



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Karna's Wife: The Out Caste's Queen: A Feminist View

### 1. Neelima G Chaudhari

Research Scholar

Department of English

Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, Surat

### 2. Dr. Priya Adwani

PhD Supervisor &

Assistant Professor

SDJ International College, Vesu, Surat.

### Abstract:

In a preliterate civilization, myths are usually understood as traditional stories that deal with supernatural entities, ancestors, and other types of people with a rudimentary understanding of the universe. There are many different kinds of myths. These comprise creation myths, myths about Gods and Goddesses, myths about etymology, psychological myths, and myths about history. Women may be among the historically misrepresented and misunderstood personalities. This is most noticeable in patriarchal societies, particularly in their religious writings and mythologies, where women are either entirely ignored or seen as the embodiment of the values of the male community. In both our mythology and literature, the Indian lady has been portrayed as a quiet, suffering, meek, obedient, faithful person who lacks her own personality. Yet, the way that women were portrayed underwent a significant shift throughout time. Particularly in Indian English fiction, the concept of the ideal lady has given way to that of the modern woman. These female characters were dubbed "New Women" because they went against the traditional patriarchal beliefs, attitudes, and goals. The researcher has examined six novels featuring characters modelled after legendary heroines in this chapter. Characters from *The Ramayana* appear in three of these books: Popuri Lalitha Kumari's *The Liberation of Sita*, Koral Dasgupta's *Ahalya*, and Kavita Kane's *Sita's Sister*. Characters from the Mahabharata appear in the other three novels: *The Rise of Hastinapur* by Sharath Kamaraju, *The Palace of Illusions* by Chitra Banerjee Divakurni, and *The Curse of Gandhari* by Aditi Banerjee.

**Key-words:** women, myth, mythology, patriarchy, assertive, literature

**Literature Review:**

1. Tuhin Subhra Mandal. 2019. *Seen Through 'Other' Eyes: The Reincarnation of Karnain Kavita Kane's Novel, Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*. The purpose of this article is to examine how the story of Karna is told from the viewpoint of Uruvi, how female narrators bridge historical gaps, and how Uruvi's interpretation of events challenges the Mahabharata's true mythological portrayal.
2. Ghale, Bandana. *Gender Expression in Kavita Kane's Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen*. Diss. Department of English, 2021. The research paper analyses the gender expression in Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*. This paper examines how the author in this text challenges the performances and utterances that have misled the identity of genders in society in the name of holy insights and ideology.
3. Aswathy, P. V. 2020. "Living on the fringes: addressing deliberate exclusions in Mahabharata through Kavita Kane's Karna's wife—the outcast's queen." The project attempts to have a vast study of this topic by pointing out the humiliations and insults faced by the so-called Sutaputra – Karna and his Queen Uruvi, who lived a magnificent and indulgent life before marriage and the drastic change that came about in her life after being the Outcast's Queen.
4. SubaVetha, P., and S. Karthika. "*Belonging and Alienation of the Marginalized in Karna's Wife, The Outcast's Queen*." This paper focuses on the marginalized characters, the vision and the reasons behind their alienation in *Karna's Wife, The Outcast's Queen* by Kavita Kane.
5. Vijayan, Vidhya. 2018. "*Unveiling The Doubly Marginalised: A Feminist Reading Of Kavita Kane's Karna's Wife And Sita's Sister*." *Literary Endeavour* The article titled 'Unveiling the Doubly Marginalized: A Feminist Reading of Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife* and *Sita's Sister* explores the psyche of two characters Uruvi and Urmila respectively. Uruvi, a hitherto neglected character, gains proper attention in the novel *Karna's Wife*. Urmila, the most disregarded character, becomes the central character in the novel *Sita's Sister*

**Introduction:**

The word myth comes from the French myth, which is derived from the Latin mythus which itself comes from the Greek mythos which refers to speech, thought, word, discourse, discussion, story, saga, tale, or anything passed along orally. The contrast between logos, which can also be rendered as a word, and myth, which is used specifically in the sense of a word that stimulates discussion or an argument, is what gives logos its significance. A myth concerning gods and superhuman beings is described by the Greek word mythos, which means a myth.

## Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen

In Kavita Kane's first and bestselling novel, Karna's second wife, Uruvi, proves to be more open-minded than the character of Draupadi who is generally considered a major figure of the magnum opus. The entire novel is told from the point of view of Uruvi, which makes this novel a unique addition to the legacy of Hindu mythology because the great epics of the mythology are written from the perspective of the male storytellers. Kane decides to give Uruvi a voice of her own so that her story is not told from the mouth of a husband or a father, but she becomes the mouthpiece for her own story. In almost all of the epics, we are listening to the stories of the male heirs and male rulers, but in this novel, we are told the story of a wife and most importantly, a woman! Uruvi is shown as an unconventionally modern-minded woman of her time who has a mind of her own and practices her own choices that go against the grain of society. Uruvi chooses a charioteer's son in her swayamvara, over a prince, whereas Draupadi rejects and humiliates Karna in her swayamvara for his low status. Here we see that while Draupadi is won as a reward in the swayamvara, Uruvi chooses her own in choosing Karna. Also, Kane shows Draupadi as more politically inclined and having an interest in "political science" as opposed to Uruvi who "was more interested in art, literature and medicine than the idle gossips" (Kane 42). Therefore, one can deduce that Uruvi is an artistic revolutionary while Draupadi is a figure adhering to the throne and the status quo. Uruvi does not sit quiet and acquiesce to the opinions and acts of Karna and scolds him for disrobing Draupadi and decides to leave him despite being pregnant with his child:

“You talk about dharma, but what sort of righteousness is that which cannot rise above your wrong sense of obligation to your friend Duryodhana, knowing fully well that his evil intentions have no limits? You are so fixated on your negative status and low birth, and yet, it prompted you to call Draupadi a harlot; it instigated you to order her to be stripped. (Kane' 117)

All the scolding by Uruvi makes Karna realize his mistake and he shows his guilt for treating Draupadi disrespectfully. He comes to his senses and notices that his anger toward Draupadi stems from hatred toward Pandavas and she should not have been dragged into this matter. He even asks Uruvi to forgive him for the act and utters "I deserve the death she has cursed me with" (Kane 119)

She blatantly criticizes the demeaning practices such as niyoga, a tradition in ancient India, where a woman would invite a man out of wedlock to have a child if she could not procreate with the help of her husband, by regarding it as a pseudonym for rape and confronts Kunti for using Draupadi as a pawn in her game of power and being the cause of all the bloodshed by not accepting Karna as her son to preserve her "fake honour"

" All your life you have denied him a dignified life, now you are denying him even a dignified death! And you call yourself a mother? You are heartless! (Kane' 262)

Also, Uruvi married at the age of 19, which is quite a strange thing for ancient India, where child marriages were a common scenario. Bhanumati (Duryodhana's wife) and Vrushali (Karna's first wife) are other minor female characters whose opinions and feelings are given heed by Kane in this novel.

The novel provides a fresh outlook on the persona of the Karna himself who is generally regarded as an antagonist due to being on the side of the Kauravas in the Great War. But in fact, Uruvi's story shows that Karna's actions had a reason of their own and his decisions were not influenced by the beliefs of the anti-hero he was siding with:

Kane through Uruvi, makes us read the unread chapters in the life of Karna. Karna always upholds his Dharma in all the situations. Then Karna's friendship with Duryodhana, his undying love towards Duryodhana. Here we can see Duryodhana as the angel of a faithful friend, instead of a villain. This has evoked a sort of compassion and respect towards him, for the genuine nature that he invested in his friendship with Karna. (Narayanan & Pai 64)

Uruvi is the voice of wisdom and reason, a reason that is often yearned by the audience of the epic. She observes and analyses the decisions made by Karna and realizes that they were not entirely made due to his bitterness for Pandavas but his commitment to his friend's favor who stood by him when no one else did:

"I will always stand by him, whoever and whatever I am against. Duryodhana gave me kingdom without asking me for it and I shall give him my undying friendship in return. I promised him I shall serve him till my last breath and I am committed to him for life." (Kane 86)

In the history of humankind, Mahabharata is the longest epic poem and it is also a very ancient epic thought to have been written around or before the 4th century BCE. Apart from listing the essence of morality for Hinduism, the epic also lays down the foundations for the identities of the various sections of society. Throughout the epic, the acts performed by the males are expressed from the male point of view. But, with change in time, the narratives take a different overtone too. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson state: The site of narration is also a moment in history, a socio-political space in culture. So, we might want to think about how particular sites of narration perform cultural work, and how they organise the personal storytelling upon which they rely. (58)

Kane provides a parallel discourse to the events of the epic by putting Uruvi on the pedestal of the counter-narrator. As a result, Uruvi becomes an anti-heroine from the perspective of the ancient patriarchs by having a voice of her own in the modern-day version of Mahabharata by Kane. The novel is entirely revolutionary in itself because Kane is not telling the account of the epic from the perspective of a major character such as Draupadi or Kunti but from the angle of an unread and sidelined character in the saga. So, her retelling does not just focus on feminism but on the marginalized characters too. While Draupadi chooses to marry a prince,

Uruvi shows a bold decision for her times by choosing to marry a person below her rank despite being a princess, a Suta Putra. Thus, in contrast to the so-called major character Draupadi, she appears to be bolder in her choices and presents her character as self-made and not entirely dependent on the identity of a powerful male in the society. Uruvi is well aware that her decision to marry a person of low caste will be disapproved by society, but she shows her ability to see through and understand the situation in which Karna is stuck. She informs the readers that Karna is "not the wrong man" but "the wronged man" (Kane 18).

By deciding to be on the side of the outcast, Karna, Uruvi is not just showing her bold choices but also, becomes representative of all the outcast women in society. She is not merely the wife of an outcast but a voice for all the women who have remained outcast from the narratives, courts, and society. Thus, the character of Uruvi offers a multi-critique opportunity in terms of gender, society, culture, myth, and psychology. Viewing the retelling of Kane only from the perspective of gender will leave out the other aspects of the criticism that the novel is touching upon. Kane tries to show the imbalance in the representation of male and female narratives in society through the character of Uruvi.

Uruvi in the story makes use of words such as; 'archery skilled', 'attractive', 'taller', 'handsome face', 'muscular' and 'god-like'. This description is on 'manly character and characters with these features are conceptualized to be ideal in that society. The writer again uses words to describe Hindu women like 'oval face', 'sighed', 'warmth', 'smile', 'elfin', 'charm', 'doe-eyed' etc. Even the words used reflect the gender frame. They are more cultural but each gender differs biologically and is defined as 'sex'. Language helps identify the sex by its features. After all, a quality that the society marks is constructed, and framed according to acts. (Ghale 14)

Kane elucidates how the expression of the narrative is based on what practices are performed by a particular gender in society. Narrative is also a part of the same gender practices that are allotted to a particular individual in society. In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," Judith Butler talks about the performances and roles that a being performs in the society in which he or she lives. In the context of Butler's theory of performativity, one can deduce that the character of Uruvi lays bare the "the mundane way in which social agents constitute social reality through language, gesture and all manner of symbolic social sign" (519). Thus, the narration of the story of epic Mahabharata from the stance of Uruvi is an attempt made by Kane to show how the gender performances have been turning the storylines upside down since the ages, along with focusing on the performances on beings based on their social class. Hence, the author is tackling the issue of both gender and class at the same time by providing narrative agency to Uruvi. She becomes a spokesperson for the issues concerning a person's genuine real self-versus the ideal identity that is thrust upon by the society due to a person's gender or class. She questions the morality of the society that puts an individual into particularly assigned molds such as religion or class. Thus, the performances become symbolic of the traditional while Uruvi's character emerges as modern due to her representation as an anti-heroine if seen from the stance of the conservative narrative.

**Conclusion:**

My study will assist researchers now and in the future in developing their critical thinking skills so they may confront prevailing viewpoints on Hindu mythology that have implicit bias. It will assist in elevating the status of other minor legendary figures whose words are either ignored or misinterpreted. The action that is seen acceptable or unacceptable by society is what distinguishes a heroine from an anti-heroine, rather than their intrinsic nature. Consequently, even if Uruvi is the novel's voice of wisdom, Kane's Uruvi is an anti-heroine for the traditional narrative.

**Works Cited:**

- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory". *Theatre Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4, 1988, pp. 519-20.
- Ghale, Bandana, Gender expression in Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen*. 2021. Tribhuvan University, PhD thesis
- <https://elibrary.tucl.edu.np/bitstream/123456789/9937/1/Full%20Thesis.pdf>.
- Kane, Kavita. *The Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*. New Delhi, Rupa, 2013.
- Mandal, Tuhin Subhra. "Seen Through 'Other' Eyes: The Reincarnation of Karna in Kavita Kane's Novel *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*." *Think India Journal* 22.14 (2019): 16474-16481.
- Narayanan, Namitha and Geetha R Pai. "Karna the Unsung Hero of Mahabharatha: Through Kavita Kane's Novel *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*." *International Journal of Science and Research*, vol. 11, no. 8, August 2022, pp. 62-64  
<https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v11i8/SR22722231347.pdf>.
- Rawat, Surabhi. "Mythology is Not Just Our Culture; It is a Part of Our Daily Existence." *Times of India*, 13 Dec. 2016, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/books/interviews/Mythology-is-not-just-our-culture-it-is-a-part-of-our-daily-existence/article-show/55955969.cms>.
- Sidonie, Smith and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narrative*. University of Minnesota Press, 2001.