

EXPLORING THE MODERN MYTHOLOGY: ANALYSING KAVITA KANE'S KARNA'S WIFE: THE OUTCAST'S QUEEN AND SITA'S SISTER

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TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

SUGUNA, S., & MALATHY, P. . (2024). EXPLORING THE MODERN MYTHOLOGY: ANALYSING KAVITA KANE'S KARNA'S WIFE: THE OUTCAST'S QUEEN AND SITA'S SISTER. Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT), 15(2), 134–136. <https://doi.org/10.61841/turcomat.v15i2.14718>

In modern-day literature, the study of mythology has presented authors with a vast and intricate framework to craft elaborate narratives that delve deeply into the intricacies of human behaviour, interpersonal connections, and societal standards. This research paper embarks on a profound and comprehensive analysis of two compelling literary works by the esteemed author Kavita Kane, explicitly focusing on *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* and *Sita's Sister*. Through a meticulous and rigorous examination of the character progression depicted in *Karna's Wife*, the primary objective of this study is to uncover and elucidate how Kane adeptly illustrates the transformation of Uruvi's character, the significant relationships that shape her journey, and the innovative perspective she brings to the enigmatic persona of Karna. Simultaneously, the scrutiny of themes and symbolism in *Sita's Sister* delves deeply into the core thematic foundations of the novel, the symbolic elements skillfully utilised by Kane to enhance the storyline, and the crucial influence of familial and societal expectations in moulding the characters within the narrative. By closely analysing these critical components, this research paper strives to illuminate the intricate layers of storytelling and the contemporary reinterpretation of classical mythology in Kane's literary creations, thereby contributing to the enhanced comprehension of the enduring fascination of mythology within present-day literature.

URUVI AND URMILA ADVOCATE FOR EQUITY AND COMPASSION:

Kavita Kane's portrayal of Uruvi and Urmila in her novels *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* and *Sita's Sister*, respectively, positions these characters as feminist reformers in the context of their mythological worlds. Kavita Kane's portrayal of Uruvi's character in the novel is a profound study in the evolution of a woman's identity and agency within a predominantly patriarchal context. She proclaims, "I choose Karna, the man of my dreams, the man I respect and love, no matter what the world thinks of him" (KW 52). Throughout the narrative, Uruvi emerges as a symbol of strength and resilience, defying societal norms and expectations that seek to marginalise her. Kane meticulously crafts Uruvi's journey as one of self-empowerment and autonomy, emphasising that her life fills with conscious decisions rather than the result of passive acquiescence. "I will not be bound by the chains of orthodoxy or the confines of caste. My heart recognises no such barriers" (KW 56). This perspective challenges traditional narratives and offers a feminist alternative by highlighting Uruvi's active participation in her destiny. Her character development is not dependent on her progress but also involves the challenging task of identifying and breaking down the systemic disparities present in the social fabric of her community. Additionally, her journey encompasses a deep exploration of the societal norms and biases that hinder her and others from achieving true equality and justice in their environment. Despite facing cruel comments and frigid treatment, Uruvi's courage and refusal to be humiliated by the superficial world further underscore her indomitable spirit.

Through Urmila, Kane sheds light on the subjugation and endurance of women, both in ancient times and the present day, by placing her struggles at the forefront of the story. This method not only prompts inquiries regarding the roles assigned to different genders and the established norms within society, but it also introduces fresh perspectives to the audience, urging them to contemplate the frequently overlooked narratives in epic mythologies. Furthermore, it motivates readers to uncover the suppressed voices and viewpoints commonly neglected in conventional mythological narratives, enriching their understanding and reverence for these age-old tales. For instance, Urmila's confession to Lakshman about her independent nature and willingness to speak her mind is a powerful symbol of her assertiveness and autonomy. "'Why must a woman's strength be measured by her silence?' Urmila thought, as she managed the affairs of the palace with quiet determination" (SS 145). This symbolic act challenges the traditional portrayal of Urmila as a submissive character, instead highlighting her strength and individuality.

Furthermore, the dialogue between Sita and Urmila regarding Rama's remarriage symbolises their solidarity and mutual determination to stand up for their rights, thus underscoring the theme of female empowerment. By using symbolism in these nuanced ways, Kane not only contemporises the story of Urmila but also interrogates the gender discourses and patriarchal fabrics that continue to shape women's lives today. This layered use of symbolism enriches the narrative and calls for a re-evaluation of the roles and representations of women in mythological epics, making Kane's work a significant contribution to feminist literature.

Both characters refuse to conform to the subservient roles traditionally assigned to women in their societies. Uruvi's active defiance and Urmila's silent endurance showcase different forms of strength and resistance. They highlight the importance of justice, equity, and compassion, challenging the often-ruthless social norms of their times. They advocate for a more humane and just society through their actions and choices.

EXPRESSION OF STRENGTH:

Uruvi is vocal and confrontational. She actively challenges social norms and voices her opinions and concerns openly. Uruvi's battles are often external, visible through her confrontations with society and her interactions with Karna. Uruvi's character is not only a strong and independent woman, but she also challenges the societal norms restricting women's experiences and voices. Her unwavering support for Karna, despite his outcast status, showcases her loyalty and unconditional love, defying the conventional expectations placed upon women during that era. She confides, "Their whispers and sneers do not define me. I find my strength in my choice and in the man I chose to stand by" (KW 87). Uruvi becomes a symbol of strength and resilience, inspiring readers to question and challenge society's limitations on women. She utters, "I am not just Karna's wife; I am Uruvi. In my lament is my power, in my endurance, my honor" (KW 125). She encourages us to reconsider the traditional gender roles assigned to women in ancient Indian society and empowers us to challenge the status quo. Uruvi's presence in *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* adds a new layer of depth to the retelling of the narrative and emphasises the importance of female perspectives in reshaping and reinterpreting classic stories. Through the exploration of the experiences and challenges faced by often disregarded female figures, Uruvi's character in Kavita Kane's writing prompts individuals to delve deeper into the realm of mythology, transcending superficial interpretations and fostering a sense of compassion towards those whose stories have been historically marginalised and overlooked.

Kavita Kane strategically presents Uruvi and Urmila in her literary works as pioneer figures within the mythological contexts that place them, advocating for gender equality. This challenges deeply rooted patriarchal systems: calling for equity and compassion, while underscoring the importance of personal strength and independence during trying times. These character portrayals stand as strong examples of women defying societal norms at every level, from embodying basic feminist principles to redefining traditional ideas of female empowerment and self-determination. Through her narratives, Kane intricately weaves these women as change agents whose stories inspire readers to reassess preconceived notions about women's capabilities in shaping their own destinies, as well as questioning structures of oppression surrounding them. By amplifying the voices and perspectives of these characters, Kane prompts readers to evaluate prevailing social conventions critically, fostering critical dialogue on gender dynamics and encouraging the exploration of diverse paradigms of female empowerment and self-determination. Verma says that in this regard,

Karna portrays a continuous day-to-day turmoil due to the mystery of his birth." underscores the constant emotional and psychological battles Karna faces. This juxtaposition serves to highlight Uruvi's resilience as she manages her transformative journey while being a source of support for Karna. (9)

Uruvi challenges patriarchal norms by defying social expectations and actively participating in decision-making. Her marriage to Karna, a considered outcast, challenges the rigid caste hierarchy of her time, advocating for personal virtues over social status. She bravely questions established norms and confronts the prevailing social order. Uruvi's character embodies independence and agency as she shapes her destiny and confronts and challenges her husband's actions. Her conversations with Karna are marked by mutual respect and equality, a departure from traditional depictions of submissive and passive wives. Uruvi also advocates for compassion and justice throughout the novel. Her endeavors to temper Karna's behaviors and her struggles to comprehend and pardon those who have caused harm to her and her family embody a feminist ideology that prioritizes human values and the principle of equity, underscoring a

commitment to gender equality and social justice. Urmila in *Sita's Sister* demonstrates silent yet powerful resistance through her internal struggles and sacrifices.

Unlike her sister Sita, Urmila's story is characterised by endurance rather than overt trials. Her decision to let Lakshmana go with Rama into exile showcases her strength and resilience in maintaining the societal fabric while quietly holding the fort in Ayodhya. "Urmila smiled through her tears as she bade farewell to Lakshmana. "Go, my love. Fulfill your duty to your brother. Our sacrifice will not be in vain" (SS 48). Urmila challenges the monolithic view of duty by redefining loyalty as a personal and collective choice. Her loyalty to her husband, family, and kingdom is displayed through her understanding, support, and balancing of responsibilities, challenging the traditional narrative that equates loyalty with blind subservience. Urmila's character is given emotional and intellectual depth, highlighting the significance of women's inner lives alongside their external actions. Her silent resilience serves as a potent form of resistance and strength. "In the quiet of the palace, Urmila found her own realm of strength. 'I may be alone, but I am not lonely. My resolve will keep the darkness at bay'" (SS 98).

CONCLUSION

The research paper delves into the exploration of modern mythology through the analysis of Kavita Kane's novels, *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen* and *Sita's Sister* offering a feminist perspective that challenges traditional narratives. The discussion of Uruvi's character reveals a profound study of the evolution of a woman's identity and agency within a patriarchal society. Uruvi's journey symbolises strength, resilience, and self-empowerment, defying societal norms and expectations that seek to marginalise her. Kane's detailed construction of Uruvi's narrative underscores the deliberate choices that influence her existence, instead of passive submission, thereby elucidating the intricacies of female figures who challenge societal norms to pursue their ambitions. This meticulous portrayal of Uruvi's interactions with often overlooked female mythological entities underscores the overarching theme of female empowerment and the breakdown of entrenched cultural disparities. Kane's analysis of Sita paints her as a self-sufficient and assertive individual which does indeed pose a direct challenge to typical gender roles—and society's expectations, portraying strength of women in defiance of those norms. Taking a feminist perspective when looking at mythological characters creates a more detailed picture of these well-known figures: it challenges the audience to re-evaluate established storylines that typically ignore women's emotional needs or sense of self due to societal indifference. Kane takes on patriarchal ideologies with an active approach: he reimagines them after considering marginalized women experiences that would also pay homage to divine femininity (as depicted through their struggles). This, therefore, reveals hidden struggles and messages towards female empowerment — not forgetting those societal expectations which are deeply interwoven into such narratives. The article dramatically enhances the present knowledge of the subject. It discusses how women have shown empowerment and resilience through mythologies, suggesting that we should view women differently in history and culture today. The article encourages us to reconsider our understanding of women's agency and determination within mythological adaptations—urging also to reassess women's positions in historical accounts and contemporary societies. By delving into female empowerment and resilience depicted within myths, it emphasizes that such narratives point out significant expectations of society on women as well as conventional stories we ought to re-evaluate.

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