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REIMAGING SURPANAKHA: NEGOTIATING DESIRE, MORALITY AND REVENGE IN *LANKA'S PRINCESS* BY KAVITA KANE

1st Arti, 2nd Dr. Nidhi

1st Research Scholar, 2nd Assistant Professor.

1st Department of English,

1st Baba Mastnath University, Rohtak, Haryana, India.

Abstract

In mythological stories, desire and morality are closely linked. Moral codes control the desires of people and support gender norms that are accepted by society. In these systems, morality validates certain actions while denouncing others, especially when individuals challenge established social structures. As a result, women who publicly express their desires outside of patriarchal norms are often depicted as immoral, hazardous or socially disruptive. This study analyses the constructed villainy of Surpanakha in Kavita Kane's *Lanka's Princess,* concentrating on the interconnected themes of desire, morality and revenge. In the traditional Ramayana, Surpanakha is portrayed as a monster demoness whose displays of desire result in shame and physical disfigurement. The study challenges the traditional views that her desire is not merely sexual rather, it reflects a deeper sense for recognition, affection and emotional validation. Her passion for revenge is a response to the experiences of rejection, gender-based discrimination, moral injustice and being pushed to the edge of society. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of power and discourse it shows that Surpanakha's portrayal as a 'villain' is not an inherent truth but a narrative construction shaped by patriarchal moral codes.

Index Terms– Morality, desire, representation, stereotype, identity.

INTRODUCTION

Desire is a fundamental aspect of human experience that shapes emotions, relationships and how people perceive themselves in society. It reflects how individuals seek recognition, affection and fulfilment. However, desire is not merely an individual emotion; it is also shaped and regulated by social values and moral frameworks. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud states that "the dream is the disguised fulfilment of a repressed wish" (160). This statement reflects his broader idea that human desires often remain suppressed by social and moral restrictions, yet they continue to influence behaviour in indirect ways. In this way, desire is not just a feeling; it's a strong psychological force that works with societal rules and moral expectations. In many societies, moral systems function as regulatory mechanisms that determine which desires are acceptable and which are considered transgressive. Cultural narratives often reinforce these moral codes by rewarding conformity and punishing deviation. Michel Foucault's concept of power and discourse provides an important framework for understanding how societies regulate desire and morality. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault challenges the common belief that societies simply repress sexuality. Instead, he argues that sexuality is actively shaped and controlled through discourses via systems of knowledge, language and

institutional practices that define what is considered normal or deviant. Michel Foucault writes in The History of Sexuality that "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (93). This statement suggests that power operates through social institutions, cultural narratives and moral codes rather than only through direct prohibition. Foucault further explains that societies create norms about sexuality and desire in order to discipline individuals and maintain social order. These norms determine which forms of desire are acceptable and which are labelled immoral or dangerous. In patriarchal cultures, such regulatory frameworks often impose stricter moral expectations on women. Female sexuality is frequently monitored and controlled because it is seen as potentially disruptive to established social hierarchies. As a result, women who openly express desire are often portrayed as morally deviant or socially threatening. The image of female characters in myths is reflective of these moral discourses. Women who conform to ideals of modesty and obedience are celebrated, whereas those who challenge these expectations are often demonized. The character of Surpanakha in the *Ramayana* illustrates this dynamic. Her direct expression of desire for Rama and Lakshman violates the moral codes that regulate feminine behaviour and consequently she is punished and remembered primarily as a villain.

In literary criticism, the concept of the villain is generally understood as a character who opposes the moral values represented by the hero and whose actions generate conflict within the narrative. According to M. H. Abrams, a villain is a character whose motives and actions are considered morally wrong and who functions as the antagonist to the protagonist, thereby creating tension and driving the plot forward (294). In epic narratives, such characters often serve to highlight the moral virtue of the hero while simultaneously advancing the central conflict of the story. When viewed through this framework, Surpanakha's role in the *Ramayana* can be interpreted as fulfilling the structural function of a villain within the narrative. Thus, when Surpanakha is examined through the frameworks of desire, morality and villainy, it becomes evident that her transformation into a monstrous antagonist cannot be the result of a single moment of transgression. Instead, it reflects the intersection of patriarchal moral codes, narrative conventions and personal experiences of suffering that collectively shape her representation within mythological tradition. Michel Foucault's relational concept of power describes how power is exercised through language, surveillance and punishment and not brute force (Foucault 93). Surpanakha's mutilation is not just a personal pain but an act that sets moral bounds on the female body. Here, Surpanakha's experience is a mixture of patriarchal and social control. Kane's rewriting therefore reveals the ideological purpose of epic morality, and redefines villainy as a product of power relations rather than innate evil.

Kane is an Indian author of mythological fiction. Her first book, *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen*, was followed by a series of works in the same genre, such as *Sita's Sister, Menaka's Choice, Lanka's Princess* and *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty*. All of her books tell the story from the point of view of characters who have been pushed to the margin or sidelined. In her novel Lanka's Princess, Kane provides us a new look at Ravan's sister Surapankha. Ravana's sister, Surpanakha the brazen and disfigured evil character we are taught to loathe and dislike. She is responsible for arranging the events that led to the battle between Ram and her brother for most.

The story goes that Surpanakha was attracted to Ram and sought to get close to him. Ram was married and his wife was there with him. So, he suggested that she should go to his brother Lakshman instead. But when Lakshman also declined, she threatened to harm Sita. In retaliation, Lakshman mutilated her. The emotional transformation that follows Surpanakha's humiliation can be better understood through philosophical discussions of revenge. The English philosopher Francis Bacon reflects on the nature of revenge in his essay "Of Revenge," in *Essays of Francis Bacon*, where he writes, "Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out." This observation suggests that revenge arises from a deep human impulse that respond to injury and humiliation when personal dignity has been violated. Although Bacon considers revenge morally problematic because it is driven by emotion rather than reason, he also acknowledges that it often emerges when individuals feel that injustice has not been properly addressed. In the narrative context of the *Ramayana*, Surpanakha's mutilation represents not only a personal insult but also a public humiliation that denies her dignity and agency. From this perspective, her subsequent actions can be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim self-respect through retaliation. Bacon further remarks that, "a man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green," meaning that the desire for revenge makes emotional pain worse over time. In Surpanakha's case, the humiliation does not stop with the mutilation;

instead, it becomes a permanent mental wound that makes her enraged and thus, the revenge that happens in her story is more than just an undesirable trait; it's a complicated emotional response to being rejected, humiliated and pushed to the edges of society. Kane explains about her punishment, “They weren’t accustomed to a woman coming at them head on. Sita was humiliated by her, and Lakshman reacted angrily. But whether she merited so severe a penalty is a question. “I was interested in her and I wanted to see how as a writer, I could deal with her,” Kane said Surabhi Rawat in an interview. I had to understand why there was so much hate around her.” Kane explored numerous views of the Ramayana, and various stories and researched extensively before making her opinion to grasp her subject. The society has always laughed at her. The part she plays in the Ramayana is so important, we take it so easily. And then she's been shelved through the rest of the epic. Her brother Ravana is better fleshed out. “I wanted to humanise her and make her real to people,” she continues (Palat, online).

The novel perspective is against the common idea of Surapankha as the evil princess of Lanka and shows stories from her point of view that are often ignored. Her parents Vishravas and Kaikesi, named her Meenakshi. Her brothers Ravan, Kumbha and Vibhishan have been with her since she was a child. She married Vidyujiva over her family's disapproval, although a scheme planned by her family separates them. According to novel’s story Raven killed Vidyujiva and took his thrown. Surapankha was devastated and wanted to take revenge at Ravan, so she leaves for the Dandak forest with her son Kumar. But she also loses her son in an unexpected incident. She utilizes her manipulative powers over Raven and causes to begins the battle between Ram and Ravan. She is still the main reason for the destruction of the Ravan clan.

Kane also emphasizes that her aim was to move beyond the stereotypical image of Surpanakha as merely a monstrous demoness. Instead, she attempts to “humanise a demonised character,” presenting her as an individual with complex emotions and motivations rather than a simple villain. In this reinterpretation, Surpanakha emerges not as a figure driven by uncontrolled desire but as a character shaped by repeated experiences of marginalization and rejection. From her childhood she is judged for her appearance and temperament, which creates a deep sense of alienation within her own family and society. The death of her husband Vidyutjiva further intensifies her emotional isolation and becomes a crucial event that fuels her growing resentment toward Ravana, the king of Lanka. These experiences gradually cultivate feelings of anger and bitterness that remain suppressed for a long time. In this context, Surpanakha’s encounter with Rama and Lakshmana becomes more than a moment of romantic rejection. Her expression of desire can be interpreted as an attempt to seek recognition and emotional connection after a life marked by neglect and loss. However, the violent humiliation she suffers was symbolized by the mutilation of her nose and ears that transforms her personal longing into a strong drive for revenge. Thus, the rejection of her desire becomes the immediate catalyst that triggers a chain of events ultimately leading to the larger conflict of the epic. Therefore, Surpanakha’s transformation into a monstrous figure associated with revenge cannot be linked to a single incident. Rather, it emerges from a complex combination of lifelong experiences of exclusion, the trauma of her husband’s death and the moral condemnation of her desire. By re-examining Surpanakha through the intersecting frameworks of desire, morality and revenge, this study seeks to challenge the traditional portrayal of her as a villain and also explore how cultural narratives construct and sustain such images within patriarchal mythological traditions.

The story starts with the birth of Surpanakha, the daughter of the asura princess Kaikesi and the sage Vishrava. Kaikesi's goal is very political, she wants to take back the throne of Lanka from Kubera hence she wants strong male successors who can help her to do that. She is disappointed when her fourth kid is a girl and says, "This girl has cheated me of my plans" (Kane 2). This event is crucial because it shows how gendered expectations are built into family and political systems. People don't see Surpanakha's life as a blessing from the start rather they consider it as a failure to meet patriarchal goals. This rejection is evident in several subsequent events in the novel, where Surpanakha faces neglect and marginalization not only from her mother but also from her brothers. Such rejection moulded Surpanakha’s emotional consciousness and significantly shaped her later actions in the narrative. Her expression of love and emotional longing may be construed as an attempt to prove her individuality in a society that has consistently devalued her since birth. Kaikesi’s sadness on her birth reflects the patriarchal mindset of the culture in which sons are valued for power, lineage and warfare, whereas daughters are often perceived as burdens or liabilities. Such attitudes, which privilege male over female offspring, have historically relegated women to the margins of social and political life. As the story goes

on, Surpanakha's experiences of being rejected by her mother, society and ultimately by Rama and Lakshmana build up into a strong desire for revenge. Consequently, her revenge cannot be construed only as violent aggression, instead it manifests as a reaction to persistent experiences of exclusion and injustice. Kane's story changes the way we think about revenge, showing that it is more than just a bad impulse; it is an emotional and psychological response. Surpanakha says, "I was born a Rakshasi, but I was not born a monster" (Kane 17). This statement goes contrary to the epic's idea that morality is a function of ancestry.

Surpanakha's demonization in the epic tradition reflects the deep embedding of gendered and racial stereotypes within popular cultural consciousness. In the classical *Ramayana*, associated to Valmiki, Surpanakha appears briefly yet decisively as a wicked rakshasi whose uncontrolled desire triggers catastrophic consequences. Her approach to Rama is portrayed as vulgar transgression and her mutilation by Lakshmana is narrated as justified punishment. Over centuries, this depiction has solidified into cultural memory, where Surpanakha symbolizes lust, jealousy and destructive femininity. However, myth does not merely reflect moral reality but constructs it also. As Roland Barthes argues in *Mythologies*, "Myth is a type of speech" that transforms historical constructs into naturalized truths (Barthes 109). Surpanakha's identity as the "dangerous desiring woman" becomes a cultural stereotype, ignoring the ideological processes that produced it. She emphasizes, "I became what their world named me" (Kane 174).

In patriarchal societies, female sexuality is often strictly regulated and controlled through social and cultural norms. Desire is permissible only when facilitated by modesty, marriage and male approval. Surpanakha's bold expressions of attraction destabilizes this framework. Unlike Sita, whose virtue is expressed through silence and devotion, Surpanakha openly chooses and proposes. This act of choosing violates patriarchal norms in which women are the objects not as the subject of desire. Femininity therefore, is a regulatory script. When Surpanakha performs femininity outside the sanctioned script through assertiveness and erotic agency she is marked as deviant. Her mutilation functions as a mechanism of disciplinary enforcement that restores patriarchal order by punishing female transgression. Here symbolic significance of nose-cutting strengthened this interpretation. In Asian culture, the nose represents honour and dignity of a person. To disfigure Surpanakha's face is an attack on her social identity. Her body is subjected to brutality, which serves as a warning against female autonomy. Yet epic narration considers it as a right act ignoring its brutality. The Minimization of violence against a woman exemplifies what Barthes calls myth's power to depoliticize history (Barthes 142).

Traditionally, Lakshmana's cutting off of Surpanakha's nose and ears is justified as an act of morality. Kane considers this incident as institutional violence, "They punished me for wanting what they had already claimed" (Kane 121). According to Foucault, the body becomes inscribed with authority, discipline replaces discourse. The mutilation as punishment for Surpanakha is a moral lesson, a public stamping of transgression. Surpanakha feels, "My blood taught them what words never taught them—that women who ask must be erased" (Kane 124). This phrase demonstrates how violence is used as an educational instrument within the culture of the epic, teaching society what desires are permitted and what are not. The punishment consequently does not stop at Surpanakha's body but extends to manage feminine desire itself.

This episode seems as comic relief or moral correction rather than as gendered humiliation. In *Lanka's Princess,* Kane interrupts this ideological focus by granting Surpanakha's psychological depth and narrative voice. Kane reframes desire not as monstrosity but as human longing. In the novel, Surpanakha does not hide her attraction to Rama. She openly expresses her desire which is considered unacceptable for women in epic morality. When Surpanakha questions why a woman cannot choose her partner "Why should I not desire a man I find worthy? Are women not born with hearts that yearn?" (Kane 189). The rhetorical structure of the question destabilizes the assumption that female desire is inherently transgressive. Kane, on the other hand, considers desire as a fundamental part of being human. This particular instance shows that her "crime" isn't bad intent, but rather her open desire as a woman. Kane presents her not as lustful but as emotionally honest. The narrative exposes the asymmetry in epic morality. Male heroes frequently exercise romantic agency like Rama's Swayam Vara triumph, Ravana's multiple marriages yet a woman's explicit attraction becomes controversial. Kane exposes these double standards by demonstrating that Surpanakha's condemnation stems not from moral wrongdoing but from her refusal to conform to patriarchal norms. A historically constructed patriarchal anxiety about female

sexuality is naturalized into an eternal moral truth in which the desiring woman is portrayed as monstrous. The Rakshasi body becomes a signifier of excess, darkness and moral threat. Her black skin, bold and uninhibited speech are coded as deviant within a moral framework. Kane's intervention consists of denaturalizing this famous coding. The narrative breaks down the dichotomy of a virtuous Aryan lady and a demonic Other via the psychological and moral development of Surpanakha. In the epic, vulgar intrusion is condemned as the wish of Surpanakha. Kane rewrites it as emotional vulnerability: “My longing was not lust; it was a plea to be seen” (Kane 88). This expression not only exposes the flawed logic of masculine morality but humanizes her sexuality. Kane undermines the patriarchal moral systems by refusing to romanticize chastity. Desire is an ethical claim to recognition, not a moral failure. She shows an interest in Rama as a way of seeking dignity in a world that has denied her love. “To love was my rebellion against fear” (Kane 92) is the confession of Surpanakha and it shows that closeness becomes a kind of resistance against societal marginalization.

Her revenge is not just the reaction of a scorned woman, it is the political awakening of a woman who sees the injustice of everyday life. Surpanakha aligns herself with Ravana, which is a political rather than an emotional choice. I chose the only kingdom that would not laugh at my scars. (Kane 150) Lanka is a metaphorical haven for wounded identities, while the forest claims moral superiority and enforces exclusion. The epic has to represent her as a monster so that Rama might remain morally righteous. Kane’s reading offers a moral complexity, arguing that Surpanakha is not merely victim nor criminal, but an ambivalent figure at the crossroads of desire, shame and political consciousness.

Surpanakha is aware of how different she is from the start of the story and people make fun of her looks. Kaikesi asked in a harsh way, "How is this dark monkey going to bring good fortune? No one will ever marry her!" (Kane 3) shows how biases are deeply ingrained about skin colour and standards of attractiveness. This moment shows how society's standards of feminine beauty hurt Surpanakha's sense of self. Instead of being valued for who she is, she is rejected by patriarchal standards that equate fairness and physical appearance with merit and worth, reducing her identity to superficial measures of beauty. These humiliating experiences from her early years affect Surpanakha's mental growth and lead to her subsequent emotional trauma. Surpanakha feels inadequate and rejected because of her looks, which makes her desire to be accepted, loved and recognized. Her innocent question to her grandmother Taraka, "Can you make me beautiful with one of your potions, Nani?" (Kane 20) shows that she wants to fit in that dimensions what society thinks is beautiful. When she says, "But I am not like either of you; I am darker, like night sky!!" (Kane 21), it shows that she has taken these discriminating conventions by heart. Kane portrays desire not as unrestrained lust, as illustrated in the conventional Ramayana narrative but as a profound human want for affirmation and dignity. The mental scars left by such discrimination also make revenge a major driving force in Surpanakha’s life. Repeated experiences of humiliation and rejection often generate feelings of anger and resentment. Such persistent social devaluation can create a strong desire to reclaim dignity, frequently motivating individuals to resist against the structures that marginalize them. In this context, Surpanakha's subsequent actions cannot be solely regarded as expressions of malevolent villainy; instead, they stem from a background of marginalization and emotional trauma from her early childhood when her mother says in rage, “Why can you not behave like a girl? Always fighting and squabbling, hitting boys and throwing stones and scratching the eyes out of anyone who provokes you. Surpanakha, that's the right name for you, you monster” (Kane 9) reveals the early formation of gendered stereotypes that shape Surpanakha’s identity. The scolding shows how patriarchal society expects girls to be passive, kind and restrained. Surpanakha's outspoken and combative behaviour violates these norms and this nonconformity is quickly labelled her as a "monster." This incident shows how women are looked down on when they act in a way that isn't considered feminine by society. Stuart Hall argues that representation generates meaning by cultural standards that determine what is considered normal and acceptable. People use these codes to understand Surpanakha's actions, which turns her complicated personality into a negative stereotype. This episode also connects to Judith Butler's idea of gender performativity, which talks about how society punishes people who don't act in the way that is expected of them. Consequently, the section illustrates that Surpanakha's demonization begins in her childhood, when patriarchal discourse frames her as deviant, ultimately establishing the groundwork for her subsequent depiction as a monster in mythological narratives.

Kane's presentation thus reconceptualizes revenge as a reaction to systemic humiliation rather than as an intrinsic moral deficiency. Here the wisdom that Taraka gives, on the other hand, makes us think deeply about morality. "Beauty lies in your head and heart; you have to believe it," she said. But for that first you have to love yourself" (Kane 22) challenges the shallow standards set by society and gives an ethical choice based on self-acceptance and inner worth. Kane says that true morality is not based on how things look on the outside or strict social norms, but on empathy, self-respect and recognizing the worth of all people. The novel exposes the unfair moral codes that judge women based on their physical appearance by portraying Surpanakha's struggle with beauty standards and her sense of self-worth. These experiences are essential for comprehending the interrelation of Surpanakha's need for acceptance, her pursuit of dignity and her subsequent retribution against humiliation within the overarching ethical context of the narrative. However, Surpanakha is always aware of how her dark skin and sharp features are different from Sita's idealized beauty. She thinks," I was never the delicate beauty; I was too dark, too fiery and too outspoken" (Kane 12). Here Kane shows how beauty can be used as a form of moral currency. Being fair and soft is good, whereas being dark and bold is bad. It indicates that morality in epic tradition is racially encoded. These binaries correspond with what feminist and postcolonial critics denote as the racialization of virtue. By linking rakshasa identity to physical darkness, epic tradition carefully encodes morality through appearance. Her knowledge shows how beliefs get into people's heads and change how they see themselves. The political importance of myth is highlighted by the interaction between race and gender in this context. Barthes asserts that myth "transforms history into nature" (Barthes 129). There is no direct foundation for the association between dark complexion and moral depravity rather, this association arises from narrative construction. It is tough to detect because it has been repeated for so long. Because Kane's retelling demonstrates that this link is artificial, it is not stable. The story shows Surpanakha's point of view, which breaks down the moral binary between the fair Sita and the wicked rakshasi. It is clear that the difference is not founded on moral truth, but on ideological convenience. This kind of racist coding fits with Barthes' idea that myth makes ideology less political by making it seem like a natural thing. The epic doesn't outright imply that dark women are terrible; instead, it uses myths to connect darkness with monsters and fairness with purity. Eventually, these patterns of storytelling turn into cultural beliefs.

Kane's account breaks this mythological obsession by moving the root of Surpanakha's change. Instead of making her seem evil, the novel frames revenge in the context of shame and hurt pride. After Lakshmana hurts her, Kane doesn't show a monstrous reaction; instead, he shows wounded pride. Surpanakha says, "They didn't just hurt my body; they crushed my pride" (Kane 157). In the book, revenge comes from feeling humiliated and wronged, not from irrational hatred. This incident can be analysed through Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, which suggests that gender norms are socially formed and sustained through repeated cultural performances usually makes her seem like a demon. Kane recontextualizes her revenge as psychologically motivated. Here focus is on psychological harm rather than demonic anger. Revenge is a reaction to being wronged or dishonoured. Kane asks readers to think about whether revenge in these situations is always wrong or morally complicated. In epic tradition, male revenge is often seen as dharma, as Rama's war against Ravana, which is seen as a moral duty. But Surpanakha's revenge considered as damaging and unreasonable. This gender-based double standard reveals the moral biasness inherent in the narrative. Furthermore, Surpanakha's anger destabilizes another stereotype: the notion that women must remain forgiving and self-sacrificing. Patriarchal culture often equates feminine virtue with endurance and silence. A woman who expresses rage becomes threatening because she challenges emotional containment. When she questions, "Was it such a sin to love? Or was my only crime that I was not the kind of woman they could control? (Kane 159)", By questioning whether love itself is a sin, Surpanakha exposes the gendered double standards that regulate female desire within patriarchal culture. Her question implies that her true transgression lies not in the act of love, but in the reluctance to adhere to the meek and constrained archetype of femininity mandated by patriarchal society. In this context, Surpanakha's actions cannot be just characterized as sinful or horrific; they must be interpreted as manifestations of emotional fragility and human desire. Kane's portrayal of Surpanakha makes readers identify her not as a villain, but as a woman who has been pushed to the edges of society.

In the epic story, being a perfect woman means being modest, obedient and able to control yourself. Sita is an example of these virtues. Surpanakha, on the other hand, openly displays her desire and takes command, which is not how women are supposed to act. Lakshmana's mutilation of her can be interpreted as a technique to punish a woman who doesn't act how a lady should. The novel also makes

the notion of Surpanakha as a rejected lover more complicated. Kane depicts her as politically aware and strategically competent. Her behaviours are not impulsive outbursts but are planned responses based on personal and family concerns, like her poor relationship with Ravana. This new way of observation changes her from a character to an agent. She is not a perfect victim or a perfect villain but a woman who is trying to survive, deal with humiliation and gain power in a patriarchal and royal system.

The work shows how stereotypes work through stories, which is an important point. In the epic, Surpanakha depicted only for a short time and her character wasn't very deep. This lack of depth makes it easier to demonize. By broadening her viewpoint, the novel reveals how constrained narratives facilitate moral reductionism. The stereotype starts to break down as soon as Surpanakha talks. Thus, Surpanakha's demonization is not because she is terrible but because of how gendered and racial discrimination are built into our culture. Her yearning goes against patriarchal conventions, her looks subverts beauty hierarchies, her rage contests feminine submissiveness. In this context, Surpanakha serves as a pathway for the analysis of stereotype politics. Her story shows how civilizations make villains to keep moral order. Kane's intervention reveals this mechanism, prompting readers to reevaluate the ethical principles derived from epic tradition. Surpanakha is not born as a demon; she is made into one by the story. Her alleged villainy is shown to be a result of societal stereotypes through narrative reclamation. This retelling shows how myths act as ideological frameworks that control gender, morality and social order. Stuart Hall's idea of representation shows that Surpanakha is a constructed image in a bigger system of meaning that turns complex identities into rigid stereotypes. Her depiction as the sexually explicit and hazardous lady illustrates how cultural representation breaks down complexity to preserve patriarchal power dynamics. Kane's story destabilizes these long-held legendary ideas by putting Surpanakha's emotional depth, agency and voice at the centre of the story. It also shows the patriarchal logic that underlies them. The novel thus serves as a contradictory discussion arena that reclaims a marginalized figure from the limitations of stereotype and moral censure. In doing this, it asks readers to think again about how myth, power and gender all work together to shape cultural memory and moral judgment. However, Kane concludes by saying that she's not trying to justify Ravana or Surpanakha through her book. "I'm not saying they were heroes. They were people with flaws. That's the beauty of mythology. Every character has shades of grey and they make you think she adds (Palat, web). In the end, the new version of Surpanakha not only makes a historically hated character more human, but it also questions the ideological frameworks that have historically shaped and controlled female identity.

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