

**REVISITING MODERN TO ANCIENT-AN ANALYSIS ON KAVITA KANE'S THE
LANKA'S PRINCESS.**

C.Sivasankari

Ph. D Research Scholar (Part time)
PG&Research Department of English,
Government Thirumagal Mills College, Gudiyattam, Vellore (Dt)

Dr. P. Vasuki

Associate Professor & Head,
PG& Research Department of English,
Periyar Government Arts College, Cuddalore

ABSTRACT

This study examines *The Lanka's Princess* by Kavita Kane as a significant work in contemporary Indian mythological fiction that reinterprets ancient narratives through a modern lens. The novel centers on Surpanakha, a marginalised female character from the Ramayana, and reconstructs her identity beyond the traditional portrayal of a villain. By blending modern sensibilities with ancient myth, the author challenges patriarchal interpretations and gives voice to suppressed perspectives. This paper explores themes of gender, identity, power, and emotional complexity, highlighting how Kane bridges temporal divides to make mythology relevant to present-day readers. The study also analyses narrative techniques, character development, and ideological shifts that redefine classical storytelling.

KEYWORDS: Kavita Kane, Mythological Retelling, Surpanakha, Feminist Perspective, Indian Literature, Gender Identity, Narrative Reconstruction, Ramayana Reinterpretation

INTRODUCTION

Indian mythology has long been a foundation of cultural and literary expression, with epics like the Ramayana shaping moral, social, and religious thought. Traditionally, these narratives have presented characters in rigid moral binaries—heroes and villains, virtuous and immoral. However, contemporary writers have begun to revisit these stories to uncover hidden voices and alternative perspectives.

Kavita Kane's *The Lanka's Princess* represents a crucial shift in this literary trend. Instead of focusing on central heroic figures, the novel explores the life of Surpanakha, a character often dismissed as a mere antagonist. Kane humanizes her, portraying her as a woman with emotions, desires, intelligence, and agency. This reinterpretation aligns with modern feminist discourse, which seeks to question and dismantle patriarchal narratives embedded in classical texts.

By revisiting ancient mythology through a modern framework, the novel not only challenges established interpretations but also invites readers to rethink history, morality, and identity.

Traditional interpretations of the Ramayana have largely portrayed Surpanakha as a grotesque and immoral figure, reinforcing gender biases and limiting her role to that of a catalyst for conflict. Such portrayals neglect the complexity of her character and reflect patriarchal norms that suppress female agency and voice.

The problem addressed in this study is the lack of critical attention to alternative perspectives within mythological narratives, particularly those of marginalized female characters. There is a need to reassess these portrayals and examine how modern retellings, such as *The Lanka's Princess*, challenge conventional narratives and offer a more nuanced understanding of identity, gender, and power.

1. To analyse the reinterpretation of Surpanakha's character in *The Lanka's Princess*.
2. To examine the feminist perspective embedded in Kavita Kane's narrative.
3. To explore the transformation of mythological storytelling from ancient to modern contexts.
4. To evaluate the themes of identity, gender roles, and emotional complexity in the novel.
5. To understand how the novel challenges traditional Ramayana narratives.

Interpretation and Analysis

Kavita Kane's *The Lanka's Princess* serves as a powerful reimagining of mythology by shifting the narrative focus from dominant male heroes to a marginalized female voice. Surpanakha, traditionally depicted as a villainous and lustful demoness, is reconstructed as a strong, independent, and emotionally layered individual.

1. Reclaiming Identity

One of the central aspects of the novel is the reclamation of Surpanakha's identity. Kane presents her not as a caricature but as a princess of Lanka, endowed with intelligence, courage, and individuality. This transformation challenges the reductionist portrayal found in traditional texts and highlights the importance of perspective in storytelling.

2. Feminist Reinterpretation

The novel reflects a strong feminist undertone by questioning patriarchal norms that define women based on their relationships with men. Surpanakha's desires, ambitions, and choices are portrayed as natural rather than deviant. Her punishment in the epic is reinterpreted as an act of gendered violence, thereby exposing the inherent biases in classical narratives.

3. Emotional Depth and Humanization

Unlike the flat characterization in traditional mythology, Kane provides emotional depth to Surpanakha. Her experiences of love, rejection, betrayal, and resilience make her relatable to modern readers. This humanization bridges the gap between ancient myth and contemporary sensibilities.

4. Challenging Moral Binaries

The novel dismantles the rigid dichotomy of good versus evil that dominates epic literature. Characters are presented with moral ambiguity, encouraging readers to question established notions of righteousness and villainy. Surpanakha's actions are contextualized within her circumstances, making her neither purely evil nor entirely justified.

5. Narrative Technique

Kane employs a first-person narrative style that allows readers to engage directly with Surpanakha's thoughts and emotions. This narrative choice is significant as it gives agency to a character who has historically been silenced. The language is modern yet retains a mythological essence, effectively blending past and present.

6. Modern Relevance

The themes explored in the novel gender discrimination, identity struggles, and societal judgment resonate strongly with contemporary issues. By reinterpreting an ancient story, Kane makes it relevant to modern readers, encouraging critical reflection on societal norms and cultural narratives.

Findings

The analysis of *The Lanka's Princess* reveals several important insights:

1. **Reconstruction of Marginalized Identity** The novel successfully reconstructs Surpanakha's identity from a one-dimensional antagonist to a complex, intelligent, and emotionally rich

individual. This reflects a shift in narrative focus from dominant voices to suppressed perspectives.

- 2. Feminist Reinterpretation of Mythology** Kavita Kane challenges patriarchal depictions embedded in traditional epics by presenting Surpanakha as a victim of gender bias and societal judgment. The study highlights how mythology can be reinterpreted to align with contemporary feminist thought.
- 3. Humanization of Mythological Characters** The character of Surpanakha is humanized through emotional depth, making her relatable to modern readers. Her experiences of love, rejection, and resilience emphasize her individuality rather than reducing her to symbolic evil.
- 4. Challenge to Moral Absolutism** The novel questions the rigid moral binaries of “good” and “evil” present in ancient texts. It presents characters with moral ambiguity, encouraging readers to critically evaluate traditional narratives.
- 5. Relevance to Contemporary Society** Themes such as gender inequality, identity crisis, and societal norms resonate strongly with present-day issues, making the text relevant beyond its mythological setting.

Suggestions

- 1. Encouraging Alternative Perspectives in Literature** Scholars and readers should explore more reinterpretations of mythological texts to uncover hidden voices and diversify literary discourse.
- 2. Integration in Academic Curriculum** Modern retellings like *The Lanka's Princess* can be included in literature syllabi to promote critical thinking and gender-sensitive analysis among students.
- 3. Further Research on Marginal Characters** More academic studies can be conducted on other marginalized figures in Indian epics to broaden understanding of narrative bias and cultural representation.
- 4. Comparative Studies** Future research can compare different retellings of the same mythological characters to analyse variations in interpretation across authors and contexts.
- 5. Promoting Feminist Literary Criticism** Increased focus on feminist approaches will help reinterpret traditional literature in ways that are more inclusive and balanced.

Conclusion

The study of *The Lanka's Princess* demonstrates how modern literature can bridge the gap between ancient mythology and contemporary thought. Kavita Kane's reinterpretation of Surpanakha challenges deeply rooted patriarchal narratives and offers a fresh perspective on a traditionally vilified character. By giving voice to the marginalized, the novel not only redefines mythological storytelling but also encourages readers to question established moral frameworks.

Ultimately, this work highlights the evolving nature of literature, where ancient stories are continuously reshaped to reflect modern values and ideologies. The novel stands as a testament to the power of narrative reinterpretation in promoting empathy, inclusivity, and critical awareness.

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