



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Exploring The Voices Of Epic Women Characters Of Indian Mythology In Contemporary Indian Writings.

Shani R S

Ph.D. Research Scholar

Reg.No. 23213064012002

Lekshmpuram College of Arts and Science

Neyyoor-629802

Affiliated to M S University,

Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu, India.

Dr. R. Rajasekar

Research Supervisor

Assistant Professor of English

Lekshmpuram College of Arts and Science

Neyyoor-629802

Affiliated to M S University,

Tirunelveli, Tamilnadu, India.

**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the mythical Indian women characters in contemporary Indian writings. Five Contemporary Indian writings such as, *Lanka's Princess* (2016) by Kavita Kane, *The Liberation of Sita* (2016) by Volga, *The Kaunteyas* (2016) by Madhavi S Mahadevan, *Sita: Daughter of the Earth* (2011) by Saraswati Nagpal, and *The Palace of Illusions* (2008) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni were taken for study. Mythology has been essential to every civilisation globally. Indian mythology is among the oldest belief systems in the world. The selected contemporary works attempts to retells the women characters in Indian mythology. The contemporary tendency of Indian English authors to reinterpret legendary narratives through the perspectives of female protagonists offers a literary viewpoint on society. Mythologies provides a new medium for integrating contemporary concepts with traditional figures.

**Index Terms:** Mythology, Contemporary, Voices, Epic.

### INTRODUCTION

Mythology, according to the dictionary, is a collection of myths, particularly those that are part of a specific religious or cultural heritage. It can also be described as a collection of myths or ideas about a specific individual, organisation, or circumstance, particularly when they are made up or exaggerated. Mythology is a field of study that focusses on stories, discusses mythical figures from various civilisations and their cultures, goddesses and gods, and demi-gods. Legends, folklore, and traditions are comparable to and occasionally included in mythology. A large portion of a society's traditions are derived from mythology. Individual myths are stories that emphasise worldly customs and common human experiences, often with a moral message at their core. When spread, these myths have a significant impact on how a culture views the world and develops its cognitive abilities. They serve as a role model for society, and people are influenced, coerced, or compelled to adopt their values and beliefs. Therefore, whether mythology is interpreted in a progressive or regressive way, it can have a significant impact on shaping and reforming society.

Mythology is timeless. It is linked by Catherine Clement to "history that is not over." It contributes to a race, a nation, or a people's cultural identity and is strongly linked to its language, morals, and social structure. Mythology recounts tales of human life's highs and lows, triumphs and glories, as well as foolishness and

fallacies. This makes it easier for the audience to relate to the characters, prolongs their existence, and increases their appeal in terms of both production and consumption.

The epics belong to the semi-historical Ithihasa genre. Ithihasa has been defined in a variety of ways over the years, but the most widely accepted description is that it is a historical tale that contains lessons about the meaning of human existence. Our Societies are based on epics and myths, and the principles they uphold are ingrained in our thoughts and values. It creating an underlying layer that we refer to as the foundation of our culture.

Epics in turn shapes our society's perspective across many generations. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharatha*, two Sanskrit epics set in several Yugas, provide us with a wealth of information about the Classical Sanskrit era. A number of writers have recently been greatly influenced to use epic tales as inspiration for their artistic creations. It brings them widespread societal attention. The *Ramayana* was recounted from the perspective of epic women by authors including Madhavi S. Mahadevan, Volga, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kane, and Namita Gokhale. The chosen modern works make an effort to retell Indian mythology's female characters. A literary perspective on society can be found in the current trend of Indian English writers to retell legendary stories from the viewpoints of female characters.

The Telugu poet and author P. Lalita Kumari went under the pen name Volga, and she typically writes from a feminist standpoint. Her concept, which is evident in her works, is that women may achieve full freedom if they band together. She received the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 2015 for her collection of short stories, *Vimukta*. She is well-known for her books *Yashodhara: A Novel*, *Womanscape*, and *Vimukta*, which translates to *The Liberation of Sita*. The original Telugu novel, *The Liberation of Sita* (2016), was translated into English by Volga. It retold the Epic work *The Ramayana* from the character Sita's point of view. After Rama left her, it follows Sita's quest for freedom and self-emancipation through her interactions with Surpanakha, Ahalya, and Renuka as well as her dialogue with Urmila, her sister. These four women teach Sita valuable life lessons that enable her to break free from the bonds of the outside world and find her true self. This particular work will address the representations of Surpanakha, Ahalya, and Urmila in addition to Sita. The character Renuka will not be included with the *Ramayana*'s primary plot.

Madhavi S. Mahadevan, one of the most well-known authors of modern mythological fiction, Mahadevan also works as an editor and translator. Her well-known books are *The Kaunteyas* (2016), *Paltan Tales* (2006), *Hanuman's Adventures in the Nether World* (2005), and *Bride of the Forest: The Untold Story of Yayati's Daughter* (2020). *The Kaunteyas* (2016) Madhavi S. Mahadevan depicts the life of Kunti, wife of Pandu and mother of the Pandavas. The novel follows the journey of Kunti from her birth till the Kurukshetra war and analyses the situation that led to the great war of the Mahabharata through the lens of Kunti's perception. Instead of only focussing on her role as the mother of the Pandava princes, the novel explores the life of Pritha or Kunti as a person. Focusing on Kunti's successes, failures, strengths, weaknesses, loyalties, and responsibilities, it portrays Kunti as a powerful, spirited character who faced every consequence of her action, like a true hero, throughout her life.

Tears are nothing but your will turned to water...and when that happens the battle is as good as lost. (*The Kaunteyas* 56)

One of the most well-known modern Indian authors of legendary fiction is Kavita Kane, a distinguished journalist. Her books retell Indian myths from the viewpoints of the mythology's largely under-represented female characters. *Karna's Wife*, her debut novel, became a success. She is credited with changing current Indian English literature by introducing feminism to mythological fiction, an area that most required it. Her well-known works are *Ahalya's Awakening* (2019), *Sarasvati's Gift* (2021), *Menaka's Choice* (2015), *Lanka's Princess* (2016), *Karna's Wife* (2013), *Sita's Sister* (2014), and *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty* (2017). The main focus of Kavita Kane's 2016 novel *Lanka's Princess* is the story of Surpanakha, the sister of Lanka's monarch Ravana. Readers typically view this character as a cunning and malevolent Rakshasi whose nose and ears were severed by Lakshman. Some are interested in finding out how and why the princess Meenakshi turned into the notorious demon Surpanakha, or what conditions led to her suffering and ultimately led to her own brother's demise. From her birth as Meenakshi to the conclusion of *The Ramayana*, Kavita Kane examines her path, revealing an unexpected and little-known aspect of the story.

She had got what she wanted—Kuber's disgrace. Here was a man without his power and pomposity, Meenakshi flicked him a scornful gaze. (*Lanka's Princess* 23)

Indian author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is well-known. The Mahabharata is told from the perspective of the heroine, Draupadi, in her 2008 book *The Palace of Illusions*, however in this case, she is called Panchali. Panchali and her brother Dhri, who were both born out of vengeance, came out of the flames together, the author claims.

Her weakness was her inability to say no to me. Dhri was the noblest of all the people I knew. He had a sincere love of virtue but, sadly, almost no sense of humour. He was overly protective (*The Palace of Illusions* 11)

Panchali was interested in learning the politics, administration, and warfare that are normally taught to a kingdom's prince in order to become its future king, despite her father's advice that she should learn domestic and household skills because women from royal households were kept out of the court and public life. Panchali was a strong, courageous woman who wanted to change history and was ready for the difficulties that would arise while she pursued her objectives. In an unfortunate sequence of events, she ended up marrying the Pandavas after having to insult her lover Karna in the swayamvar to save her brother. Even though she was born a princess accustomed to the luxuries of the palace, she endured severe humiliation during the Game of Dice and a challenging exile with her husbands. Her bond with Krishna takes up a significant portion of the book. The author claims that the Kuru dynasty was destroyed in the great conflict at Kurukshetra as a result of Panchali's resolve to exact retribution for her humiliation. Saraswati Nagpal renowned Indian author. In her 2011 book *Sita: Daughter of the Earth*, Saraswati Nagpal takes readers on a tour of the Ramayana from Sita's point of view. The book, which is full of beautiful pictures and graphics, retells the tale with a few contemporary additions.

Sita, you are as delicate as a flower. They will crush you in moments! I argued for a while, but later went to It is not your destiny my chamber feeling helpless. What to battle rakshasas, my use was it being born a Kshatriya? daughter. The prince who will do this has already begun his quest. (*Sita: Daughter of the Earth* 14)

Saraswati Nagpal has twisted the narrative in order to highlight a powerful Sita who isn't afraid to make her own choices. Because she believed it was her primary responsibility as a queen to uphold the rule of law among the populace, Sita chooses to test her suitors in the book by posing the challenge of raising the bow. She then leaves the palace and heads into the wilderness. She calls her mother Bhudevi to accompany her when she returns and Rama demands her to swear an oath of purity in front of the public, testing her patience because she sees coldness and indifference in Rama's eyes instead of love. Although there is a strong female heroine in the book, little information has been provided regarding the other female characters. We don't hear anything about Surpanakha and Urmila. The Ahalya-related portion of the narrative has been entirely removed.

## Conclusion

Mythology and mythological literature are significantly influenced by a person's thoughts, vision, viewpoint, and personality, as well as the customs and values of the community. As mentioned earlier in this paper modern authors have tried to retell Indian mythological stories from the viewpoints of various epic women characters. One can undoubtedly observe the variations in the female characters' roles and character sketches while examining all each of the five retellings and comparing them to the original epics. This study's foundation is an examination of women authors' retellings of the Ramayana and Mahabharata from the viewpoint of female protagonists against the backdrop of feminist revisionist mythology.

## Reference

- Mahadevan, Madhavi S. *The Kaunteyas*. Tranquebar Press, 2016.
- Volga. *The Liberation of Sita*. Trans. T. Vijay Kumar and C. Vijayasree. HarperCollins Publishers, 2016.
- Kane, Kavita. *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*. Rupa Publications, 2013.
- Kane, Kavita. *Lanka's Princess*. Rupa Publications, 2016.
- Mahadevan, Madhavi S. *The Kaunteyas*. Tranquebar Press, 2016.
- Taylor, Haley. *Myth-taken Identity: Margaret Atwood and Carol Ann Duffy's Feminist Mythology*. 2017. Florida Southern College, Honors Thesis. Revisionist
- Banerjee Divakarun, Chithra Lekha. *The Palace of Illusions*. Picador, 2009.
- Nagpal, S. *Sita - Daughter of the Earth*. New Delhi: Campfire Publication, 2011.

