

# Indian Myth and Modern Indian English Writings: A Resurgence of Cultural Interest

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**Abstract:** *Mythology has always stirred up civilised literature's deep interest and fascination. Indian literature is not unusual. Numerous literary works have continued to draw inspiration from the Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads. The acceptance and accessibility of Indian mythology have inspired authors throughout history to adapt Indian myths to contemporary environments. In the current century, there is a growing trend of rewriting, recreating, retelling, remembering, reintroducing, and reimagining myths from a modern point of view. It is necessary to investigate the advent of mythological novels in the twenty-first century and their enormous appeal. It is necessary to find the answers to questions like how myths have come back to life in the modern era and why Indian mythology has enthralled authors and readers in the modern age of technology. Writers such as Amish Tripathi, Ashok K. Banker, Devdutt Pattanaik, Nilanjan P. Chaudhari, Anand Neelakantan, Chitra Banerjee, Saiswaroopaa Iyer, Ashwin Sanghi, Divakaruni, Kavita Kane, Akshat Gupta and numerous others look to mythology in their quest for fresh platforms for artistic expression to build the cultural important and resurgence to the Indian myth through their writing. This writing tries to enlighten the cultural interest of Indian myth through modern Indian English writings.*

**Key Words:** *Mythology, Veda, Purana, Ramayana, Mahabharata.*

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**Introduction:**

Since ancient times, myth has typically been connected to fiction or stories that feature gods or other supernatural beings. Myths have penetrated every genre, spanning time, space, and language, from epics to poetry to novels.<sup>1</sup> Indian literature is not an exception, since it fulfils the deep-seated yearning of Indians to be immersed in a world rich in myths, stories, and folklore.

Indian writers have always drawn inspiration from mythology, with its gripping turns, malevolent acts, and the ultimate triumph of virtue over evil, along with its liberated kingdoms, from the beginning of time. Indian writers continue to be deeply influenced by Indian mythology, even despite its antiquity, in the topics, stories, and subjects they choose to write about. Even though mythology was once regarded as literature, it has more significance now. History, in the form of true stories, is always replacing it. Even so, myths continue to play a significant role in defining and shaping literature. A myth can be repeated, expanded upon, or new patterns can be found because it is an essential component of literature. It is still a significant literary genre in all societies. Myths have a literary framework by nature. Indian myths and legends have been incorporated into works of prose and fiction by some of the best Postcolonial Indian English writers. The nineteenth century was marked with the birth of plays expressing the contemporary “Urge of Freedom” as their central theme. Because theatre production directly connects people, both literate and illiterate, the study of drama is half literary and half sociological.<sup>2</sup> There was also other plays marking the playwrights desire to give a modern interpretation to mythology. Girish Karnad in *Yayati*, *Hayavadan*, *Nagamandala*, *Fire and Rain* and Raja Rao in *The Serpent* and *the Rope* are just a few examples of writers who have brought out the emotional, metaphorical, historical and symbolical appeal of myths.<sup>3</sup> But it’s fascinating to see how popular writing and prose in recent years have incorporated elements of Indian mythology.

**Discussion:**

Today’s India has witnessed a surge in the popularity of Indian English fiction and prose. Numerous writers of Indian descent and those living abroad have produced prose and fiction that has attracted a lot of attention and been very well-liked by today’s Indian readers, particularly the younger generation. The book market has been blown up by a completely new genre of writing on Indian mythology and stories in such literature. Writers such as Amish Tripathi, Ashok K. Banker, Devdutt Pattanaik, Nilanjan P. Chaudhari, Anand Neelakantan, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Saiswaroopaa Iyer, Ashwin Sanghi, Kavita Kane, Akshat Gupta and several more look to mythology

in their drive for fresh platforms for artistic expression. They make extensive use of myth. Young adults in particular are big fans of their literature among today's Indian readers.

India in the post-liberalization age is not like India in the pre-liberalization era. India's urban landscape has seen a significant transformation. Due to the widespread appeal and familiarity of Indian mythology, authors throughout history have adapted Indian myths for contemporary audiences. New perceptions in the current era of globalization create opportunities for myths to be reinterpreted and looked at again. Myths have always been a part of our socio-cultural fabric, weaving in with our traditions and taking on new forms.<sup>4</sup> The Shiva Purana, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata are the main subjects of interest. Through their imaginative powers, authors can create a whole new version of a myth or character's story that is relevant to the modern world by reinterpreting it from a different angle or by adopting only a small portion of a bigger work.<sup>5</sup> In the modern setting, myths from antiquity serve as a matrix for psychology, philosophy, and history.<sup>6</sup> Myths function in the modern Indian atmosphere of their works to develop a new tradition in English-language works of Indian literature. Last but not least, they are interconnected inside the operating culture and point towards the depiction of societal beliefs and resurgence of the ancient Indian cultural heritage.<sup>7</sup> This research examines a few modern books that make extensive use of myth like Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy*, Ashwin Sanghi's *Chanakya's Chant*, Akshat Gupta's *The Hidden Hindu* (Trilogy), Kavita Kané's *Karna's Wife and Menaka's Choice*, Saiswaroopaa Iyer's *Rukmini— Krishna's Wife*.

The Shiva Trilogy, which consists of the three Amish Tripathi novels *The Immortals of Meluha* [(2010), Westland Ltd], *The Secret of the Nagas* [(2012), Westland Ltd] and *The Oath of Vayuputras* [(2013), Westland Ltd], is a prime example of how ancient mythology has been adapted into the new, modern language of science. The Shiva Trilogy uses well-known figures and a variety of subjects to investigate and retell the famous old tale of Lord Shiva, the Lord of the Lords. The story of Shiva's transformation into Mahadev is told three times in the trilogy. The Indus Valley civilization, with its painstakingly built buildings, drains, and spas, is where the Meluhans' story takes place. Shiva is not a god at all, but a Tibetan immigrant who smokes drugs and is worshipped as the Mahadev or God. Brihaspati is the Chief Scientist in *The Immortals of Meluha*, where he is responsible for creating Somras, or nectar, which gives the Meluhans eternal youth. He attempts to provide a scientific explanation for Shiva's blue throat, saying, "I'm sure there is one. Regarding the blue throat... I think science is real."<sup>8</sup> It gives a justification and a resolution for every problem. And the only explanation for

everything that seems miraculous is that a scientific explanation hasn't been found yet. Amish Tripathi, the writer of the Shiva series, also says this: "Myths are nothing but jumbled memories of a true past. A past buried under mounds of earth and ignorance."<sup>9</sup> This basic idea forms the basis of this trilogy. "In my (Amish Tripathi) opinion, the Hindu gods were real, not just the products of folklore or vivid imagination. They were, I think, creatures of flesh and blood, just like you and me. They become gods, in my opinion, through their actions, their karma. In my opinion, Vishnu and Mahadev are not separate names. These are, in actuality, titles bestowed upon the most exceptional leaders who attain godlike status."<sup>10</sup>

Using the Chanakya tale, Ashwin Sanghi [(2010) *Chanakya's Chant*, Westland Ltd] presents Chanakya as a shrewd, crafty, clever, and patriotic master strategist. He compares the modern-day Pandit Gangasagar Mishra, a cunning and calculating politician, with the fabled Chanakya and creates an entirely realistic image. Gangasagar's nourishing area is modern India, where class enmity, corruption, and polarizing politics are just as prevalent as they were in ancient Bharat. Can this cunning pandit— who feeds off of avarice, venality, and promiscuity— Will usher in yet another marvel of a unified India? Corruption is about embracing our animal nature, denying our humanity, and allocating resources to the powerful to subjugate the weak.

*The Hidden Hindu* [(2022), *The Hidden Hindu (Part-1, 2 & 3)*, Penguin India Ltd.] of Akshat Gupta, is a timeless saga that will appeal to readers across generations. It brings alive mythology and makes it relatable and engaging and Its captivating storytelling and clever tale make for an amazing visual experience. Twenty-one-year-old Prithvi is looking for Om Shastri, a strange middle-aged Aghori who was taken prisoner and sent to a state-of-the-art institution on a remote Indian island. Upon being drugged and put under hypnosis to be questioned by a team of experts, the Aghori declared that he had seen all four yugas (Hindu epochs) and had taken part in the events of both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Everyone was perplexed when Om revealed his amazing past, which defied the norms of mortality. The group also learned that Om was looking for other immortals from all the yugas. If these strange secrets were made public, they might upend long-held notions and change the path of history. On this thrilling voyage, discover the mysteries of Om Shastri, follow Prithvi's quest, and go on adventures with other mysterious immortals from Hindu mythology.

Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife* [(2017), *Rupa Publications*] is an outstanding story of Karna and his wife Urvi. Karna was born into a family unmarried to the sun god Surya and Kunti. At birth, Karna's mother abandons him. Although he deserves to be a royal, he is raised by a humble charioteer and ends up becoming one. Uruvi, a Kshatriya

princess, chooses him over Arjun at her swayamvar, and theirs is a marriage of great social contrast. Uruvi must bring to bear all her love for Karna, and her formidable intelligence, to be accepted by his family. She eventually becomes Karna's mainstay, counselling and guiding him. However, his blind allegiance to Duryodhana, the eventual cause of his downfall, is beyond her power to change. *Karna's Wife* told from Uruvi's point of view, unfolds against the backdrop of the epic struggle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Lyrical and inventive, it is a moving story of love against all odds.

Kavita Kane's other mythological love story *Menaka's Choice* [(2016), *Rupa Publications*] is a beautiful fragrance about Indian myth. Menaka was born during the churning of the ocean of milk. Menaka is the most beautiful of all the apsaras in heaven, with quick intelligence and innate talent. However, she craves the one thing she can never have a family. In another instance, a man who has undergone extreme simplicity and been given the name Vishwamitra opposes the gods and dares to build a second heaven. The ruler of the devas, Indra, decides to put an end to his ambitions by having Menaka seduce him out of fear for his rising abilities. Here the author told the story with a special reference to spiritualism and Indian philosophy.

The Rukmini Kalyanam episode of Bhagavatam is a part and parcel of every household in the southern part of our country. Saiswaroopa Iyer's *Rukmini Krishna's Wife* [(2021), *Rupa Publications*] is the story of how the princess of Vidarbha braved all odds in making her choice and in making sure that her choice prevailed is considered an auspicious read and traditionally unmarried girls are encouraged to read the episode to be blessed with a suitable spouse. In Bhagavatam and Hari Vamsham, the story of Rukmini is established as that of a great devotee, apart from being a beloved bride of Lord Krishna. But often her story, post her wedding, is eclipsed by the macro plot of the Mahabharata and the exploits of Lord Krishna. The author considered it a matter of fortune to retell the story of the woman believed to be the incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi. In the Mahabharata, the entire Bharatavarsha walking towards the battle of Kurukshetra. Was Rukmini's life after she wed this delightful champion of dharma only filled with household intrigues and co-wife rivalries, where she emerged as the epitome of self-control and bhakti? Or was she an active part of Krishna's endeavours to establish dharma in the whole of Bharata? This novel is also a humble attempt to settle the contrasting narratives of the Bhagavatam and the Mahabharata.

### **Conclusion:**

These authors employ the grammar of literary archetypes to make connections between the real and the archetypal, the historical and the contemporary. Their inventiveness

rests in combining tastes of historical and mythical experience to create a powerful statement. The contemporary writers also attempt to instil an alienation effect by driving the material of their work from the folk tales, folk-expressions etc. and also by using the 'non-materialistic techniques' of the traditional Indian literature. They skilfully explore the prescription of social relations employing Indian mythology, trying to establish the cultural importance and relationship that originates out of the emotional needs of human beings coming in contact with one another.

Hindu mythology has its genesis in numerous Sanskrit texts like the Rig Veda, the Puranas, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Instead of having a consistent and monolithic structure, Hindu mythology has various versions and diversities according to rituals, traditions, and regions. The Hindu texts can be classified into Sruti— which can be heard and Smriti—which can be memorised. The Vedas and their embedded texts— the Samhitas, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads fall into the first category.

One of the main and most ancient sources of mythology is thought to be the Rig Veda. A collection of songs honouring the gods, it was passed down orally from generation to generation before being written down centuries later, giving rise to several tales. Another work that elaborates on mythological ceremonies is the Brahmanas. The Mahabharata's central narrative, which weaves together countless stories, history, and philosophy, describes the Great War between the Kauravas and the Pandavas from the Kuru clan. Another famous epic that tells the tale of Rama, a prince of the Ikshvaku dynasty, is the Ramayana. There are many myths in the eighteen Puranas. Because of their sectarian prejudice, the majority of them propagate varying versions of the same falsehoods. There have been several retellings and interpretations of these myths. In terms of presentation and plot, the contemporary retelling typically stays true to its Puranic or epic origins.

Mythology still has a significant impact on contemporary society. For instance, myths explain our idling cultural and psychological processes. It uses personification to make a connection between our inner and outside worlds, taking us from the conceptual to the useful and meaningful figuratively. The psyche is home to myths, and our perception of the world is shaped by this psyche. The classical world used myths to help individuals make sense of their surroundings and their own lives. The underlying forces that have shaped us in the present are myths. Every myth functions as a metaphor for our actions and organizes a style of thinking. For this reason, it is essential to understand the myths of a community to recognize the values that its members hold dear.

Through their use of myth stories, the writers convey their opinions regarding mythology. Indian culture is currently in a terrible place. While many of us hold our culture in high regard, others use it as a platform for propaganda. However, writers who write about myth make history, much like the authors listed above. There is undoubtedly a return to our motherland's culture.

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