
The Inner Worlds of Mythic Women: A Psychological Study of Emotional Echoes in Kavita Kane's Novels

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the psychological immanence of marginalized female figures in Kavita Kane's four major novels: *The Karna's Wife*, *Sita's Sister*, *Menaka's Choice*, and *Lanka's Princess*. While traditional epic narratives highlight the external heroics of male protagonists, Kane's "mythic reimagining" moves attention to the domestic and psychological spaces occupied by women. By analyzing Uruvi, Urmila, Menaka, and Surpanakha, this paper argues that Kane constructs a "psychology of the periphery," where emotional echoes of trauma, abandonment, and social rejection, become impetus for self-actualization. Using a framework of Cognitive Dissonance and Agency Theory, the research examines how these women steer the conflict between societal "dharma" (duty) and personal desire. The study finds that Kane's protagonists are not merely victims of their circumstances but are reimagined as modern psychological archetypes who challenge patriarchal moralities through their intellectual and emotional resilience. Ultimately, the article postulates that these "inner worlds" serve as a Counter-cultural space where the silence of the mythic past is transformed into a evocative dialogue on contemporary female



identity. The analysis reveals that Kane's protagonists are not merely mythological placeholders but complex psychological entities struggling with autonomy, grief, and the sociopolitical constructs of dharma.

Introduction

The landscape of Indian English Literature has witnessed a significant "mythic turn" in the twenty-first century, characterized by a shift from the fulsome to the humanistic. At the forefront of this movement is Kavita Kane, whose portfolio focuses on the regaining of voices buried in the footnotes of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. While classical Sanskrit epics primarily celebrate the *Virya* (heroism) of the male warrior and the *Sati* (chaste devotion) of the ideal woman, Kane's narratives pivot toward the "inner worlds" of those who exist on the periphery of these grand narratives.

This article explores the psychological landscapes of four central characters: Uruvi (*The Karna's Wife*), Urmila (*Sita's Sister*), Menaka (*Menaka's Choice*), and Surpanakha (*Lanka's Princess*). These women are not merely reactive figures in the lives of heroes and villains; rather, they are complex subjects navigating deep emotional echoes remnants of trauma, social exclusion, and repressed desire.

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the intersection of Feminist Revisionist Mythmaking and Archetypal Psychology. By examining the "echoes" of their experiences, we can see how Kane utilizes cognitive dissonance to bridge the gap between mythic duty (*Dharma*) and individual agency. The central inquiry of this research is to determine how the "silence" of these women in traditional texts is transformed into a psychological roar in Kane's contemporary retelling.

Through these novels, the "inner world" becomes a site of resistance. Whether it is Urmila's self-imposed exile within the palace or Surpanakha's descent into vengeful madness, Kane suggests that the true epic battle is not fought on the fields of Kurukshetra or the battlement of Lanka, but within the fractured psyches of those left behind by history.

The Echo of the Moral Choice: The Karna's wife

In *The Karna's Wife*, Kavita Kane introduces Uruvi, a princess of Pukhiya, whose primary psychological conflict stems from her choice to marry an "outcast." The "emotional echo" here is one of social dissonance. Uruvi's inner world is a battleground between her elite upbringing and her love for a man constantly belittled by the "Suta-putra" (son of a charioteer) label.



Uruvi represents the voice of conscience that Karna often suppresses in his loyalty to Duryodhana. Her psychological journey is marked by the realization that her husband is both a tragic hero and a flawed man. Kane highlights this internal struggle through Uruvi's refusal to be a silent spectator to Karna's choices:

"Why do you always have to prove yourself?"

Is it to the world or to yourself?" (Kane, the Karna's Wife)

This quotation encapsulates the **imposter syndrome** and **obsessive quest for validation** that Uruvi identifies in Karna. Her "echo" is the constant anxiety of a woman who sees her husband's impending doom but is powerless to stop his misplaced sense of gratitude.

Uruvi's agency is most visible when she critiques the very foundations of the Kuru elders. She does not merely follow her husband; she challenges him. When Karna is caught in the moral crossfire of the Draupadi disrobing, Uruvi's internal monologue reflects a profound psychological break from traditional loyalty

"You are a man of honor, they say. But where was your honor when a woman was being shamed in a hall full of men?" (Kane, The Karna's Wife)

At the core of the novel is the tension between **unwavering loyalty** and **moral righteousness**. Uruvi loves Karna deeply, yet she is his most vocal critic. She represents the "echo of moral choice," constantly reminding Karna that his debt to Duryodhana does not justify his participation in adharma (unrighteousness). One of the most poignant moments in the book occurs when Uruvi confronts Karna after the humiliation of Draupadi in the gambling hall. She challenges the very foundation of his "noble" loyalty:

"A man is known by the company he keeps, but a man is judged by the silence he keeps when he should have spoken."

This quote encapsulates the tragedy of Karna. His silence during the disrobing of Draupadi was his greatest moral failure. Kane suggests that while Karna was a victim of social prejudice, he eventually became a victim of his own misplaced gratitude.



The "echo" in the title of your prompt refers to the haunting realization that Karna's downfall was avoidable. He was a man of immense potential who chose a path of darkness out of a sense of obligation to the only man who ever gave him status. Through Uruvi's perspective, the Kurukshetra war is not a glorious struggle for a throne, but a devastating loss of life fueled by ego. Her voice is the one that lingers after the arrows have stopped flying—a reminder that love cannot always save a man from himself if he refuses to listen to his own conscience.

The Echo of loneliness: Sita's Sister

If *The Karna's Wife* was about moral confrontation, *Sita's Sister* is an exploration of **stoicism and the psyche of isolation**. Urmila's "inner world" is defined by her decision to remain in a state of "active waiting" for fourteen years. Urmila's psychological struggle begins with the negation of her identity as a wife. When Lakshmana decides to follow Rama, he effectively asks Urmila to cease existing in his consciousness so he can focus on his duty. Kane highlights this erasure through Urmila's internal realization:

"You are leaving me behind, not because I am weak, but because you are.

You cannot see my grief and still do your duty." (Kane, Sita's Sister)

This quotation points to a displacement of emotional labor. Urmila realizes that her "sacrifice" is not a choice made for her, but a burden thrust upon her to facilitate the "heroism" of the men. To survive the "emotional echo" of her husband's absence, Urmila turns inward. In Kane's retelling, Urmila becomes a scholar and a philosopher. Her room becomes a sanctuary of the mind a psychological fortress.

Kane explores the "inner world" of Ayodhya's palace, which becomes a psychological pressure cooker. Urmila's choice to remain in a state of "waking sleep" (metaphorically and literally in myth) is reinterpreted as a high-level **Defense Mechanism**.

"They celebrate the sacrifice of the brothers who went to the forest,

but what of the sisters who stayed back to keep

the lamps burning in a hollow home?" (Kane, Sita's Sister)

Urmila's emotional echo is one of **intellectual sublimation**. She turns her loneliness into a pursuit of art and philosophy, representing the psychological transition from "The Forsaken" to "The Self-Sufficient."



The Echo of Autonomy: Menaka's Choice

The psychological core of this novel lies in the tension between **objectification and selfhood**. Menaka is often viewed through the "male gaze" of Indra (the king of gods) or the ascetic gaze of Vishwamitra. Kane, however, grants her an internal monologue that reveals a woman desperate to own her own narrative. Menaka's tragedy is that she is treated as a weapon of distraction. Her psychological "echo" is the resentment of a being who possesses immense beauty but zero agency. Kane captures this frustration when Menaka reflects on her "duty" to seduce the sage Vishwamitra:

"Am I but a tool in the hands of the gods?

Is my beauty my only identity, my only power,

and yet my greatest shackle?"(Kane, Menaka's Choice)

This highlights the **identity crisis** of a woman who is valued only for her utility. Her choice to actually fall in love with her "target" is a psychological rebellion an attempt to turn a mission into a lived reality. The most poignant emotional echo in the novel is the abandonment of her daughter, Shakuntala. Traditional myths frame this as a casual act of a celestial being, but Kane reimagines it as a profound psychological wound:

"To be an Apsara is to be a mother who can never be a mother;

to have a heart that must remain as cold as the stars we inhabit."(Kane, Menaka's Choice)

In *Menaka's Choice*, Kane challenges the "Apsara" trope. Menaka's internal world is a battleground between **Instinct and Mandate**. Menaka is a "divine puppet." Her psychological arc is a quest for **Autonomy**. She suffers from a deep-seated identity crisis, wondering if her feelings for the sage Vishwamitra are her own or merely part of her "programming" by Indra.

"Is there a part of me that is not a performance?

Does the dancer ever stop dancing to

simply breathe?" (Kane, Menaka's Choice)



The abandonment of her child, Shakuntala, is the climax of her psychological trauma. Kane portrays this not as an act of coldness, but as a "Necessary Loss" in a world where an Apsara is forbidden from domesticity.

The Echo of Vengeance: Lanka's Princess

Finally, we arrive at the most complex psychological study in Kane's collection: Surpanakha (Meenakshi). In *Lanka's Princess*, the "echo" is the sound of systemic abuse and the transformation of a victim into a "monster." Kane traces Surpanakha's psychological descent from a lonely, misunderstood child to a woman scarred physically and mentally by the men in her life. Her "echo" is the rejection she faces from her own family (Ravana) and her enemies (Rama and Lakshmana).

*"They see the nose they cut, the ears they lopped off;
they never saw the heart they had already
trampled upon." (Kane, Lanka's Princess)*

Psychologically, Surpanakha's "evil" is a manifestation of Reactive Attachment Disorder and Complex PTSD. She adopts the persona of a demoness because society refused to accept her as a woman.

*"If the world insists on seeing me as a monster,
I shall give them a monster
they will never forget." (Kane, Lanka's Princess)*

Conclusion

Kavita Kane's reimagining of mythic women represents a significant shift from "history" to "her-story," moving beyond the external events of the epics to map the complex interiority of those left in the shadows. This study has demonstrated that the "emotional echoes" in *The Karna's Wife*, *Sita's Sister*, *Menaka's Choice*, and *Lanka's Princess* are not merely echoes of grief, but of profound psychological resistance.

By analyzing Uruvi's moral defiance, Urmila's intellectual stoicism, Menaka's struggle for autonomy, and Surpanakha's descent into reactive vengeance, we see a recurring theme: **the reclamation of the self through the acknowledgement of trauma**. Kane's protagonists challenge the traditional binary of the "virtuous wife" or the "evil demoness," offering instead a nuanced spectrum of human emotion.



Ultimately, these "inner worlds" suggest that while the patriarchal framework of the myth remains unchanged, the psychological agency of the women within those myths is boundless. Their voices, once muffled by centuries of tradition, now resonate as modern archetypes of resilience.

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