

EVOLUTION OF MYTHOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN INDIAN SOCIO-CULTURAL SPACE

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ЕВОЛЮЦІЯ МІФОЛОГІЧНОЇ СВІДОМОСТІ В ІНДІЙСЬКОМУ СОЦІОКУЛЬТУРНОМУ ПРОСТОРИ

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Abstract

Mythology plays a significant role within the Indian sociocultural space. Adaptation of Indian epics such as “Ramayana” and “Mahabharata” into cinematic productions, and the publication of fictional and non-fictional books with protagonists drawn from the Indian mythological figures gains popularity in modern India. In this work, we will identify the key sociocultural functions served by myth within modern Indian literary discourse, analyze the books by D. Pattanaik, A. Tripathi, and K. Kané, as well as determine if representatives of new myth-making offer innovative ideas or prefer conservative paradigms.

Keywords: *mythology, society, traditions, interpretation, culture, Hinduism*

Анотація

У сучасному індійському соціокультурному просторі міфологія займає значне місце. В Індії спостерігається адаптація індійських епосів, таких як “Рамаяна” та “Махабхарата”, у кінематографічні постановки, а також публікація книг, де головними героями виступають індійські міфологічні персонажі. У даній роботі ми плануємо визначити ключові соціокультурні функції, які виконує міф у сучасному індійському літературному дискурсі, проаналізувати твори Д. Паттанаїка, А. Тріпаті та К. Кане, а також визначити, чи пропонують представники нової міфотворчості новаторські ідеї або віддають перевагу консервативним парадигмам.

Ключові слова: *міфологія, суспільство, традиції, інтерпретація, культура, індуїзм*

Introduction

In modern India, mythology plays a significant role within the sociocultural space, evidenced by the adaptation of ancient Indian epics into cinematic productions, the emergence of TV programs for mass audiences that delve into themes of Indian philosophy, and the publication of both fictional and non-fictional books with protagonists drawn from the Indian pantheon of deities and mythological figures.

The research *aims* to identify whether the evolution of mythological consciousness within the contemporary socio-cultural landscape of India is a perpetuation of traditional narratives, a process of simplification, or a profound transformation.

We set the following *objectives*:

1. To identify the principal sociocultural functions served by myth within contemporary Indian literary discourse.
2. To examine the metamorphosis of myth through the analysis of works by modern Indian writers, including D. Pattanaik, A. Tripathi, and K. Kané.
3. To determine whether representatives of new myth-making offer innovative tendencies or adhere to conservative paradigms.

Methodology

Throughout our investigation, a multifaceted methodology was employed, encompassing textual analysis, comparative analysis, and both synchronic and diachronic research methods within the sociocultural space.

Results

Mythological consciousness is a form of social consciousness wherein myth is embraced as truth, serving as a foundational element for constructing worldviews and various spheres of human existence. As underscored by V. Kuyevda (Kuyevda, 2007), an authority on the subject of historical memory as a theoretical problem: “Myth, mythological consciousness, which are so actively portrayed in all genres of verbal creativity as something naive, ephemeral, long past, remain a fact of our mental life, powerfully asserting in extreme human states such as the loss of proper control of the mind is compensated by the resource of intuitive potential and unwavering belief in the impenetrable and inscrutable (p. 12).”

In the Indian context, we observe the emergence of a genre that we term “new Indian mythmaking.” Under the influence of globalization and the politics of multiculturalism, modern Indian authors are engaging in the reimagining and reinterpretation of traditional myths within new realities.

Myths have a great influence on various domains, including art, literature, and filmmaking. Inspired by the rich tapestry of mythological stories, authors and filmmakers create narratives that not only transmit cultural heritage but also offer fresh perspectives on tradition. Balancing the preservation of

tradition and cultural memory with the introduction of innovative ideas is important for the cultural development of society.

The key functions of myth, which are evident in modern literary myth-making, include:

1. The *function of preservation of traditional and cultural memory*, safeguarding values for future generations.

2. The *function of innovation and creativity*, contributing to the dissemination of new ideas and forms of self-expression, as well as creating favorable conditions for the perpetuation of myth in the modern world.

3. The *compensatory function*, entailing the reimagining of an idealized past to generate fresh material for reflection.

In the realm of “new Indian myth-making,” the ancient Indian epic “Ramayana” serves as a rich source of inspiration for writers. Through an examination of the works of modern authors, we can see how this iconic epic undergoes metamorphoses.

Numerous modern authors abstain from a direct engagement with classical Sanskrit texts. Their reliance on English translations of these epics results in a phenomenon characterized by double modernization and Westernization. In “new Indian mythmaking,” the loss of profound meaning is compounded by the erosion of philosophical components linked to language and culture. We will turn our attention to several distinguished mythmakers: Kavita Kané, Amish Tripathi, and Devdutt Pattanaik. Through a brief examination of their works rooted in “Ramayana,” we aim to gain insight into their contributions to modern literature.

In her novel “Lanka's Princess,” K. Kané tells the story of Surpanakha, the sister of the demon Ravana (Kané, 2016). In Valmiki's Ramayana and various other traditional retellings of the epic, the character of Surpanakha, also known as Meenakshi, is notably absent. However, it is important to consider that had Ravana's sister not encountered Rama and Lakshmana in the forest, Sita's abduction and the war would not have occurred. K. Kané suggests tracing the life story of this heroine. Within K. Kané's narrative, Surpanakha emerges as a neglected child, forming a closer bond with her brother Kumbhakarna from an early age, rather than with Ravana. As the writer emphasizes, her intent is not to justify the actions of either Ravana or his sister: “I'm not saying they were heroes. They were people with flaws. That's the beauty of mythology. Every character has shades of grey, and they make you think and question (Palat, 2017).”

The book “Sita: Warrior of Mithila” by A. Tripathi is dedicated to Sita, a figure who has long epitomized the archetype of the ideal Indian woman: a faithful, devoted, and obedient wife. Nevertheless, Amish Tripathi offers a fresh perspective on Sita, depicting her as a princess who frequently finds herself embroiled in conflicts and knows how to handle weapons. A. Tripathi's innovative approach enables readers to engage with the characters, as they encounter individuals who bear greater resemblance to themselves and perceive reflections of their ideas and desires. If one were to replace the names of characters from the “Ramayana” with others, A.

Tripathi's work could arguably be categorized as a science fiction novel. Through the manipulation of traditional myths, contemporary authors craft fantasy worlds characterized by unique interpretations, new characters, and impressive changes in storylines.

Drawing parallels between Hindu mythology and the business world, D. Pattanaik opens a new page in modern Hinduism, offering a fresh philosophical turn in epic mythology. Through the analysis of the behavior exhibited by heroes of ancient Indian epics and the extrapolation of similar scenarios into contemporary contexts, the expert illustrates the essence of true leadership, strategies for ensuring organizational success, and appropriate conduct in professional settings. This can be seen in the book "Leader: 50 Insights from Mythology" (Pattanaik, 2017).

The adaptation of myth over time serves as a testament to the evolution of humanity, mirroring shifts in worldview and the evolving needs of individuals. "New Indian mythmaking" not only reflects changes in cultural context but also serves as a bridge between tradition and modernity. Figures like A. Tripathi, K. Kané, and D. Pattanaik are innovators, aiming to adapt the myth to the changing socio-cultural landscape of India. The simplification and production of pseudo-spiritual works rooted in epic mythology exemplify the commercialization and dissemination of popular culture to a broad audience. The philosophical foundations of this discourse deserve closer examination.

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