

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i4.1188>

Reimagining Mythology Through “Feminist Lenses”: A Critical Analysis of Utkarsh Patel's Narrative Techniques

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Abstract

While mythology is a set of folk tales steeped in man-made perceptions that have always identified it as male-dominated throughout time, ancient mythologies did stand upon patriarchal frameworks and celebrated masculinity by relegating their female leads to passivism, submission, or plain victimhood. The reason is that old stories have constructed the genre as a completely male-occupied world in the realm of mythology; their more modern remakes began upending convention and a story, at long last, going beyond its archetypal vision of men only as perpetrators or saviours. Instead, they represent critical viewpoints that re-evaluate the villainous or peripheral female character. This paper examines how postmodern reinterpretations of mythological texts dismantle the ideological limitations of classic patriarchal narratives by examining the alternative discourses that reclaim and celebrate female agency. Among all such reinterpretations, Utkarsh Patel's works dismantle patriarchal ideologies and focus on the reimagining of female figures relegated to the background of history. A possible example of this is the novels *Shakuntala: The Woman Wronged* (2015) and *Satyavati* (2019) by Patel, which may be said to offer a feminist reappraisal of mythological heroines. Patel repositions *Shakuntala* and *Satyavati* as subjects with agency and power, thereby critiquing the gender prejudices underpinning such myths and appealing for a more inclusive and balanced narration framework. The paper critically analyses the narrative strategies Patel adopted to understand how his remade stories do not merely resist the restrictive boundaries of patriarchal mythology but create space for feminist discourses that dream of a more equitable and egalitarian society.

Keywords: Feminist Revisionism, Patriarchy, Retellings, Mythology, Postmodern Narratives.

Introduction

Myths remain a powerhouse of cultural and spiritual wisdom, especially within Indian traditions, which are far-famed for their detailed narrations, complex story plotting, and myriad characters. However, over time, these stories have been shaped and reshaped through the lens of patriarchal narrations, minimizing or deleting the agency of women in them. In that space of deletion, Utkarsh Patel's work starts to make a difference as he revisits the ancient stories from a feminist point of view. Patel reclaims the stories of women from epics like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*—narratives conventionally couched in patriarchal frames—and reinvents them as strong, resilient, and individualistic (Patel, 2015). Patel's works are not simple retellings but acts of cultural revision—an attempt to return collective mythology to its due place, one more in tune with contemporary feminist values and ideals. This is well illustrated in Patel's first novel, *Shakuntala: The Woman Wronged*. In his rendering, *Shakuntala* is no longer the helpless victim of destiny but a brave and confident woman who revels in the Gandharva love form in all its joys and misfortunes without losing her identity or bowing to patriarchy. Patel's narration

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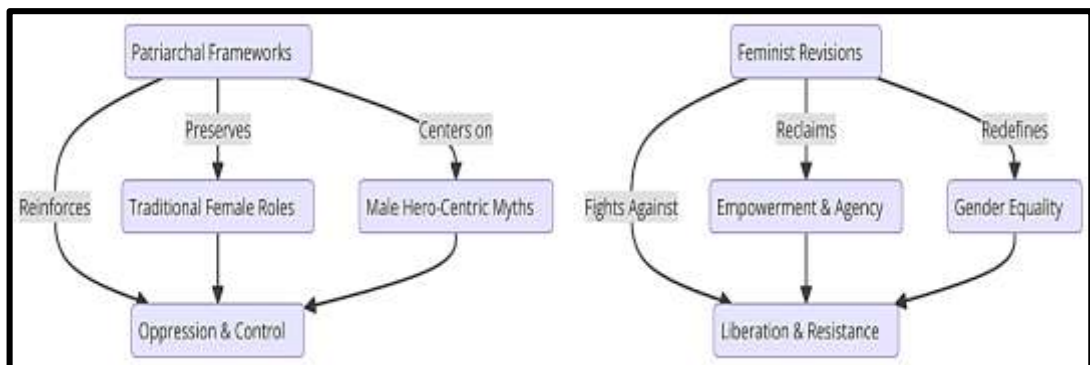
converts Shakuntala into a symbol of independence and freedom, giving a narrative of a character that fights the stereotypical view of a woman yet connects to the roots of feminism today (Cavallaro, 2004).

Other than the traditional narration of Shakuntala as the archetype of womanly perfection, Patel's narration turns her into a character challenging the archetype of a meek woman. Similarly, Satyawati, one of the most important characters of the Mahabharata—often ignored—Patel narrates with new depth (Patel, 2019). Satyawati is no longer confined to the roles of Hastinapura's regent queen or the mother of Vedavyasa; instead, she emerges as a dynamic and multidimensional figure who grapples with moral and political dilemmas, wielding agency and intent in every decision she makes (Collins, 2022).

In these remade stories, Patel liberates these women from the shadows of their male counterparts and gives them prominence and individuality. His feminist revisionist mythmaking is not an act of literature but a deep cultural intervention (Christian, 1985). As Patel unravels the Indian mythology ensconced with patriarchal ideologies, he opens up a space for women to be recognized as active participants in the mythic tradition. His work is in tune with rewriting history and culture to reclaim women's voices and experiences, integral to feminist theoretical frameworks (Frost, 2001). This kind of retelling is a dismantling of hierarchical structures that would characterize storytelling and reconstitute them as narratives through which inclusion and equality now act. Patel's retelling thus serves as an insistent invitation to return, first and foremost, not merely to cultural narratives or memory, but with new and readjusted convictions of their diversity and agency therein (Collins, 2015).

The research also examines how critics and readers view Patel's narratives, celebrating him as an influential voice in the call for an inclusive cultural framework. Patel's works reinvent the literary ideal of complex, multidimensional protagonists while deepening cultural and social discussions around gender equality, representation, and the transformative powers of myth. In rewriting and reimagining ancient narratives, Patel directs attention to the power of mythology as an ever-relevant medium toward a vision of contemporary questions and social change (Fensham, 2005).

His feminist reinterpretations remind us that mythology is not static within its repository of times past but a dynamic force, ever-evolving with its interpreters and audiences. Through his works, Patel shows how ancient texts can be transformed into inclusive, progressive narratives—reflecting the values of modernity. Whereas the narration of stories and the portrayal of characters have been very patriarchal in most Indian instances, Patel's work functions as a process of reclamation of myths into tools for social critique and rebirth, as shown in Figure 1.



This paper discusses in depth the significant contribution that Utkarsh Patel made to feminist revisionist mythmaking through his retellings of Hindu mythology. Drawing particular focus on Patel's Mythosphere series, this paper undertakes a close analysis of his attempts to deconstruct and question those narratives that had been created by patriarchy and representations of women as depicted in ancient myths. Works by Patel represent a different perspective that reflects female characters' strength, intelligence, and agency, thus presenting a vision for an equal Indian mythology (Bronfen, 2001). It discusses how Patel engages in feminist revisionist mythmaking to reimagine and reclaim some of the most marginalized figures of Indian mythology, drawing specifically on his novels *Shakuntala: The Woman Wronged* and *Satyavati*. This research, therefore, focuses on how Patel deconstructs patriarchal constructs in his retellings to transform passive female figures into empowered protagonists. It further investigates the broader cultural implications of Patel's work in fostering gender equity and challenging entrenched narratives, contributing to the growing discourse on feminist reinterpretations of mythology. Seen in this light, Patel's storytelling comes not only as a performative act of reformation in literature but to invoke the reconsideration of cultural identity, the way power and domination are distributed, and to think toward a future in freedom that is more equal.

Satyavati: A Feminist Retelling

Utkarsh Patel's *Satyavati* boldly reimagines one of the Mahabharata's most significant yet often overlooked characters. Through this retelling, Patel breathes new life into Satyavati, transforming her from the simplistic portrayal of a fisherwoman who became the matriarch of the Kuru dynasty into a nuanced and dynamic figure. He delves into her complexities - her ambitions, her resilience, and the decisions she made in navigating a world dominated by men. No longer just the mother of Ved Vyasa, Patel's *Satyavati* emerges as a visionary who understood the power of opportunity and pursued her goals with determination and foresight (Dirghangi, 2021). The narrative traces her journey from being the adopted daughter of a fisherman to ascending the throne as the queen of Hastinapura, presenting her as a woman of immense strength and resolve who faced the harsh realities of fate without faltering. Patel paints *Satyavati* as a multifaceted character shaped by love, duty, and aspiration while also humanizing her by exploring her vulnerabilities and inner struggles. This portrayal resonates deeply with modern readers, making her story relatable and inspiring.

Beyond the personal, Patel uses *Satyavati*'s life to comment on the broader social dynamics of ancient Indian society, shedding light on women's challenges within patriarchal systems. Her story becomes both an individual journey and a lens through which the systemic oppression of women is explored. Patel's retelling not only reclaims *Satyavati*'s voice but also advocates for a feminist reinterpretation of historical texts, urging readers to question and rethink the roles assigned to women in traditional narratives (Allen, 2020).

By placing *Satyavati* at the center of her story, Patel underscores her strength, intelligence, and agency, elevating her from the margins of mythology to a position of rightful prominence. His vivid storytelling invites readers to view mythology through a contemporary lens, reminding us of the transformative power of revisiting and reimagining the past (Sinha, 2024).

In his retelling of the story, Patel primarily focuses on *Satyavati*'s role in setting her path for the future, especially her choice that impacted the lineage of the Kuru dynasty. Another example is her demand for King Shantanu a promise that her future offspring will inherit the throne, which

shows she understands the importance of power. Examples like this show her intelligence and strength of will and her emergence as a complex character in a traditional patriarchal epic. Utkarsh Patel's "Satyavati" is a beautifully empowering, thought-provoking, and profoundly introspective narrative. It gives voice back to an overlooked heroine, making her a natural person who made choices and took actions that had ramifications beyond her immediate sphere. This way, Patel provides thematically relevant insights that connect feminist gender analysis to ancient myth (Kuhlmann, 2002).

Feminist revisionist mythmaking involves reclaiming and reinterpreting traditional myths to present feminist perspectives that challenge patriarchal narratives. This approach seeks to amplify the voices of female characters often misrepresented or sidelined in classical mythology, offering alternative narratives that center on their experiences and agency. Alicia Ostriker, in her influential essay *The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking*, notes that "women poets frequently find revisionist mythmaking through retelling myths to be both a form of critique and a source of empowerment" (Ostriker, 1982).

By revisiting these ancient tales, authors create opportunities to challenge conventional gender roles and expand the representation of women in mythology. This practice is not confined to Western mythologies but finds its place in Indian literature as well. Indian writers, including Utkarsh Patel, have embraced feminist revisionist mythmaking to reimagine characters from Hindu epics. In *Shakuntala: The Woman Wronged*, Patel portrays Shakuntala as a woman who "dared to love and pay the price to retain her pride" (Patel, 2015). This interpretation presents her as a complex and resilient individual, contrasting with the traditional portrayal of her as passive or victimized.

Through this lens, feminist revisionist mythmaking becomes a powerful literary tool, reclaiming marginalized voices and redefining women's role in the cultural imagination. By challenging patriarchal frameworks, authors like Patel contribute to a broader literary discourse that recognizes the multifaceted experiences of women in mythology, thus carving out a space for their rightful inclusion in the canon (Eagleton, 2010).

2.1. The Woman Wronged: Rediscovering Vyasa's Original Narrative

In *Shakuntala: The Woman Wronged*, Utkarsh Patel offers a profound and compelling reinterpretation of Shakuntala's story, initially conceived in Ved Vyasa's *Mahabharata* (Patel, 2015). Patel shifts the focus to a lesser-known and more grounded version of Shakuntala's narrative, contrasting sharply with the romanticized portrayal in Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntalam*. This reimagining presents Shakuntala as a woman of resilience and agency, navigating her experiences of love and resistance to male-dominated societal structures (Patel, 2015).

Patel's portrayal moves beyond the idealized and sentimental image of Shakuntala popularized by Kalidasa, offering readers a deeper and more complex understanding of her character. Through meticulous research and evocative storytelling, Patel restores Shakuntala to her rightful place in Indian mythology, emphasizing her strength and significance in ways that resonate with contemporary gender discourse. This reinterpretation also serves as a bridge between feminist theory and ancient texts, situating Shakuntala as an influential figure who challenges traditional gender dynamics while remaining firmly rooted in India's cultural and mythological fabric. Patel's work reclaims Shakuntala's voice, reminding readers of her enduring relevance and vital role in the broader narrative of Indian mythology (Wray, 2004).

As Elaine Showalter suggests, storytelling possesses a distinctly feminine impulse that requires a departure from traditional narratives steeped in male-centric biases (Showalter, 1981). With his deep engagement with mythology, Utkarsh Patel recognized that women in ancient myths are often relegated to peripheral roles, portrayed as passive and predictable figures. This realization inspired him to reimagine these tales, crafting dynamic, multidimensional female characters who possess personal agency and resonate with modern sensibilities.

Drawing on Bennett's assertion that authentic gender representation necessitates a genuine articulation of difference, Patel aligns with this discourse by offering nuanced portrayals of female protagonists (Bennett, 2005). His retellings delve into the intricacies of these characters, addressing their challenges and strengths to make them relatable to contemporary readers. For instance, in *Satyavati*, Patel contrasts patriarchal interpretations of her story, while in *Shakuntala*, he emphasizes the propagation of gender equality through her empowered narrative.

Patel's works transcend mere retellings; they embody feminist sensibilities by reinterpreting myths that patriarchal perspectives have long shaped. These stories, rooted in a collective cultural and national experience, challenge the legacy of male-dominated narratives, offering a fresh lens through which to view history and mythology. By doing so, Patel not only reclaims the voices of these women but also contributes to a broader dialogue on gender and representation in mythological storytelling (Karmakar, 2021).

Amidst the multitude of mythological retellings, Utkarsh Patel distinguishes itself by staying true to the essence of Vyasa and providing a story that is authentic yet relevant to the present time. His nuanced approach to characters such as *Shakuntala* and *Satyavati* embodies both a desire to retain the intricacies of their narratives and relevance to the contemporary world (Viswamohan, 2001). Patel's work gains further depth with a Foreword by Prof. Satya Chaitanya, whose scholarly insights enrich the narrative framework and an introduction that provides readers with a thoughtful lens to understand the nuances of the retellings. By blending fidelity to the source material with contemporary perspectives, Patel's storytelling not only revives ancient characters but also redefines their significance for today's audiences, making his work a standout in a saturated literary market (Gallastegui, 2024).

Significance of the Study

Utkarsh Patel's novels *Shakuntala: The Woman Wronged* (2015) and *Satyavati* (2019) are remarkable examples of feminist revisionist mythmaking that challenge the traditionally male-centric narratives of mythology. Historically, mythological literature has often relegated women to the margins, depicting them as passive figures reacting to male heroics, their autonomy diminished or erased. Patel's reinterpretations, however, offer a radical departure by presenting empowered versions of female characters such as *Shakuntala* and *Satyavati*, restoring their significance and agency within their stories. Through these reimagined narratives, Patel gives these iconic women a voice, encouraging readers to reflect on gender constructs and the need for a more equitable and inclusive worldview. His work contributes profoundly to feminist mythological studies, enriching the growing literature that critiques and dismantles patriarchal narratives. By rewriting ancient myths, Patel reclaims these characters' agency and demonstrates how mythology can be reinterpreted to resonate with the contemporary understanding of gender dynamics (Coly, 2019).

Patel's retellings also critique how entrenched patriarchal ideologies continue to shape cultural and historical narratives. His works underscore the transformative potential of storytelling to challenge traditional frameworks and inspire the creation of new, empowering narratives for women in the 21st century. In doing so, Patel positions mythology as a living, evolving tradition that can adapt to and reflect modern ideals of equality and representation (Basu, 2011).

This research underscores the critical need to address gender disparities, particularly about women and transwomen, emphasizing the experiences of feminized bodies. It serves as a potent reminder that patriarchal ideologies persist and highlights the transformative potential of challenging these norms through a feminist lens. By offering a framework for building inclusive societies, Patel's work makes a significant contribution to the dialogue on gender and mythology, aligning with the broader pursuit of justice and equality in every sphere of life (as explored in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*). This study holds profound relevance, urging a reconsideration of traditional gender roles and inspiring contemporary society to adopt equity and inclusivity as core values.

Literature Review

The mutilation of Surpanakha in the Ramayana has emerged as a pivotal theme in feminist reinterpretations, offering profound insights into the dynamics of gendered violence and societal constructs. Feminist retellings, such as Kavita Kane's *Lanka's Princess* and Nabanita Deb Sen's *Rajkumari Kamaballi*, portray Surpanakha not as a mere antagonist but as a figure of agency and defiance. These narratives confront the entrenched patriarchal frameworks that have historically silenced women, relegating them to the margins of cultural narratives.

Surpanakha's desires and punishment epitomize the pervasive cultural dominance rooted in Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony that suppresses women's autonomy, underscoring the tension between individual freedom and societal positioning. Ecofeminist perspectives further enrich these feminist interpretations, drawing parallels between the exploitation of women and the degradation of nature. The erosion of Surpanakha's autonomy mirrors the destruction of ecological systems, exposing the interconnected layers of oppression (Bacon, 2023).

Through her lens of "postcolonial ecofeminism," Kane illuminates how Surpanakha's character interrogates and remains constrained by the historical power hierarchies that define her narrative. Despite this, revisionist feminist literary theory challenges patriarchal underpinnings in mythological texts, seeking to reclaim and reimagine these stories through empowering perspective. In these reimaginings, Surpanakha symbolizes subversion and female strength, embodying resistance against systems that have long suppressed women's voices.

Examining Surpanakha's marginalization through an intersectional lens provides profound insights into her story. Drawing on the work of scholars, these reinterpretations highlight how caste, gender, and cultural constructs intricately shape her narrative. Rather than reducing Surpanakha to a simple victim or villain, these nuanced readings explore her as a layered, active and passive character embodying complexity and depth. In Kavita Kane's portrayal, Surpanakha represents corporeal feminism, her yearning for freedom and independence reflecting her struggle against the patriarchal norms that confine her. This feminist reimagining of myths is not just creative storytelling but also an ideological act to foster social change. Myths have the transformative power to shift marginalized stories to the forefront, challenging dominant narratives while celebrating cultural identity and heritage (Smith, 1990).

Recent works, such as Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019) and Arshia Sattar's translations of the *Ramayana*, take a balanced approach to characters like Surpanakha and Sita (Chatterjee, 2019). Like Kane and Nabanita Deb Sen, these authors underscore the capacity of revisionist feminist narratives to dismantle hegemonic discourses and advocate for gender equity. These retellings reaffirm the power of mythological reinterpretation as a vehicle for cultural critique and societal transformation.

"Feminist reinterpretations transform Surpanakha into a compelling counter-narrative against the patriarchal framework of Hindu mythology, redefining her story beyond conventional boundaries and reclaiming female agency. These revisionist approaches to myth offer fresh perspectives, inviting a deeper exploration of our historical engagement with mythology while challenging the enduring power structures that continue to shape society today. This distinctly feminist lens reexamines the past and inspires critical discourse on autonomy and equity in contemporary cultural narratives."

Research Gap

A notable gap in existing research is the lack of intersectional analysis within Utkarsh Patel's feminist reinterpretations of mythology, particularly about caste, class, and gender. While Satyavati traces the protagonist's journey from a fisherwoman to the queen of Hastinapura, a more nuanced examination of how caste intersects with patriarchal oppression could add complexity to the narrative. Additionally, Patel's focus on Indian mythology would benefit significantly from a comparative analysis with feminist retellings from global traditions, such as Greek or Norse mythology. Such a study could illuminate both the universal and culturally specific dimensions of feminist mythmaking, enriching our understanding of its role in diverse literary traditions.

Another area that remains underexplored is the cultural significance of Patel's narratives. Investigating their broader societal impact would provide valuable insights into their place within feminist literary discourse. Addressing these gaps could offer a more comprehensive appreciation of Patel's contributions and relevance in advancing conversations about gender, power, and mythology.

Methodology

This qualitative research study employs close textual analysis as its primary methodology to examine feminist revisionist mythmaking in the mythological retellings of Utkarsh Patel. The paper delves into how Patel subverts traditional myths, focusing on the representation of female characters and their embodiment of agency, oppression, and resistance to hegemonic patriarchal ideologies. Central to this exploration is Patel's rewriting of narratives that have long been overlooked, offering fresh perspectives on untold stories.

The study investigates feminist principles embedded in Patel's works and how these retellings serve as acts of resistance against dominant cultural and gender constructs. The initial phase involves a high-level curation of Patel's texts that align with the study's themes, including interpretations of tales from the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, and other cultural and mythological sources. Selected texts are assessed based on their integration of feminist themes, such as the subversion of patriarchal female roles, the depiction of gender justice issues, and their relevance to contemporary feminist discourse.

Through the lens of feminist vigilantism, the research highlights narratives that present marginalized female characters with greater complexity and positivity, showcasing their reclamation within the framework of revisionist feminism. This approach aims to shed light on how Patel reimagines these figures, transforming them into symbols of resistance and empowerment within the broader feminist literary tradition. After selecting the relevant texts, this study employs close textual analysis to examine Utkarsh Patel's narrative techniques, rhetorical strategies, and recurring motifs. This critical approach focuses on key concepts integral to a feminist reinterpretation of mythology.

Language and Dialogue

The first thematic area centers on language and dialogue, investigating the feminist linguistic elements in Patel's writing, such as word choice, expressions, and the construction of dialogue. This analysis reveals how Patel's language actively challenges traditional patriarchal norms, offering a feminist perspective through intentional linguistic choices.

Character Evolution

The study further explores the evolution of female characters in Patel's narratives, examining their independence, development, and agency. By deviating from conventional portrayals, Patel reimagines these characters as complex, empowered figures, breaking away from their historically constrained representations.

Plot Dynamics

Through an analysis of plot dynamics, the research uncovers the nuanced ways Patel reconfigures original myths. It examines narrative structure and purpose changes, highlighting how these revisions resist patriarchal standards and redefine cultural narratives.

Symbolism and Broader Themes

The study also delves into Patel's use of symbolism and thematic constructs, analyzing metaphors and broader societal commentary embedded in the narratives. Selected excerpts and key scenes are scrutinized to uncover acts of feminist subversion, resistance, and the redefinition of traditional gender roles.

Theoretical Context

Patel's works are situated within the framework of feminist theories, including intersectionality, corporeal feminism, and ecofeminism. The research examines how Patel addresses intersecting issues of gender, caste, and culture, offering a multidimensional critique of patriarchal oppression.

By placing Patel's narratives within the broader scope of feminist literary theory, this study highlights their contribution to reimagining mythology as a space for progressive cultural discourse. Through close textual analysis, it argues that Patel's retellings disrupt patriarchal interpretations, amplify the silenced voices of women, and expand the dialogue around feminism and mythology. This approach underscores Patel's role in reshaping traditional myths into narratives that challenge oppressive constructs and foster equity and inclusivity (Moi, 1995).

Comparative Analysis

A critical component of this research is comparing the favorable and unfavorable aspects of myths, as this juxtaposition is key to understanding feminist revisionist mythmaking. By

analyzing Utkarsh Patel's adaptations alongside conventional versions of mythological stories, the study examines how he redefines narratives to create empowering portrayals of female characters. This comparative lens allows for a deeper appreciation of the transformations Patel introduces, particularly in enhancing the agency of these characters.

Traditional mythological frameworks, such as those found in the Mahabharata and Ramayana, often confine female characters to marginal roles, presenting them as subservient to patriarchal norms or existing primarily as extensions of male protagonists. Patel, however, subverts these conventions by recontextualizing such figures, shifting them from the periphery to the center of the narrative. In his retellings, these women emerge as fully realized individuals—imbued with agency, autonomy, and resistance to systemic oppression.

Patel's approach reclaims and reshapes their stories, challenging the rewritten histories and entrenched gendered power dynamics of more familiar versions. His feminist reinterpretations command the reader's attention and offer a stark reimagining of these characters as vibrant, empowered agents of their own destinies, effectively dismantling the patriarchal constructs of traditional mythological storytelling (Shildrick, 2017).

To illustrate, traditional texts often portray characters like Surpanakha and Sita as either victims or villains. By reimagining these figures, Patel breathes new life into their narratives, endowing them with nuanced motivations and humanizing their struggles and choices. This shift transforms their roles from passive to active, fundamentally altering their positions within the mythological canon. Patel's reworking of key plot points emphasizes empowerment, equality, and resistance, showcasing female agency and independence in ways that diverge significantly from standard portrayals. His retellings operate within the framework of feminist revisionism, creating a dialogue between historical contexts, cultural specificity, and contemporary gender dynamics. These narratives reshape myths into instruments of advocacy and inclusion, all while retaining their cultural significance.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a comprehensive theoretical framework rooted in feminist literary theory, mythification, and revisionism. These approaches guide the analysis of Patel's retellings, exploring their impact on shaping social and cultural discourses.

Feminist Literary Theory

This research's core is feminist literary theory, which examines representations of gender identity, the cultural constructs that shape women's artistic experiences, and the influence of patriarchy as a power system. This theory critiques canonical literature that marginalizes or excludes non-dominant voices, exposing the patriarchal structures underpinning traditional narratives. By broadening its scope to include intersections of race, class, sexuality, and politics, feminist literary theory sheds light on how literature reflects and influences societal power dynamics.

Feminist literary theory also advocates for reimagining myths and queering gender hierarchies, mobilizing literature as a tool for equality and inclusion. Analyzing mythological stories through a feminist lens exposes oppressive social constructs and highlights the need for transformation.

Mythification and Its Relevance

Mythification, the creation and reinterpretation of myths, is central to classical and feminist literature. Myths embody the aspirations and values of society but can also perpetuate gender-based power imbalances by reinforcing stereotypes about what each gender can or should do. For example, traditional Western literature often portrays women as subservient and powerless, while men are afforded autonomy and strength.

Feminist revisionist mythification dismantles these stereotypes, reclaiming narrative spaces to foster inclusivity and empowerment. These retellings deconstruct hegemonic ideologies, alternative histories emerge, and power dynamics are reimaged. This process amplifies marginalized voices, offering fresh perspectives on cultural narratives and redefining their societal significance.

Feminist Revisionism in Practice

Feminist revisionism seeks to challenge patriarchal norms by reimagining established narratives. Pioneering authors like Toni Morrison and Gloria Anzaldúa have demonstrated this through their works. Morrison's *Beloved*, for instance, subverts racial and gendered tropes of the antebellum South while interrogating the act of storytelling itself. Similarly, Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* reclaims the U.S.-Mexico borderlands dialogue, creating space for marginalized voices and critiquing the power structures that define cultural and geographic boundaries.

This theoretical framework underscores the significance of feminist literary theory, mythification, and revisionism in redefining literary narratives. By analyzing Utkarsh Patel's retellings through this lens, the study highlights how his works challenge patriarchal ideologies, reclaim silenced voices, and contribute to the evolution of literature and culture. Patel's narratives exemplify how feminist reinterpretations can reshape myths into powerful tools for advocacy, inclusivity, and cultural transformation.

Novelty

This research stands out for its in-depth exploration of how Utkarsh Patel utilizes feminist revisionist mythmaking to reclaim the narratives of marginalized female characters in Indian mythology. Focusing on his works *Shakuntala: The Woman Wronged* and *Satyavati*, the study moves beyond traditional analyses that often uphold patriarchal interpretations. Instead, it delves into Patel's innovative reframing of myths, presenting them as instruments for cultural critique and catalysts for social change.

By placing characters like *Shakuntala* and *Satyavati* at the heart of their stories, Patel reconstructs their agency within the confines of oppressive societal structures. This approach offers a fresh lens through which to view classical mythology, intertwining timeless tales with contemporary discussions on gender equality. The research contributes significantly to feminist literary discourse, demonstrating how Patel's works bridge the gap between historical narratives and modern movements for social justice and inclusivity.

9. Discussion

Through the lens of gender explored in Feminist Revisionist Mythification, Utkarsh Patel's retellings offer a compelling perspective on cultural dynamics and the complexities of human experience, including love, change, and societal expectations. These narratives highlight themes such as the portrayal of formidable women, the critique of patriarchal traditions, the relevance

of feminist issues in contemporary society, and the empowerment of female voices. This study delves into Patel's works through a feminist lens, aiming to subvert traditional gender roles and challenge patriarchal depictions of women.

By situating Patel's retellings within the framework of feminist literary scholarship and mythological reinterpretation, this analysis unveils Patel as a significant feminist interlocutor. His works serve as a medium for interrogating gender constructs, power hierarchies, and cultural paradigms. As Greene asserts, feminist scholarship has long focused on critiquing the socially constructed roles of women and examining how historical and cultural contexts shape these perceptions (Greene, 1991). Patel's narratives, viewed through this scholarly lens, underscore the intersections of feminist mythmaking and broader literary critiques of gender and societal structures, offering a nuanced understanding of his contribution to the ongoing discourse on gender equity and empowerment.

Representation of Strong Female Characters

One of the central themes in Utkarsh Patel's retellings is the portrayal of strong, multifaceted female characters. This aligns closely with feminist literary criticism, which advocates for women to be represented not merely as men but as independent, complex, and dynamic individuals. Grosz eloquently observes that "the body is not a thing with a fixed poetic of movement; it is a social and linguistic construct, a site of contestation, fluidity, challenge, and resistance." This idea resonates deeply in Patel's narratives, where female characters embody the struggles and triumphs of existing within and pushing against societal norms. These characters are not just reflections of their external circumstances but also agents of transformation, carrying their identities boldly into the world while shaping and being shaped by it.

Drawing on insights from thinkers like Judith Butler and Bell Hooks, Patel's retellings underscore the importance of such representations in literature. They challenge traditional gender constructs and patriarchal ideals, offering empowering narratives that allow women to reclaim their voices and assert their agency. Through Patel's reimaginings, these female figures resist being confined by societal molds, asserting their autonomy and rewriting their own stories on their terms. This approach enriches the literary landscape and contributes to a broader cultural dialogue about gender equality and representation.

Questioning of Patriarchal Practices

Aligned with the feminist literary theory concept of "The Lion beside the Lamb" (Baker), Utkarsh Patel's works are a powerful critique of patriarchal systems. Feminist scholars, from Simone de Beauvoir to Kate Millett, have long emphasized the role of literature in exposing and challenging the structures of patriarchy. Patel's retellings echo this tradition by dismantling entrenched power dynamics, reimagining traditional myths, and offering counter-narratives that question societal norms.

Through his stories, Patel presents characters who actively resist patriarchal constructs, showcasing the pervasive influence of gendered hierarchies in all aspects of life. These narratives challenge conventional norms and emphasize the transformative power of rewriting stories. Patel's characters remind us that dismantling these hierarchies requires a reexamination and re-articulation of the myths and narratives that uphold them, making his works significantly contribute to feminist literary discourse.

Relevance of Feminist Issues in Contemporary Society

Utkarsh Patel's fiction resonates deeply with contemporary feminist concerns, shedding light on gender inequality and social injustice in today's world. Much like the perspectives of Angela Davis and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Patel's works emphasize the systemic nature of oppression and the critical role literature plays in advancing feminist activism. These voices collectively call for engagement with gender equality, recognizing the intersection of societal structures and individual experiences.

Bell Hooks aptly observes that "women cannot be 'liberated' in a world in which militarism and economic imperialism play a major role in shaping social thought and daily life" (Hooks, 2000). Patel's retellings echo this sentiment, using mythology as a powerful tool to critique entrenched gender norms and offer transformative perspectives. By reimagining ancient narratives through a feminist lens, Patel underscores the ongoing relevance of these issues, inviting readers to reexamine societal perceptions of gender and power in light of enduring inequalities (Expósito de Vicente, 2024).

Empowerment and Agency of Women

A prominent theme in Utkarsh Patel's works is the empowerment and agency of women, portrayed through characters who boldly resist oppressive systems and reclaim control over their stories. This theme aligns with feminist scholarship that champions women's autonomy and explores avenues for resistance and transformation. Thinkers like Audre Lorde and Gloria Anzaldúa have underscored the importance of empowerment in feminist literature. At the same time, Kabeer defines empowerment as the interplay of "resources, agency, and achievements" that enable individuals to confront and dismantle systemic oppression.

Patel's characters exemplify these principles, asserting their independence and reshaping traditional power structures to their advantage. By challenging existing hierarchies, they reclaim their narratives and inspire broader conversations about resistance and the transformative potential of agency, making Patel's works a vital contribution to contemporary feminist discourse.

Comparative Insights

While Utkarsh Patel's retellings provide a thoughtful and feminist reimagining of traditional stories, a deeper analytical engagement with these themes would further enrich their significance. A more comprehensive comparative study could situate Patel's works more firmly within the broader context of feminist literary traditions. Drawing from the feminist revisionism of authors like Toni Morrison and Gloria Anzaldúa, who have demonstrated how myths can be reinterpreted to challenge dominant narratives, would illuminate Patel's unique contributions while aligning his work with a broader movement of counter-hegemonic storytelling.

Patel's retellings are a vital addition to feminist literary discourse, offering a transformative lens to reinterpret ancient myths. His focus on strong female protagonists, critique of patriarchal norms, exploration of contemporary feminist issues, and emphasis on empowerment and agency all resonate deeply with the ongoing tradition of feminist revisionist mythmaking. By reclaiming and reshaping these narratives, Patel honors the tradition and pushes it forward, creating space for new, inclusive, and redemptive interpretations (Priya, 2020).

Conclusion

This study centers on the works of Utkarsh Patel, particularly his novels *Shakuntala: The Woman Wronged* and *Satyavati*, exploring the concept of "revisionist mythification." Delving into these retellings addresses key questions within Patel's feminist framework, where incidental female characters are reimagined as central figures of agency and consequence. Patel disrupts patriarchal narratives and fosters a more inclusive and empowering discourse by bringing women like Shakuntala and Satyavati from the periphery to the forefront. This research highlights the critical need to reflect on gender roles in mythological narratives, reconstruct societal perceptions of women, and develop fresh critical perspectives that redefine the representation of female characters.

Patel's retellings carve out a modern space for women to voice their experiences and assert their agency, situating his works within the growing field of feminist mythological studies. By challenging patriarchal interpretations of classical myths, he proposes egalitarian and inclusive frameworks that align with contemporary ideals of gender equality. His writings exemplify the transformative power of literature to question entrenched ideologies and promote counter-narratives that empower women. This research underscores the importance of rewriting traditional narratives to amplify female voices and dismantle patriarchal paradigms. Patel's work enriches feminist discourse by exposing the limitations of a historically male-centered literary canon and advocating for a reimagined cultural narrative that values the contributions and significance of women. By reclaiming and redefining mythological tales, Patel's feminist reinterpretations critique existing power structures and inspire progress toward a more just and equitable society. His work is a testament to literature's enduring capacity to challenge societal norms and envision a future grounded in inclusivity and equality.

Author Contributions: All the authors contributed equally.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: Data is contained within the article.

Acknowledgments: The authors thank the National Institute of Technology Patna, India, for providing the necessary institutional facilities and encouragement.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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