

From Subaltern Histories to Feminist Mythmaking: Women's Voice, Agency, and Resistance in Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a comparative feminist analysis of the representation of women's voice, agency, and resistance in the writings of Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane, two writers who work in markedly different narrative terrains yet share a common commitment to recovering silenced female subjectivities. While Mahasweta Devi writes from the ground of subaltern history, documenting the lived realities of tribal, Dalit, and marginalized women subjected to caste, class, and state violence, Kavita Kane engages in feminist mythmaking by reinterpreting women from Indian epics who have traditionally been reduced to symbolic or moral functions. The paper argues that both writers challenge patriarchal structures, but they do so through distinct narrative strategies shaped by their respective engagements with history and myth.

Drawing on subaltern studies, feminist historiography, and feminist myth criticism, the study examines how women's voices emerge under different conditions of silencing. In Mahasweta Devi's fiction, female agency often arises through bodily endurance, refusal, and confrontation, where resistance is forged in moments of extreme oppression and historical neglect. Her narratives expose how official histories erase the suffering and defiance of marginalized women, compelling them to speak through silence, damaged bodies, and radical acts of non-compliance. In contrast, Kavita Kane's novels reclaim mythological women by restoring interiority, ethical reflection, and conscious choice. Her feminist retellings resist patriarchal mythic traditions not through overt rebellion, but through re-inscription, where women assert autonomy by reinterpreting their roles, desires, and moral authority within familiar epic frameworks.

The comparative framework of this paper highlights how history and myth function as two complementary feminist strategies. Where subaltern history demands recognition through disruption and confrontation, feminist mythmaking enables resistance through reinterpretation and narrative revision. By placing Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane in dialogue, the paper demonstrates that feminist recovery is not a singular method but a spectrum of narrative interventions shaped by context, genre, and audience. Ultimately, the study contributes to contemporary feminist literary criticism by showing how Indian women's writing negotiates the politics of voice and agency across the domains of lived history and cultural memory.

Keywords: Subaltern studies; feminist mythmaking; women's voice; agency and resistance; Mahasweta Devi; Kavita Kane; feminist historiography; myth revision; Indian women's writing

1. Introduction

The question of women's voice has remained central to feminist literary criticism, particularly in contexts where history and culture have systematically silenced female experience. In Indian literature, this silencing operates through multiple layers of exclusion, ranging from caste and class hierarchies to patriarchal mythic traditions that privilege male heroism and authority. Women appear frequently in literary texts, yet their presence is often symbolic, mediated, or contained within narratives that deny them agency, interiority, or ethical autonomy. Recovering women's voices therefore requires more than simply adding female characters to existing frameworks. It demands a rethinking of how stories are told, whose experiences are recognized as meaningful, and what forms of resistance literature is capable of imagining.

Within this context, the writings of **Mahasweta Devi** and **Kavita Kane** offer two distinct yet intellectually connected approaches to feminist recovery. Although they operate in different genres and historical registers, both writers are engaged in challenging patriarchal modes of representation and in restoring agency to women who have been marginalized by dominant narratives. Mahasweta Devi writes from the terrain of lived social reality, focusing on tribal, Dalit, and economically oppressed women whose lives are shaped by violence, dispossession, and institutional neglect. Kavita Kane, by contrast, works within the domain of myth and cultural memory, revisiting epic narratives to foreground women who have traditionally been sidelined, misrepresented, or reduced to moral symbols.

The apparent distance between subaltern history and mythological retelling has often prevented these two writers from being read together. Mahasweta Devi is frequently approached through the lenses of social realism, activism, and subaltern studies, while Kavita Kane is commonly situated within popular mythological fiction or feminist reinterpretation of epics. Yet such separation overlooks a crucial commonality. Both writers are deeply invested in the politics of voice. Both interrogate how women are spoken for, spoken about, or rendered silent, and both attempt to create narrative spaces where female subjectivity can emerge on its own terms. Reading them comparatively allows for a richer understanding of feminist literary strategies across genres that are rarely placed in dialogue.

Mahasweta Devi's work arises from a sustained engagement with communities excluded from official history. Her fiction repeatedly exposes how tribal and Dalit women are erased not only from historical records but also from moral consideration. These women occupy positions where silence is imposed through force, poverty, and fear. In such contexts, voice does not emerge as articulate self-expression in the conventional sense. Instead, it appears through endurance, refusal, and bodily resistance. Acts of defiance in her narratives often disrupt the very language of power, revealing the limits of legal, political, and cultural systems that claim authority over marginalized lives. Mahasweta Devi's women do not seek empowerment in abstract terms. Their agency is forged in situations where survival itself becomes a form of resistance.

Kavita Kane approaches silencing from a different direction. The women she rewrites are not absent from cultural memory; they are omnipresent yet unheard. Epic traditions have preserved their names and stories, but often without granting them interior depth or moral complexity. These women exist as ideals, temptresses, devotees, or cautionary figures, framed largely in relation to male protagonists. Kane's project is not to dismantle myth but to inhabit it differently. By retelling familiar narratives from female perspectives, she restores thought, doubt, desire, and choice to characters long denied these dimensions. Her feminist mythmaking challenges the authority of canonical interpretations while remaining within the cultural structures that give myth its enduring power.

Placing Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane together makes it possible to examine how women's agency is shaped by narrative context. In subaltern histories, resistance is often immediate, risky, and bodily, arising under conditions of extreme constraint. In mythological retellings, resistance tends to be reflective, ethical, and interpretive, emerging through the redefinition of duty, love, and selfhood. These differences do not signal opposing feminist positions but rather demonstrate the adaptability of feminist thought to different narrative terrains. History and myth function here as complementary rather than competing modes of feminist intervention.

This comparative study is grounded in the belief that feminist literary criticism must attend not only to what is said but also to how voice becomes possible in the first place. Subaltern women and mythological women face different forms of silencing, yet both are shaped by patriarchal structures that limit speech, autonomy, and recognition. By examining how Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane negotiate these limits, the paper seeks to broaden current understandings of feminist resistance in Indian writing. It argues that women's agency cannot be reduced to a single model of empowerment. Instead, it must be understood as a spectrum of narrative responses shaped by history, genre, and cultural memory. This paper therefore explores how women's voice, agency, and resistance are articulated across subaltern histories and feminist mythmaking. Through a comparative reading of selected works by Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane, it demonstrates that feminist recovery operates through multiple narrative strategies. Whether through confrontation with material violence or through reinterpretation of inherited myths, both writers insist on the ethical necessity of listening to women who have long been spoken over or spoken for. Their work collectively underscores the enduring power of literature to challenge silence and to reimagine the conditions under which women can speak.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This study adopts an interdisciplinary feminist framework that brings together subaltern studies, feminist historiography, and feminist myth criticism to examine how women's voice, agency, and resistance are articulated in the writings of **Mahasweta Devi** and **Kavita Kane**. The purpose of combining these approaches is not to flatten the differences between history and myth but to understand how each domain produces distinct conditions of silencing and, consequently, distinct forms of feminist intervention. The framework recognizes that voice is not a neutral or universal category. It is shaped by power relations, narrative form, and cultural memory. Methodologically, the paper follows a comparative textual analysis that keeps both writers in sustained dialogue rather than treating them as separate case studies.

Subaltern studies provide the first conceptual anchor for this analysis. Emerging from a critique of elitist historiography, subaltern theory emphasizes the systematic exclusion of marginalized groups from official historical narratives. Central to this framework is the question of representation and the problem of speech. Subaltern women, in particular, occupy a position where gender, caste, class, and ethnicity intersect to produce layers of silence. Within this theoretical lens, voice does not simply refer to articulation through language. It includes gestures, refusals, bodily endurance, and moments of disruption that challenge dominant systems of meaning. This understanding is crucial for reading Mahasweta Devi's fiction, where women often resist not by narrating their suffering in conventional terms but by exposing the violence of structures that deny them legibility. Subaltern studies thus allow the paper to interpret silence and bodily resistance as meaningful political acts rather than as narrative absence.

Feminist historiography further strengthens this framework by interrogating the gendered nature of historical knowledge. Traditional historiography has largely privileged public events, male actors, and institutional power, marginalizing women's experiences as private, incidental, or irrelevant. Feminist historians argue that history is not merely a record of facts but a narrative shaped by selective memory and exclusion. From this perspective, Mahasweta Devi's work can be read as a form of counter-history. Her fiction reconstructs historical reality from below, foregrounding women whose lives are shaped by dispossession, labor exploitation, and sexual violence. Feminist historiography enables the study to treat these narratives not as sociological case studies but as deliberate interventions into how history itself is imagined and recorded. It emphasizes that writing women into history is not an additive process but a transformative one that challenges the epistemological foundations of historical knowledge.

While subaltern studies and feminist historiography are essential for understanding Devi's work, they are insufficient on their own to address Kavita Kane's engagement with myth. Feminist myth criticism provides the necessary theoretical bridge. Myth, within this framework, is understood not as a fixed or sacred narrative but as a living cultural system that shapes social values, gender roles, and ethical norms. Feminist critics have shown that mythological narratives often encode patriarchal assumptions by privileging male heroism and reducing women to archetypes. Feminist mythmaking seeks to reclaim these narratives by re-centering women's perspectives and restoring interiority to figures long treated as symbols. Kane's novels exemplify this process. By retelling epic stories from female viewpoints, she exposes the gendered politics of mythic storytelling and reconfigures women as ethical subjects capable of choice and self-definition.

The comparative framework of this paper rests on the idea that history and myth represent two different but interconnected narrative economies. In subaltern history, silence is enforced through material conditions such as poverty, violence, and institutional neglect. In myth, silence operates through symbolic containment, where women are present but denied narrative authority. This distinction shapes the forms of resistance available to women in each context. The theoretical framework therefore avoids measuring both writers against a single model of feminist agency. Instead, it recognizes agency as context-dependent and narratively mediated. This allows for a more nuanced comparison that respects genre-specific constraints while identifying shared feminist concerns.

Methodologically, the study employs close textual analysis of selected works by both writers. For Mahasweta Devi, the analysis focuses on narratives where women confront extreme forms of marginalization and violence, paying attention to moments where silence, refusal, and bodily presence function as acts of resistance. For Kavita Kane, the analysis examines how narrative voice, interior monologue, and ethical reflection are used to reclaim agency within mythological frameworks. The comparison is not structured as a sequential reading of one author followed by the other. Instead, it proceeds thematically, bringing the texts into conversation around key concepts such as voice, resistance, and narrative authority.

The study also adopts a qualitative interpretive methodology rather than a quantitative or thematic survey approach. This allows for sustained engagement with narrative strategies, symbolism, and character construction. Secondary sources from feminist criticism and subaltern theory are used to contextualize the readings, but the primary emphasis remains on the literary texts themselves. Care is taken to avoid imposing contemporary feminist categories anachronistically. Instead, the analysis attends to how each writer negotiates patriarchy within her specific historical, cultural, and literary context.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives and methodological choices, the paper aims to demonstrate that feminist resistance in Indian women's writing cannot be understood through a single narrative model. Subaltern history and feminist mythmaking represent different yet complementary strategies for recovering women's voices. The theoretical framework outlined here provides the conceptual clarity necessary to read Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane together, not as opposites, but as writers engaged in parallel struggles against silencing across distinct narrative worlds.

Women's Voice and Subaltern Resistance in Mahasweta Devi

The writing of Mahasweta Devi emerges from a sustained engagement with communities that exist at the margins of Indian society and outside the protection of official history. Her fiction repeatedly returns to the lives of tribal, Dalit, and economically dispossessed women whose experiences are shaped by systemic violence, displacement, and erasure. In these narratives, women's voices do not appear as polished self-expression or rhetorical assertion. Instead, voice is forged under conditions of silence, coercion, and bodily vulnerability. Mahasweta Devi's distinctive contribution to feminist writing lies in her insistence that resistance can exist even where speech is denied, and that agency may take forms that challenge conventional definitions of empowerment.

A central feature of Mahasweta Devi's portrayal of women is her refusal to sentimentalize suffering. The women in her stories are not idealized victims, nor are they transformed into heroic figures who overcome oppression through moral triumph alone. They inhabit spaces where law, morality, and social protection fail to operate. Within such contexts, the possibility of voice is deeply constrained. Devi's narratives therefore redefine voice as an act that does not always rely on articulation. Silence, endurance, and refusal become meaningful forms of expression, exposing the limits of dominant systems that claim to speak on behalf of the oppressed.

This redefinition is particularly evident in her representation of subaltern women who confront state power and institutional violence. These women are often positioned at the intersection of caste, gender, and class, making them especially vulnerable to exploitation. Their marginality is not incidental but structural. They are excluded from legal recourse, economic security, and historical recognition. In such circumstances, Devi portrays resistance as emerging not through organized rebellion or ideological clarity, but through moments that rupture the logic of domination. Acts that appear irrational or defiant within the framework of authority become, in Devi's fiction, assertions of dignity that refuse assimilation into narratives of victimhood.

The body plays a crucial role in this process. For Mahasweta Devi, the female body is not merely a site of suffering but also a medium through which power is contested. Sexual violence, labor exploitation, and physical degradation are shown as tools through which dominant forces attempt to discipline and silence women. Yet the same body becomes a space of resistance when it refuses compliance. By foregrounding bodily presence, Devi challenges the abstraction of subaltern lives into statistics or sociological categories. Her women insist on being seen, even when visibility is dangerous. This insistence disrupts the authority of those who rely on invisibility and silence to maintain control.

Mahasweta Devi's engagement with subaltern resistance is also shaped by her understanding of history as an exclusionary process. Official histories often record revolutions, leaders, and policies, while ignoring the everyday struggles of marginalized women. Devi's fiction functions as a counter-historical intervention. By centering women whose lives are marked by dispossession, she exposes how history itself participates in silencing. Her narratives do not merely fill gaps in historical record; they challenge

the criteria by which historical significance is assigned. Women who are absent from archives become central figures in her storytelling, not because they represent collective ideals, but because their lived experiences reveal the violence underlying social order.

Another important aspect of Devi's portrayal of women's voice is her rejection of redemptive closure. Her stories rarely offer resolution in the form of justice, reconciliation, or social reform. This narrative choice reflects her skepticism toward institutional promises that consistently fail marginalized communities. Resistance, in her work, does not guarantee transformation. Instead, it exposes injustice and affirms subjectivity in spaces where transformation may be impossible. By refusing closure, Devi resists the temptation to convert suffering into moral lessons that comfort readers. Her women do not exist to inspire sympathy alone; they confront readers with uncomfortable truths about power and complicity.

Language itself becomes a contested terrain in Mahasweta Devi's fiction. The dominant language of law, governance, and morality often appears inadequate or hostile to subaltern women. Devi's narratives therefore disrupt linear storytelling and conventional narrative authority. She frequently employs stark descriptions, abrupt shifts, and narrative gaps that mirror the fractured realities of her characters. These stylistic choices reinforce the idea that subaltern voice cannot be smoothly integrated into dominant discourse. Instead, it unsettles narrative expectations and demands new modes of reading.

Importantly, Mahasweta Devi does not position herself as a spokesperson who fully mediates subaltern experience. Her writing reflects an awareness of the ethical risks involved in representation. While she gives narrative space to marginalized women, she also highlights the limits of her own position as an intellectual and writer. This tension prevents her work from becoming appropriative. Rather than claiming to recover a pure or authentic subaltern voice, Devi emphasizes the difficulty of speaking within oppressive structures. Voice, in her fiction, is always partial, fragile, and contested.

Through these narrative strategies, Mahasweta Devi articulates a form of feminist resistance that is grounded in material reality rather than abstract ideology. Her women resist not because resistance promises liberation, but because silence would mean annihilation. Agency, in this context, is not a stable possession but a momentary assertion of selfhood against overwhelming forces. By redefining voice and resistance in this way, Devi expands feminist literary discourse to include forms of agency that emerge from desperation, refusal, and survival.

In examining women's voice in Mahasweta Devi's work, it becomes clear that subaltern resistance cannot be measured by visibility or success alone. It must be understood in relation to the conditions that deny women the right to speak in the first place. Devi's fiction insists that even within extreme marginalization, women assert presence in ways that challenge dominant narratives. Their voices may not conform to conventional modes of expression, but they carry an ethical force that exposes the violence of silence itself.

Feminist Mythmaking and Reclaimed Agency in Kavita Kane

The feminist project undertaken by **Kavita Kane** operates within a narrative domain markedly different from that of subaltern history, yet it confronts an equally powerful structure of silencing. Mythological women are not erased from cultural memory; rather, they are overdetermined by it. Their stories are preserved, retold, and revered, but often in forms that deny them interiority, ethical autonomy, and narrative authority. Kane's fiction intervenes in this tradition by reclaiming myth as a site of feminist reinterpretation, where women long confined to symbolic or moral roles are reimaged as thinking,

choosing subjects. Her work demonstrates that silence in myth does not arise from absence but from containment, and that resistance within this framework requires re-vision rather than rupture.

A defining feature of Kane's feminist mythmaking is her emphasis on interior voice. Epic narratives have historically privileged action over reflection, foregrounding male heroism while reducing women to functions that support or test that heroism. Kane reverses this emphasis by granting her female protagonists sustained psychological depth. Thought, doubt, desire, and ethical struggle become central narrative elements. Through interior monologue and reflective narration, Kane restores complexity to women who were previously understood through the perspectives of male characters or through prescriptive moral codes. This narrative strategy does not merely add emotion to myth; it fundamentally alters the structure of authority by shifting the locus of meaning from external action to internal deliberation.

Agency in Kane's fiction is closely tied to choice. Unlike subaltern women whose options are constrained by material deprivation and violence, mythological women often appear bound by destiny, divine will, or social duty. Kane interrogates these constraints by reframing destiny as a narrative imposed rather than an inevitable truth. Her protagonists engage critically with the roles assigned to them, questioning whether obedience and sacrifice are virtues freely chosen or expectations enforced through tradition. In doing so, Kane transforms agency from heroic defiance into ethical self-definition. Resistance is enacted not through confrontation with power but through reinterpretation of values that legitimize power.

This form of resistance is particularly significant because it unfolds within the cultural authority of myth itself. Kane does not reject mythological tradition outright. Instead, she works from within it, using familiarity as a strategic advantage. Readers enter her narratives with preconceived understandings shaped by epic retellings, only to encounter alternative perspectives that destabilize those understandings. This method allows Kane to challenge patriarchal interpretations without alienating the cultural framework that gives myth its influence. Feminist resistance here is dialogic rather than oppositional. It speaks back to tradition instead of standing outside it.

Another important aspect of Kane's feminist mythmaking is her reconfiguration of morality. Traditional myths often present women as moral exemplars or transgressors, rewarding obedience and punishing deviation. Kane complicates this binary by portraying moral choice as context-dependent and emotionally fraught. Her women are neither idealized nor condemned. They are shown grappling with conflicting duties, personal desires, and ethical consequences. This approach dismantles the notion that virtue is synonymous with silence or sacrifice. By portraying moral reasoning as an active, internal process, Kane asserts women's capacity for ethical agency independent of patriarchal validation.

Kane's narrative voice also resists the spectacle of suffering that frequently accompanies representations of women in myth. While pain and loss are present, they are not sensationalized or used solely to advance male-centered narratives. Instead, suffering becomes a site of reflection that prompts self-awareness and transformation. This contrasts with mythic traditions where women's pain often serves as a catalyst for male action or divine intervention. Kane reclaims suffering as a subjective experience that belongs to the woman herself, thereby restoring ownership over emotional and moral consequence.

Language and storytelling play a crucial role in this reclamation. Kane's prose is accessible yet reflective, balancing narrative momentum with introspection. This stylistic choice reinforces her feminist aims by inviting readers into the consciousness of her protagonists rather than positioning them as distant symbols. The act of retelling itself becomes an assertion of agency. By choosing to narrate

from women's perspectives, Kane challenges the authority of canonical versions and demonstrates that myth is not immutable. It is a living narrative form shaped by those who tell it.

Importantly, Kane's feminist mythmaking does not seek to replace one authoritative narrative with another. Her retellings acknowledge plurality and ambiguity. Different women respond differently to similar constraints, and there is no single model of empowerment presented as universally valid. This openness resists the homogenization of feminist experience and aligns her work with contemporary feminist thought that values diversity of response over prescriptive ideals. Agency, in Kane's fiction, is not defined by rebellion alone but by the capacity to reflect, choose, and assert meaning within inherited structures.

Through these strategies, Kavita Kane reclaims myth as a space where women can speak without being reduced to archetypes. Her work demonstrates that feminist resistance does not always require dismantling cultural traditions. It can also emerge through reinterpretation that exposes the gendered assumptions underlying those traditions. By restoring voice, interiority, and ethical autonomy to mythological women, Kane expands the possibilities of feminist writing in Indian literature. Her fiction shows that myth, when reimagined, can become a powerful medium for articulating women's agency and challenging the narratives that have long confined it.

Comparative Analysis: History and Myth as Feminist Strategies

Reading Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane together reveals that feminist resistance in literature does not operate through a single narrative model. Instead, it adapts to the forms of silencing imposed by different cultural structures. History and myth, as narrative domains, generate distinct conditions under which women's voices are suppressed, and consequently, they demand different strategies of recovery. Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane respond to these conditions through contrasting yet complementary feminist interventions that illuminate the breadth of women's agency in Indian writing.

In subaltern history, as represented in Mahasweta Devi's work, silence is enforced through material deprivation, caste hierarchy, and institutional violence. Women's lives unfold in spaces where legal protection is absent and recognition is denied. Within such contexts, resistance cannot rely on sustained articulation or public legitimacy. Voice emerges instead through acts that interrupt the functioning of power. These acts often take the form of refusal, bodily presence, or non-compliance, gestures that defy assimilation into dominant narratives. Mahasweta Devi's feminist strategy is therefore confrontational in nature, even when it does not resemble organized rebellion. It exposes the violence underlying social order by forcing visibility upon those who would prefer invisibility.

Myth, by contrast, produces silence not through erasure but through containment. Women in epic narratives are remembered, named, and celebrated, yet their subjectivity is constrained by rigid moral frameworks and symbolic roles. In Kavita Kane's fiction, feminist resistance does not arise from confrontation with overt violence but from the reinterpretation of inherited meanings. Her strategy is reflective and dialogic rather than disruptive. By reclaiming interiority and ethical reasoning for mythological women, Kane challenges the authority of patriarchal tradition without rejecting the cultural power of myth itself. This distinction highlights how the form of oppression shapes the form of resistance.

One of the most significant contrasts between these feminist strategies lies in their treatment of the body. In Mahasweta Devi's work, the female body is central to both oppression and resistance. It is through the body that power is exercised and contested. Violence against the body becomes a language through

which the state and society attempt to discipline subaltern women. Resistance, in turn, emerges when the body refuses to perform its assigned role. The body speaks where language fails. In Kane's narratives, the body is less a site of public violation and more a space of personal experience. Resistance is located in consciousness rather than corporeality. The body matters, but it does not function as the primary medium of protest. This difference underscores how material conditions determine the possibilities of feminist expression.

The nature of agency also diverges across history and myth. Mahasweta Devi presents agency as fragile, momentary, and often costly. Her women do not gain power in lasting or institutional terms. Instead, agency appears as a refusal to accept imposed meanings, even when such refusal leads to further marginalization. This form of agency challenges liberal notions of empowerment that equate resistance with success or transformation. It insists that dignity can exist independently of outcome. In Kane's fiction, agency is more sustained and reflective. Her protagonists engage in ethical self-definition, negotiating constraints through choice and reinterpretation. Agency here is not measured by visible defiance but by the capacity to think, decide, and assert meaning within tradition.

Narrative voice further distinguishes these feminist strategies. Mahasweta Devi's storytelling often resists narrative smoothness. Abrupt shifts, silences, and unresolved endings mirror the fractured realities of subaltern lives. The narrative itself becomes a site of resistance, refusing closure or moral consolation. Kane's narratives, while challenging in content, are more structurally coherent. This coherence is not a retreat from critique but a strategic use of accessibility. By working within familiar narrative forms, Kane reaches readers who might otherwise resist feminist reinterpretation. Her resistance operates through persuasion rather than shock, re-educating cultural memory from within.

Despite these differences, important points of convergence emerge. Both writers reject the reduction of women to passive victims or moral symbols. Both insist on women's capacity for self-definition, even under severe constraint. Most importantly, both challenge the authority of dominant narratives, whether historical or mythological, that claim to speak for women. Their work exposes the politics of storytelling itself, revealing how voice is distributed, controlled, and denied.

History and myth, in this comparative framework, appear not as oppositional categories but as complementary feminist terrains. Subaltern history demands strategies that expose violence and force recognition. Feminist mythmaking requires strategies that reinterpret and reframe meaning. Together, these approaches broaden feminist literary practice by demonstrating that resistance can take multiple forms depending on context. Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane show that women's voices do not emerge through a single pathway. They are shaped by the narrative structures that attempt to contain them.

By placing these writers in dialogue, this comparative analysis challenges the tendency to compartmentalize feminist writing by genre or mode. It argues instead for a relational understanding of feminist strategies that recognizes diversity without hierarchy. History and myth, when read together, reveal the adaptability and resilience of women's agency. Through confrontation and reinterpretation, through body and consciousness, both Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane affirm literature's capacity to resist silence and to reimagine the conditions under which women can speak.

Conclusion

This comparative study has examined how women's voice, agency, and resistance are articulated through two distinct yet interconnected feminist strategies in the works of Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane. By placing subaltern history and feminist mythmaking in dialogue, the paper has sought to move beyond genre-based divisions and to foreground the narrative conditions under which women are silenced and subsequently recovered. The analysis demonstrates that feminist resistance in Indian women's writing cannot be reduced to a single model of empowerment. Instead, it must be understood as a spectrum of responses shaped by material reality, cultural memory, and narrative form.

Mahasweta Devi's fiction reveals how women's voices emerge under conditions of extreme marginalization where history itself becomes a mechanism of exclusion. Her subaltern women confront caste oppression, economic dispossession, and state violence in contexts that deny them legal and moral recognition. Within such spaces, agency appears not as sustained empowerment but as momentary assertion, often expressed through silence, refusal, or bodily presence. Devi's narratives insist that resistance need not be articulate or successful to be meaningful. By exposing the violence that sustains social order, her work challenges dominant assumptions about voice, agency, and historical significance. It affirms that even in the absence of institutional change, the assertion of dignity constitutes a radical act.

Kavita Kane's feminist project operates within a contrasting narrative terrain, one shaped by mythological continuity rather than historical erasure. Her work addresses a different form of silencing, where women are remembered yet denied interiority and ethical authority. By reclaiming myth as a living cultural form, Kane restores voice to women long confined to symbolic roles. Her feminist mythmaking reframes agency as reflective choice, moral reasoning, and self-definition within inherited structures. Resistance here does not manifest as confrontation with power but as reinterpretation of values that legitimize patriarchal authority. Kane's fiction demonstrates that tradition itself can become a site of feminist intervention when its narratives are retold from within.

The comparative framework developed in this study highlights that history and myth function as complementary feminist strategies rather than opposing modes. Subaltern history demands exposure of violence and forces recognition through disruption. Feminist mythmaking reshapes cultural memory by challenging interpretive authority. Together, these approaches broaden the scope of feminist literary criticism by acknowledging that women's agency is context-dependent and narratively mediated. Neither bodily defiance nor ethical reflection alone can account for the diversity of feminist resistance. Each emerges in response to specific forms of silencing and constraint.

This study also underscores the importance of reading women writers across perceived boundaries of realism and myth. Such comparative engagement reveals shared feminist concerns that are often obscured by disciplinary compartmentalization. Both Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane interrogate the politics of storytelling, exposing how narratives shape who is heard and who is rendered silent. Their work collectively insists that women's voices must be understood not only in terms of what is spoken, but also in terms of how speech becomes possible under conditions of exclusion.

In conclusion, this paper argues that feminist recovery in Indian literature operates through multiple narrative pathways. Whether through the confrontation of subaltern history or the reinterpretation of mythic tradition, both writers affirm literature's ethical responsibility to challenge silence and to imagine alternative forms of agency. By bringing Mahasweta Devi and Kavita Kane into comparative focus, the

study contributes to a more inclusive understanding of feminist strategies and reinforces the need to attend to diversity, context, and narrative form in the ongoing effort to recover women's voices.

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