

# Kavita Kané's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*: Unveiling the Untold Perspective in Indian Mythology

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## **Abstract**

Kavita Kané's novel *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen* reveals an unseen perspective in Indian mythology. This article discusses the novel's capacity to challenge established power systems and offer new interpretations of traditional mythological narratives. Uruvi, the wife of Karna and a lesser-known figure from the *Mahabharata*, is the novel's focus. It explores Uruvi's oppressed position in the patriarchal culture of ancient India, shedding light on her battles with cultural expectations and the limited agency given to woman. We investigate how Uruvi's story reveals the layers of patriarchy, emphasising the voices of marginalised people and providing a counter-narrative to the predominately male-centric viewpoints. Furthermore, the article analyses Uruvi's empowerment and transformation from a silenced figure to a symbol of resilience and self-determination. Uruvi's character challenges traditional gender roles and asserts her own narrative, reclaiming her agency within a constrained social context. By unveiling the untold perspective, *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen* contributes to the reevaluation of Indian mythology. It adds to the ongoing discourse on mythological reinterpretation, highlighting the significance of diverse voices and alternative interpretations in shaping our understanding of ancient narratives.

**Keywords:** mythology, retelling, untold perspective, intertextuality, feminism, influence and analysis.

## **Introduction**

Indian mythology is a rich tapestry including fantastic stories, alluring people, and ageless lessons. To the detriment of the equally intriguing tales of their female equivalents, heroic protagonists like Arjuna, Rama, and Krishna frequently dominate the texts. One such figure is Karna's wife Uruvi, who is generally disregarded in the common interpretations of the *Mahabharata*. By examining her life in the context of ancient Indian civilization via Kavita Kané's innovative retelling, this article sheds light on previously untold perspectives about Uruvi. Northrup Frye argues that "literature is a reconstructed mythology, with its structural principles derived from those of myth."<sup>1</sup> We can better grasp the nuances of Indian mythology and the roles that women play in it by looking

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<sup>1</sup> Northrup Frye, "Myth, Fiction and Displacement," *Daedalus*, vol. 90, no. 3 (1961), p. 603.

at her life path, challenges, and the social repercussions endured as an outcast queen. Much ancient Indian literature was oral in nature, and passed down over centuries, and was commonly sung or recited during social occasions. The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* are two examples of Sanskrit literary epic. Mediaeval Indian literatures were created in the Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu languages, and literature eventually emerged in a variety of languages such as Marathi, Gujarati, Malayalam, Bengali, Hindi, and Urdu. Today, Indian literature is found in the majority of India's regional languages. Fyre argues that “myth is a conception permeating many areas of contemporary thought anthropology, psychology, comparative religion, and several others.”<sup>2</sup>

However, in the twenty-first century, the public are drawn to popular culture, such as films, and the appeal of both poetry and the epics have declined. For many, the best-known epics are the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, as they are the source of stories about the various gods and goddesses in Hindu mythology. These Hindu epics were produced to establish moral standards for followers to strive for, composed in Sanskrit and in regional languages, and depicted the power of the Hindu gods. The *Ramayana* is a wonderful account of Rama's life, following Rama from his birth in the kingdom of Ayodhya to his decisive victory over his enemy Ravana, king of Lanka.<sup>3</sup> The epic speaks eloquently about the virtues of true brotherhood and love, as well as the nature of sacrifice required to vanquish evil. The *Mahabharata* describes the battle between the Kauravas and the Pandavas, two groups of cousins. Before this struggle the god Krishna, charioteer of the Pandava Arjuna, revealed the destiny of the warrior. The *Bhagavad Gita* eventually become the most popular Hindu sacred scripture.<sup>4</sup> Certain major Hindu ideas serve as the backdrop against which the myths develop. One of these is the concept of reincarnation, often known as soul transmigration. According to Hindu mythology, each soul has many, many lives. Following the death of one's physical body, or incarnation, the soul is reborn into a new living body. Even gods can be reincarnated as humans.<sup>5</sup> Brahma, the originator of life on Earth, is one of the Trimurti, the Hindu pantheon's three great gods, with Shiva and Vishnu. Prajapati was creator in the early Vedic writings, but Brahma usurped his position in many myths concerning the formation of the universe.

Kavita Kané is an Indian novelist, well-known for her mythical literature, novels based on Indian mythology. She left her position as Assistant Editor at the *Times of India* to become a full-time author, and *Karna's Wife: The Outcast Queen* is a best-selling novel. Her novels are women-centric, about lesser-known females in mythology, and show themes and issues that contemporary women still face. *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*, is primarily set in the backdrop of the *Mahabharata*, and focused on Uruvi, who becomes the wife of Karna, a central figure in the *Mahabharata*. Kané uses a first-person narrative structure, with Uruvi as the protagonist and the narrator, and this choice allows readers to intimately connect with Uruvi's thoughts, emotions, and experiences. The narrative unfolds chronologically, following Uruvi's life from her childhood in Pukeya to her marriage to Karna and her experiences in the Kuru court. Within this structure, there

<sup>2</sup> Northrop Frye, “Myth, Fiction and Displacement,” p. 587.

<sup>3</sup> Valmiki, *The Ramayana*, trans. Makhan Lal Sen, 3 volumes (Calcutta: Oriental Publishing Company, 1927).

<sup>4</sup> Juan Mascaro (ed.), *The Bhagavad Gita* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Laurie L. Patton, *Bringing the Gods to Mind: Mantra and Ritual in Early Indian Sacrifice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

are also flashbacks and reflections that add depth to Uruvi's character and the unfolding events, as Uruvi tells readers, "I sit by the riverside, my mind drifts back to my childhood in Pukeya, where I first heard tales of the great warrior, Karna."<sup>6</sup>

Uruvi undergoes significant development in the novel. In the beginning, she is a headstrong and independent princess who defies societal norms by choosing Karna as her husband. Her transformation from a sheltered princess to a resilient woman who faces hardships with courage is a central theme. She states: "I was once a naive princess, but life with Karna has taught me the true meaning of strength and sacrifice. I've evolved into a different person, and I wouldn't change a thing."<sup>7</sup> Kané humanises Karna, a character often depicted as a tragic hero or a warrior of unyielding valor. Through Uruvi's perspective, readers witness Karna's inner struggles, vulnerabilities, and the emotional toll of his choices, and his character development challenges the traditional portrayal of him in Indian mythology. Uruvi comments that "Karna's eyes betrayed a sadness that pierced my heart. He was not just a warrior; he was a man burdened by his past and the weight of his destiny."<sup>8</sup> Fire is a recurring symbol, representing both destruction and transformation, associated also with Karna's birth in a basket floating in the river and his subsequent adoption by Kunti. Fire also symbolises the trials and tribulations faced by Uruvi and Karna throughout their lives. She reflects that "the flickering flames of the *yagna* (sacred fire) seemed to mirror the turbulence in our lives, burning away our illusions and forging us anew."<sup>9</sup> Sacrifice is a central theme, especially in Karna's life, as his personal and moral sacrifices shape the narrative. Uruvi's willingness to sacrifice her royal status for love also highlights this theme.<sup>10</sup>

Uruvi grapples with her identity as the wife of an outcast, while Karna's identity as *Suta Putra* (son of a charioteer) and his hidden heritage are central to his character. These identity crises drive much of the conflict and emotional depth in the story. "Our identities were a tangled web of expectations, birthrights, and love. But in each other's arms, we found acceptance and authenticity."<sup>11</sup> The primary sources for the story of Karna in Indian mythology are mainly found in the *Mahabharata*. While the *Mahabharata* provides the foundational narrative of Karna's life, Kané's portrayal of Karna differs from the traditional depiction in several significant ways. The *Mahabharata* is the most extensive and authoritative source for the story of Karna. It is an ancient Indian epic that narrates the Kurukshetra War and the events leading up to it, including Karna's life.<sup>12</sup> The *Mahabharata* gives the traditional, widely accepted account of Karna's birth, upbringing, relationship with Duryodhana, role in the Kurukshetra War, and eventual tragic death.

Kané's novel shifts the narrative perspective from Karna to Uruvi, his wife. This change in perspective allows readers to explore Karna's character and life from the vantage point of Uruvi, emphasising his humanity, vulnerabilities, and personal struggles. In the *Mahabharata*, Karna is

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<sup>6</sup> Kavita Kané, *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2013), p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> Kané, *Karna's Wife*, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Kané, *Karna's Wife*, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Kané, *Karna's Wife*, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> Kané, *Karna's Wife*, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Kané, *Karna's Wife*, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Srijia Sanjal, "Marginalized yet Empowered: A Study of Ekalavya and Karna from Mahabharata," *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 4 (2015).

primarily depicted as a warrior and hero. Kané's novel delves into Karna's inner struggles, particularly his feelings of being an outsider, and his longing for acceptance, which adds complexity to his character. While the *Mahabharata* focuses on Karna's military prowess and his interactions with other warriors, Kané's novel places emphasis on love and relationships in Karna's life. The love story between Karna and Uruvi is central, offering a more intimate and emotional perspective on Karna's character. In *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*, Karna's vulnerability is evident when he confides in Uruvi about his feelings of being an outsider and his desire for acceptance. This emotional depth and introspection are not in the *Mahabharata* narrative.

Uruvi is the central figure in the novel, and her journey reflects both the challenges she faces and her agency in challenging patriarchal norms. Uruvi's agency is evident from the very beginning when she defies her father, King Vahusha, who wishes to choose her husband for her. Instead of conforming to the traditional practice of arranged marriage, Uruvi chooses to marry Karna, an outcast and a warrior of lower caste. This act of defiance challenges the patriarchal norm of women having little to no say in their marriage arrangements. "An heiress to her father's legacy, his intelligence, and her mother's flaming beauty ... Though the burning fire in her eyes, the warmth of her smile, and the passion with which she articulated her thoughts were enticing, she was too spirited to be restrained, too proud to be cautious, and far too forthright to think of the consequences of her actions."<sup>13</sup> Uruvi's agency in choosing Karna marks her as a character who refuses to be controlled by male authority figures. The marriage is met with strong opposition from her family, especially her father and brother, and from society at large. She faces ridicule, isolation, and discrimination due to her choice of a husband who does not conform to the social hierarchy.

Despite these challenges, Uruvi stands by Karna and supports him unwaveringly. "Slender and petite, her loveliness was distracting, speciously masking her incisive wit."<sup>14</sup> Her commitment to her chosen partner demonstrates her agency in making her own decisions and her willingness to challenge societal norms that dictate who is an acceptable spouse. Uruvi's character displays resilience and strength throughout the narrative. She faces numerous trials and tribulations as the wife of an outcast and as someone who must navigate the complex world of the *Mahabharata* epic. Her ability to weather these challenges and maintain her dignity reflects her inner strength and determination to shape her own destiny, despite the patriarchal constraints that seek to limit her role in society. She "loved this man most people treated with such scorn."<sup>15</sup> Uruvi has emotional depth. She experiences moments of love, passion, anger, and sorrow. Her emotional complexity challenges the stereotype of women in mythology as one-dimensional characters and highlights her humanity. The first-person narrative through Uruvi's perspective allows readers to intimately understand her thoughts, feelings, and experiences. It provides insight into the internal struggles she faces as she challenges patriarchal norms and navigates her unconventional marriage.

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<sup>13</sup> Kané, *Karna's Wife*, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Kané, *Karna's Wife*, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Kané, *Karna's Wife*, p. 13.

Kané portrays Uruvi as a strong, independent woman who defies patriarchal norms. She “felt like an intruder, trespassing on the happiness of the woman in front of her.”<sup>16</sup> Her agency and resilience in the face of societal opposition and her willingness to challenge established gender roles make her a compelling character. Through her journey, the novel offers a fresh perspective on the role of women in Indian mythology. As noted, the *Mahabharata* focuses mostly on the deeds of masculine heroes like Arjuna, Bhima, and Karna. Although important to the plot, female characters like Draupadi, Kunti, and Gandhari frequently play supporting roles and are portrayed as wives or mothers. By concentrating on Uruvi's experiences and difficulties, Kané offers a new viewpoint. By highlighting the inner life and agency of a woman in the *Mahabharata's* realm, it questions the conventional male-centric narrative. Draupadi is a central character in the *Mahabharata* and has been the subject of reinterpretation in various works, such as Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*.<sup>17</sup> This novel offers a feminist perspective by exploring Draupadi's emotions and struggles, yet *Karna's Wife* stands out because it presents a minor female character in the epic, thus diversifying the range of female perspectives in Indian mythology. The *Ramayana*, another prominent Indian epic, has seen reinterpretations of its female characters, particularly Sita. Works like Volga's *The Liberation of Sita* reimagine Sita's trials and tribulations from a feminist standpoint.<sup>18</sup> The portrayal of women in traditional narratives often reflects the societal norms and values of their time. These narratives are embedded in a patriarchal context where women's roles were largely confined to familial and domestic spheres. Uruvi declares, “I am looking forward to my new life. I shall live in the home of the man I love, looking after him and his family. There will be enough strength in me to be his wife and I shall be proud of that.”<sup>19</sup>

*Karna's Wife* challenges this historical context by placing Uruvi at the forefront of a male-dominated society. Uruvi's story resonates with modern readers. Traditional retellings of the *Mahabharata* have primarily focused on the grand battles, political intrigue, and the heroic deeds of the male characters. While these aspects are essential to the epic, *Karna's Wife* takes a unique approach by offering an intimate exploration of Uruvi's life, her relationships, and her emotional journey. Through Uruvi's eyes, the novel shows the complexities of love, sacrifice, and societal expectations in a way that adds depth to the *Mahabharata* narrative. It invites readers to consider the personal and emotional aspects of the epic's characters, offering a holistic view of their lives.

### The Unseen Perspective

Within the vast and intricate landscape of Indian mythology, narratives have traditionally revolved around male protagonists and their heroic feats. Female characters, while present, have frequently played secondary roles, with their inner lives and perspectives often left unexplored. The *unseen perspective* in Kané's novel challenges this norm by placing Uruvi, a character typically overshadowed by the epic's male figures, at the center of the narrative. Uruvi's perspective unveils

<sup>16</sup> Kané, *Karna's Wife*, p. 24.

<sup>17</sup> Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, *The Palace of Illusions* (London: Vintage, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Volga, *The Liberation of Sita*, trans. T. Vijay Kumar and C. Vijayasree (New York: Harper Perennial, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Kané, *Karna's Wife*, p. 24.

the challenges, constraints, and expectations placed upon women in ancient India. It offers readers a glimpse into the complexities of navigating a patriarchal society where women's roles were largely confined to the domestic sphere. Uruvi's narrative explores the nuances of her experiences within this context. Through Uruvi's character, the novel underscores the agency and capacity of women to make choices that diverge from established norms. The *unseen perspective* delves into the emotional and personal dimensions of its characters. It moves beyond the grand battles and political machinations of the Mahabharata to explore the inner lives, desires, and vulnerabilities of its protagonists. Uruvi's narrative brings forth the complexity of human emotions, such as love, sacrifice, jealousy, and loyalty, contributing depth and richness to the story. Traditional narratives often define heroism in terms of physical prowess and battlefield valor. However, *Karna's Wife* redefines heroism by highlighting the strength and resilience of its female characters. Uruvi's unwavering support for Karna, her ability to withstand societal opposition, and her determination to stand by her choices reframe heroism as the courage of women who challenge the status quo.

### First-Person Narrative

The novel unfolds through a first-person narrative, with Uruvi serving as the central character and narrator. This narrative choice immerses readers in Uruvi's thoughts, emotions, and experiences, offering an intimate and unfiltered view of her world. Readers become closely acquainted with Uruvi's perspective, making it impossible to ignore or dismiss. Uruvi's character is complex and developed, allowing readers to witness her growth and evolution throughout the narrative. She begins as a spirited and independent young woman, and her journey unfolds as she confronts societal norms, navigates her marriage to Karna, and faces challenges of conflict and war. This character arc ensures readers connect with Uruvi and empathise with her struggles and triumphs.<sup>20</sup>

The novel explores a variety of relationships, including Uruvi's love for Karna, her friendship with Bhanumati, her interactions with other family members, and her complex emotions in the midst of a turbulent epic: ". . . being Karna's wife was now her only aspiration, the only aim that gave meaning to her life."<sup>21</sup> These intimate portrayals of relationships allow readers to witness the emotional depth and complexity of the characters, moving beyond superficial depictions. Through Uruvi's perspective, *Karna's Wife* invites readers to reconsider these established narratives and to appreciate the agency and resilience of women in a society where their voices and choices were often silenced. The novel empowers its female characters, not by depicting them as invincible warriors, but by showing their strength in the face of adversity, their determination to shape their destinies, and their support for their loved ones. Uruvi's agency in choosing Karna and her commitment to him exemplify female empowerment in a world of limited choices.

Intertextuality is a prominent and connecting theme in Kavita Kané's novels, linking her works not only with other Indian theorists, but also with the broader context of Indian literature

<sup>20</sup> P. Suba Vetha and S. Karthika, "Belonging and Alienation of the Marginalized in *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*," *JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2020), pp. 1386-1389.

<sup>21</sup> Kané, *Karna's Wife*, p. 16.

and culture. Kané's novels are characterised by her reimagining of mythological characters from Indian epics such as the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. Kané's novels often align with feminist literary theory, a field that has been explored by Indian theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak<sup>22</sup> and Uma Narayan.<sup>23</sup> Her novels bring to the forefront the experiences, struggles, and inner lives of female characters, shedding light on their agency and resilience. For instance, Kané's *Sita's Sister* explores the character of Urmila, Sita's sister, and her sacrifices during Rama's exile, when her own husband Lakshmana is exiled too.<sup>24</sup> This narrative choice aligns with the feminist perspective, emphasising the importance of giving voice to lesser-known female characters. Kané's novels draw extensively from classical Hindu texts, engaging with the rich tradition of Indian literature. This links her with theorists who analyse the interpretation and reinterpretation of classical texts. For instance, in *Lanka's Princess*, Kané tells the backstory of Surpanakha, Ravana's sister, giving a fresh perspective on her character.<sup>25</sup> This reimagining of a character from the *Ramayana* is a form of intertextuality that invites comparison with traditional interpretations.

Kané's novels also intersect with postcolonial and subaltern studies, which have been prominent areas of inquiry for Indian theorists. Her reimagining of marginalised or silenced characters contributes to the broader discourse on colonialism's impact on the interpretation of Indian myths. For instance, Kané's portrayal of Menaka, a celestial nymph, in *Menaka's Choice* challenges traditional depictions and engages with subaltern studies by giving voice to a character often seen through a narrow lens.<sup>26</sup> Kané's novels participate in contemporary literary dialogues in India. She is part of a generation of authors—like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Amish Tripathi, and Devdutt Pattanaï—who are reimagining and retelling mythological stories, creating a literary conversation. For instance, Kané's reimagining of Uruvi's perspective in *Karna's Wife* adds to the ongoing dialogue about the complexity and depth of characters from the *Mahabharata*.

### **Semiotics and Myth, Interpretation and Intertextuality**

Roland Barthes is known for his work on semiotics and the analysis of cultural texts; he argued “Myth is a system of communication, that is a message.”<sup>27</sup> While Barthes' work primarily focuses on Western literature and culture, there are certain aspects of his ideas on semiotics, interpretation, and myth that can be applied to Kané's novel, particularly in the context of reinterpreting and unveiling untold perspectives in Indian mythology. Barthes introduced the concept of semiotics, which is the study of signs and symbols and their meaning in language and culture. He also wrote extensively about the role of myth in society, emphasising that myths are not merely ancient stories but are cultural constructs that convey underlying messages and ideologies. Connection with

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<sup>22</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline: The Wellek Lectures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third-World Feminism* (London: Routledge, 1997).

<sup>24</sup> Kavita Kané, *Sita's Sister* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2014)

<sup>25</sup> Kavita Kané, *Lanka's Princess* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2016).

<sup>26</sup> Kavita Kané, *Menaka's Choice* (New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), p. 107.

Kané's Novel unveils an untold perspective within the Mahabharata, challenging conventional interpretations and highlighting the complexity of characters and relationships. Through this reinterpretation, Kané engages in a form of myth-making, reshaping and recontextualising a well-known mythological narrative to convey new meanings. Barthes' ideas on myth as a cultural construct that can be deconstructed and reinterpreted align with Kané's approach in the novel.

Barthes emphasised that texts are open to multiple interpretations "a text introduces and predicts elements of a symbolic event that is yet to unfold,"<sup>28</sup> and that readers play an active role in creating meaning from texts. He also discussed intertextuality, the idea that texts refer to and are influenced by other texts. Kavita Kané's novel is a prime example of intertextuality as it draws from and engages with the *Mahabharata*, a foundational text in Indian mythology. By reinterpreting the story of Karna and Uruvi, Kané invites readers to engage actively in the reinterpretation of a well-known narrative. Readers are encouraged to explore the untold perspectives and nuances of the characters, just as Barthes would argue that readers actively engage with and interpret texts. Barthes believed that texts often contain hidden meanings and ideologies that need to be unveiled and critically examined. He argued that myths can perpetuate certain cultural beliefs and stereotypes. Kavita Kané's work can be seen as an endeavor to unveil hidden meanings within Indian mythology. Through her exploration of Uruvi's perspective and agency, she challenges traditional gender norms and reveals the untold stories. Kané's novel encourages readers to critically examine the cultural and gender ideologies in the *Mahabharata*. While Barthes' work focused on Western literature and culture, his ideas on interpretation, semiotics, and myth can be applied to Kané's *Karna's Wife* in the context of reinterpreting and unveiling untold perspectives in Indian mythology. Kané's novel engages with the concept of myth as a cultural construct, emphasises intertextuality, and seeks to unveil hidden meanings within a well-known mythological narrative, aligning with certain aspects of Barthes' theories.

### Power and Knowledge

Michel Foucault's theories can be used to analyse *Karna's Wife*; although Foucault's writings are not specifically about Indian mythology, they can be used to the book to illuminate the forces at work in the story. Foucault's exploration of the relationship between power and knowledge is highly relevant as power dynamics are prevalent, not just in the grand scale of the *Mahabharata* but also in the personal lives of the characters.<sup>29</sup> Uruvi, as a woman in a patriarchal society, negotiates power structures and navigates her own agency. Her decisions, her love for Karna, and her interactions with other characters are shaped by these power structures. Foucault's concept of how power operates within institutions and societal norms can be applied to analyse how Uruvi and other characters exert or experience power within their contexts. Foucault's examination of discourse and how it influences the construction of truth is relevant to *Karna's Wife*. The novel, in

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<sup>28</sup> John Oddo, *Intertextuality and the 24-Hour News Cycle: A Day in the Rhetorical Life of Colin Powell's U.N. Address* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014), p. 78.

<sup>29</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).



many ways, challenges the dominant discourse of the *Mahabharata*, which portrays Karna as an unwavering hero and Duryodhana as a villain. Kané's retelling disrupts this traditional discourse by offering a different perspective on Karna and other characters. This underscores Foucault's idea that truth is not a fixed entity but is constructed within particular discourses. The novel engages in a discourse that reinterprets and reevaluates the truths within the *Mahabharata*. Foucault's concept of "subjugated knowledge" refers to knowledge that has been marginalised, suppressed, or excluded from the dominant discourse. *Karna's Wife* can be seen as an attempt to bring subjugated knowledge to the forefront; Uruvi's view, overshadowed in the traditional *Mahabharata* narratives, becomes a subjugated knowledge that the novel seeks to recover and give voice to. This aligns with Foucault's notion of challenging hegemonic knowledge structures. Foucault's exploration of biopower, the control and regulation of populations, is mirrored in the novel's exploration of societal norms and expectations that govern characters' lives. Uruvi, in her defiance of norms, challenges dictats of how women should conform to predefined roles and expectations. Her choices, particularly in her relationship with Karna, are acts of resistance against biopower.

## Conclusion

*Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* stands as a remarkable literary work that achieves something truly extraordinary within the realm of Indian mythology. Through the lens of Uruvi, a character often relegated to the sidelines in the grand epic of the *Mahabharata*, Kavita Kané unveils a hitherto untold perspective, breathing life and agency into a character whose voice had long been muted by tradition. In doing so, the novel transcends the boundaries of time, culture, and gender to offer readers a poignant and thought-provoking journey into the heart of Indian mythology. One of the most compelling aspects of the novel is its unapologetic feminist narrative. Kané's portrayal of Uruvi as a strong-willed, intelligent, and independent woman challenges the age-old patriarchal norms that have pervaded Indian society for centuries. Through Uruvi's eyes, readers are confronted with the stark realities faced by women in a male-dominated world, making the novel a powerful catalyst for dialogue on gender roles and the importance of women's agency.

Moreover, *Karna's Wife* beautifully illustrates the transformative power of literature. It demonstrates how a skilled author can breathe fresh life into ancient tales, offering readers a chance to rediscover and reinterpret the stories that have shaped their cultural heritage. Kané's intertextual approach, her engagement with the *Mahabharata*, and her profound understanding of its characters allow her to deconstruct the traditional narratives, revealing the multi-faceted humanity that lies beneath. The symbolic elements and narrative structure employed by Kané enrich the reading experience, offering layers of depth and complexity to the story. Symbols such as the lotus serve as potent metaphors for resilience and strength, while the narrative structure, with its shifting timelines and perspectives, mirrors the intricacies of the *Mahabharata* itself. In the end, *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* is not just a retelling of a mythological story; it is a powerful testament to the enduring relevance and adaptability of ancient narratives. It reminds us that the untold perspectives within our cultural myths are waiting to be unveiled, and it encourages us to question

established norms and narratives. As we close the pages of this exceptional novel, we are left with a profound sense of admiration for Kavita Kané's literary prowess and a deeper appreciation for the untapped treasures within Indian mythology. *Karna's Wife* invites us to embrace the untold stories, to challenge ingrained norms, and to celebrate the resilience and agency of characters like Uruvi who have, for too long, remained in the shadows. It is a literary journey that empowers us to see beyond the confines of tradition and discover the untold perspectives that lie within the rich tapestry of our cultural heritage.