



Exploring the representation of myth through archetypes

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Abstract

How myths, culture, and language are all deeply connected and constantly influence each other. They really shape how we think, how our societies are put together, and even how we tell stories. Myths are those foundational tales that try to explain existence, lay down what's right and wrong, and pass on important values from one generation to the next. Language is the key way we tell these myths, keep them alive, and transform them, allowing them to have lots of different meanings and adapt over time and in various situations. Myths work as sacred texts, important literary works, and even as a cultural roadmap that influences everyday life, all at once. While new versions certainly help preserve heritage, they're also caught up in the ideological and commercial currents of global capitalism. Ultimately, myths stay crucial not as literal facts, but as symbolic frameworks that give us meaning, help societies stick together, and offer a certain psychological comfort. They often work hand-in-hand with scientific reasoning to address our most fundamental human concerns, rather than being at odds with it.

Keywords: Myth, archetype, collective unconscious, language, culture

Introduction

“Myth cannot be translated as they did in their ancient soil.

We can only find our own meaning in our own time.”

Margaret Atwood

The interconnected triad of myth, culture, and language shapes humanity's conscious awareness of the world around them and also determines how societies organized themselves in relation to one another, as well as how literature is expressed. Through myths, humanity creates a form of narrative that serves as an explanation for existence; teaches right from wrong; shares wisdom across the generations; etc. myths exist in the form of ancient tradition(s), particularly in India (The Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads). Myths perform three different but very important functions simultaneously: As sacred books (holy texts) containing the shared knowledge of a particular culture; As repositories for symbolic representations of divine forces and events; As a way to represent the connection between the human and divine worlds through language. Culture is the greater context in which myths derive their meaning and relevance. Culture contains all of the rituals, behaviors, and social rules that are contained within a myth, which makes them real. There is a reciprocal relationship between culture and myth: myths provide the framework for all aspects of culture while culture preserves and changes a myth (often many times) based upon the ever-changing needs of society. An example of this reciprocal relationship is found in the resurgence of mythological literature in contemporary Indian writing. In this instance, many of the original stories have been reinterpreted and rewritten to account for the anxieties and desires present today (which is not to say that there weren't really 'current' applications during the original period). Language is the medium through which myths take form and are maintained. Various theorists since Lévi-Strauss and Barthes (many of whom were trained as anthropologists) have viewed myths from the perspective of language, wherein they view myth as a semiotic system (second-level,

or second-order) that has an ideological meaning that exists beyond the literal storyline contained within the myth. The linguistic dimension of myth accounts for their polysemous characteristic; thus, myths communicate through multiple meanings at once, allowing for multiple interpretations in differing historical and cultural contexts. Mythology has been one of the oldest intellectual endeavors in human history as it addresses questions of origins, meaning, and existence. The term 'myth' comes from the Ancient Greek term 'mythos,' or 'word,' and refers to stories or accounts, fictional or not, that convey meaning. The simplest definition of the term, as stated by Northrop Frye in his essay on Milton's *Lycidas* (1658), is 'a story about God.' This definition is simple; however, when viewed through the lenses of anthropology, philosophy, psychology, and literature, this seemingly simple definition becomes quite complex. Throughout history, myths have served many purposes—e.g., they have been used to describe how the cosmos originated (who created the world; where the human race comes from; why there is a god). Myths also serve as moral codes that guide social conduct, creating a code among individuals which governs their relationships with one another. Myths provide individuals with psychological security when facing existential worries concerning death and suffering; disasters; and the apparent disorder of existence. Most importantly, myths create meaning for all members of society (bonds) through common stories and symbols. A specific example of how literature has retained connections to the past is evident through the relationship between myth and Indian literature as expressed through myths and mythology. For centuries, writers like Valmiki, Ved Vyas, as well as many contemporary writers (Devdutt Pattanaik, Amish Tripathi, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni) have drawn upon this mythic foundation to create works that not only repeat, but engage with, reinterpret and transform these myths for today's audiences. The growing popularity of mythological literature raises multiple questions such as why this explosion of interest in myth is occurring now, given that we are living in a time of scientific rationalism and technological advancement; how authors balance

staying true to the original source material (traditional myths) versus adding their own original creativity to the myth; and what cultural needs do these retellings serve? These questions will lead to the development of critical analysis on the continuing importance of myths.

Another way that myths distinguish themselves from other narrative types is through the significance of their meanings. Myths do not offer factual truth (as history does); rather, myths exist outside time (i.e., they are eternal), and function in a symbolic manner rather than as literal truth. When someone states that a myth is "true," that person is not referring to its accuracy in relation to some empirical evidence of its occurrence; rather, one uses the word "true" in relation to an individual or group's experiences with the myth's meaning (i.e. its spiritual significance). This theory focuses on the way that mythology is acted out through performance - that is, mythologies are not just stories to tell, they are actually scripts that we act out in our lives socially and/or religiously. Jessie Weston further built on this theory in her book, *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), where she analyzed the mythological elements of folklore, magic, and religion and found that myths exist within the broader cultural network of folklore, magic, and religion. This theory demonstrates the way that mythology is a cultural element in a larger system than a single narrative form. The Finnish folklorist Lauri Honko offered one of the best definitions of mythology to date as follows:

Myth is a narrative of the gods; it is a religious description of how the universe was created as a combination of divine actions; it describes the order and rules of life defined by the actions of the gods during the creation of the universe; these rules still apply today as a result of God's creation of life and culture through laws established by God. A myth also serves to validate and express the religious values and beliefs of a society, to establish and support the practice of ritual in relation to its practical results, and to delineate the holy/holy land as a result of God's creation of the world. The definition above identifies four fundamental functions of myth: to explain the cosmological order; to legitimize social order; to prescribe normative behaviour; and to sanctify religious experience. Myths perform all four of these functions by means of a narrative. In addition, myths are also connected with the broader field of mythology, which is defined as the systematic collection and interpretation of mythic narratives, including mono-narratives, fables, allegories, and parables. This relationship between myth and mythology emphasises the multi-dimensional nature of myth, which typically operates at multiple levels of meaning and application. One of the first to introduce the concept of archetypes into the study of myth was Carl Gustav Jung. Jung stated that archetypes are located in the "collective unconscious," which represents the psychic dispositions of men and women that are a result of hereditary forces and shared by the entire human race. In other words, the collective unconscious is a part of each person's unconscious that consists of the evolutionary ideas, concepts, and values that our ancestors held dear. He theorized those human beings retain within themselves the concepts, ideas, and values that their ancestors valued, and that these concepts find expression through mythology, ritual and creative literature. Therefore, when authors use archetypes in their literature, they are tapping into the collective unconscious to create literature that is meaningful across culture, and to make connections between cultures

through literature. Moreover, one area of Jung's scholarship was an attempt to understand religion and mythology from a perspective rooted in human existence. Religion, for Jung, is a construct of life in the world that has been formed by human experience throughout time. A meaningful discussion of religious and mythological phenomena cannot take place unless one considers that they are all rooted in the human experience. By taking a humanistic view of mythology, Jung treated mythological stories as materials for psychological studies. In his Terry Lectures at Yale in 1937, Jung commented on how without an understanding of the psychic dimension of religion, one cannot discuss or analyse religious literature. He opposed both the uncritical acceptance of religion and the scientific dismissal of religion. Jung sought to better understand the realities of religious and mythological experiences, and thus, regarded them as actual, existing as concrete realities within the depth of human experience. This approach helped create what is now known as archetypal criticism within the field of literary studies. Archetypal criticism is an approach to analysing texts by looking for mythic structures within a culture (people) or "racial" group, i.e., by studying culture's myths and rituals as they pertain to the work. Archetypal works reveal deeper truths about culture and humanity than the apparent story being told by the text. Archetypal criticism was methodologically developed by Northrop Frye, who published his work on archetypal criticism in *Fearful Symmetry* (1947), *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957)^[12], and *Fables of Identity* (1963). Frye also described the interconnectedness of literature and archetypes, suggesting that literature mimicked the complete dreams of humanity while existing as an independent, self-contained universe that combines and unifies the natural world (the universe) with the human world, via the imagination. Myths are among the primary means whereby cultures express and transmit culture. In the narrative form, myths encode the fundamental values, beliefs and world views that make up a society. This facilitates memory and communication. Through mythological references, communities develop shared understanding of these values which enables them to communicate efficiently; a single allusion can generate a rich and complex web of meaning.

Mythologically, this function is clear in India. Names like Ram, Lakshman, Bharat, Sita, Hanuman, Krishna, Arjun, Karna and Draupadi conjure immediate associations for members of Indian society who use them in their regular conversations. References to episodes experienced between Ram and Hanuman in the Ramayana, or to experiences between the Pandavas (Krishna, Arjun, Karna, etc.) and Kauravas (e.g., Bhishma, Duryodhana) in the Mahabharata trigger the entire context of a given interaction and elicit millions of associations for listeners or readers. The use of this mythological lexicon creates a cultural language which exists side by side, but is separate from, the everyday linguistic communication.

The German Romantics and Roland Barthes have argued for the significance of mythopoesis in literature and as an instrument of power, while Frank Kermode has proposed that the mythic "short-circuits" perception and releases the creative imagination. Northrop Frye believed that literature is an adaptation of myth, while John Vickery argued that James Frazer's own work in *The Golden Bough* guided the creative imagination of contemporary western societies in developing a mythopoeic-style literature. The collective

function of cultural food explains why myths continue to exist regardless of apparent conflict with scientific rationality - they meet needs not met by the scientific explanation, such as needs for significance and purpose and for maintaining connectedness to something greater than one's own existence. Humans still create belief systems and try to find answers for abstract questions that cannot be answered by empirical methods, even in technological societies. There are blurred and argued boundaries relating myth, folklore, and religion. All three of these contain a narrative that has traditional content passed from one generation to another and are hierarchically categorized by culture (i.e., difference in hierarchy). Myths relate to gods or cosmological events; therefore, they usually have an authority tied to religion. Folklore has a more generalized traditional material category containing legends, folktales, customs that may or may not fall under a set theological belief. Religion takes mythological narratives and forms them into an institutionalized or systematic belief through doctrine and ritual. This delineation becomes complicated in an Indian context. The Ramayana and Mahabharata could be viewed as both mythological narratives and literary epics, or folklore; however, both categories also categorize them as religious texts. While viewed as sacred texts by millions, they also serve as sources for artistic adaptation as well as artistic and literary critique. Because of their multipurpose function, Indian mytho-stories create a unique space at the intersection of multiple genres and subgenres. As a final point, we need to consider what "sacred" texts/writings are. In pre-modern societies, sacred vs secular was not a well-defined distinction and the natural vs supernatural was not clearly defined. In pre-modern societies, gods, humans and nature were all part of an unbroken chain. Through modern science, we have created divisions that have no historical context in the mythological consciousness. Even current societies can never fully eradicate the spiritual aspect; science demonstrates how events transpire yet cannot adequately address meaning and purpose, which mythology accomplishes. This aspect explains the growth of mythic literature today; authors have written from ancient sources not because they were not aware of scientific expression, but because they realize that the nature of the question asked will largely determine the type of answer provided. The framework of mythology provides a basis for meaningful existence, supporting rather than undermining scientific knowledge.

Myths perform important social functions causing myths to exist over two entirely different histories. For one reason, myths help create social order, by providing legitimacy for hierarchies and institutions. Secondly, myths assist people in establishing behavioural patterns through the use of exemplary narrative. Thirdly, myths allow for social cohesion through collective narratives that provide meaning to one's membership in a community. Fourthly, myths allow society to respond to its collective anxieties through symbolism; i.e., resolving unresolved conflicts where practical solutions are elusive. Socially, Fredric Jameson (1981) describes myths as having an ideological role to fulfill. He asserts that narrative represents, through symbolism, the actual social reality of the author, but that it is only upon the reading of a narrative, can one discover and understand the conscious truth of such historical aspects of society. Romantic and supernatural narratives reflect closely the cultures in which they are produced, while at the same

time expressing deep-seated human desires for an 'ideal' society. Jameson builds upon Freud's concept of wish-fulfillment, and Lévi-Strauss's idea of the "savage mind," to show that creative works offer a symbolic resolution to actual (although unconsciously-attributed) cultural/social challenges. These creative works (literature or otherwise) can provide a resolution to problems and conflict within society from which they developed out of. Creative works can also provide resolution to an oppressive social problem through magic by way of narrative.

If one considers the modern mythological literature in this understanding, these texts reflect modern-day 'utopian' desire and the modern conception of historical reality through their ideological function. They also debunk and demystify ideologies that express the deeper anxieties the culture has towards political relations and political action. As discussed in the last chapter, "stereoscopic" reasoning applied to all literature, including the literary genre of the contemporary Indian phenomenon of mythological fiction, will reveal the hidden anxieties/conflict in the literature. The analysis of the work of Indian mythological fiction, as noted above, presents itself as a cultural product that responds to the anxieties of globalisation, identity crisis, and rapid social change. They provide resolution to the identity crisis experienced by English-speaking, cosmopolitan classes in order to make sense of their identity in a globalised Indian cultural context. Mythological literature has become a consumable commodity for the purposes of global capitalism while serving an ideological function by mystifying the material conditions of society. Anthropologists have long examined how humans developed culture and civilization. In examining how humans developed culture anthropologists have noted that myths are at the core of creation. How anthropologists approach mythology depends on how the myths have developed. The approach of Bronislaw Malinowski to the study of myth is one that believes that the study of myth is about how myths accomplish social function. The analysis that he does of myth looks at how the story of origins gives social order to society. For Malinowski the myth is more than a primitive understanding of why nature occurs, but is a charter of the social institutions and customs of society. The myth provides authority for existing social orders by linking them to the events that occurred at the beginning of time. Lévi-Strauss' approach to the study of mythology was the structuralist approach or use of scientific inquiry into how myth expresses the underlying structure of the mind. In his work *The Raw and the Cooked* (1970) ^[20], he states in a somewhat controversial way that "It is not humans who have developed myth; rather myths have developed humans; and humans are not aware of how they have been developed." Lévi-Strauss' analysis of human involvement with mythology directly challenges the common notion that humans create myths to serve their own needs. He presents myths as functioning through people as structural expressions. For Lévi-Strauss, myths are the organizing principles or ways in which humans reformulate their lives in accordance with myth. For him, myths establish binary oppositions - e.g., raw vs. cooked; life vs. death; and nature vs. culture - that structure the thoughts of humans across cultures. Although there are many variations of specific myths, there are some consistent structures found within them (i.e., the underlying structures show us the way all humans think is similar even though we may have many

cultural differences). Joseph Campbell also suggests this in "The Hero with a Thousand Faces." He believes that all myths contain teleological and transcendental meanings that surpass the specific cultural contexts of the myths. Campbell described what is known as the "monomyth" (or the hero's journey) as an example of a global storytelling pattern that is found throughout society, which consists of three stages: 1) departure from one's home; 2) initiation into the world of the unknown; 3) return home with a new understanding of life. Campbell's theory implies that the purpose of mythological stories around the globe is more about dealing with challenges that people face throughout their lifetimes, as opposed to just being culturally relevant stories. From an anthropological perspective, as it relates to this subject, myth serves a basic function within the culture and should not be regarded as simply being creative forms of entertainment or being primitive errors. However, anthropologists differ in their view of whether the primary function of myths is to create social order, provide insight into how the mind functions, or serve as vehicles for communicating universal truths. In relation to this subject, the relationship between literature and mythology has been an important issue for scholars of literature (particularly during the 20th century). As a result, Northrop Frye was able to develop a theoretical basis for relating the two. In his work entitled "Anatomy of Criticism," Frye presents literature as "intentionally created fables" and suggests that literature provides insight into the world we live in by creating new spaces in the imagination of the reader. In the development of his theory of "mythoi," Frye described four basic types of mythic plot structure that are associated with the various seasons of nature: Comedy to spring; Romance to summer; Tragedy to fall; and Satire to winter. All myths include stories, narratives or literature and all are defined by their structure in relation to one another. As such, they connect all forms of literature to one another as well as all literature as a whole. The four mythoi do not create a closed ring or cycle, but a wheel (Spengler) that evolves from birth/growth/maturity to death. Frye's analyses of Blake developed a framework for creating four actions that create the "vision" of humanity: falling from a higher state; struggling within a fallen world; achieving redemption from that state; and experiencing an apocalypse that returns you to the higher state—corresponding to tragedy/irony/comedy/romance. Frye's framework allows readers to understand mythological foundations of literature without requiring specific mythological information. However, even works that do not have any specific mythological meaning will be performed according to the mythic pattern (Detective stories illustrate the quest; Romantic comedies express renewal and social unity; and Tragedy demonstrates the progression from prosperity to ruin). The archetypal method for evaluating literary material is concerned with how a text contains mythology and ritual, both of which are detail-based pieces of art that possess multiple layers of interpretation. The notable use of Mythological construction by T.S. Eliot is exemplified by his use of multiple myths in *The Waste Land*. Additionally, the artistic dualism present in James Joyce's *Ulysses* maps Homeric literature onto the modern city of Dublin. These two texts and many other examples illustrate how current literature uses mythological construction to continue the mythopoeic legacy despite rejecting traditional religious institutions.

The language aspect of myths has been looked at a lot by thinkers. People like Lévi-Strauss and Barthes saw myths as both a structure and a kind of language, suggesting that how language works can help us understand myths. This way of looking at it shows that myths are like a system of signs; they communicate meaning that goes beyond just what the words literally say. Lévi-Strauss talked about "reversible" and "non-reversible" time, which he linked to the overall language system and actual speech. Myths work in both ways at the same time. While they show a timeless structure, they also carry historical meaning, giving us glimpses into the past that are hidden in the stories we tell now. Roland Barthes built on this idea in his book *Mythologies*, where he treated myth as "depoliticised speech" that works hand-in-hand with ideology. For Barthes, myth is a way of communicating and a method of making meaning that functions within certain historical times and social situations. Myth takes things that are historical and makes them seem natural, making arrangements that are specific to a culture appear universal and unavoidable. Barthes wrote: What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality... The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human actions; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences.

When we look closely, we see that myths serve a purpose: they make things that are just part of history seem as natural as breathing. They disguise the fact that society is something we've built, presenting it instead as if it's always been this way. Thinkers like Barthes, who follow a post-structuralist view, believe that myths are full of different voices and broken pieces, not just one clear message. Instead of telling us one single thing, myths open up spaces for new meanings to appear and be thought about. A great example of this is A.K. Ramanujan's essay "Three Hundred Ramayanas." It shows how the Ramayana isn't just one official book, but rather countless versions found across different cultures and times. Whether a myth is "true" is still a big debate. Nowadays, when someone calls something a "myth," they often mean it's a lie or a fantasy that needs to be disproven. But that's a sharp contrast to how people traditionally saw myths—as carriers of deep, important truths. The difference between mythological truth and historical truth is key here. History tries to be accurate with facts, and it would lose its value if it wasn't. Myths, though, make different claims; they express meaning rather than just reporting events. People who believe a myth is true usually mean it holds deep personal or spiritual significance, not that it's a factual historical record. Ernst Cassirer once explained that a myth can be seen as a story or a group of ideas that get at the deeper parts of human experience. Myths show a profound reality and deliver powerful truths, but these are different kinds of truths than scientific findings or historical facts. Barthes' work points out that myths can definitely be used as tools to make certain social setups and power imbalances seem completely normal. Modern mythological stories or products might even make social reality seem complicated and obscure, all while appearing to meet our cultural needs. Fredric Jameson, in his book *Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* from 1989, looked at how art and cultural items, including myths, become things to buy and sell. In today's world, culture

often turns into a product to be consumed for its look or feel. Myths become like cultural merchandise in a consumer-driven age—they're commercial objects that pretend to just be sources of enjoyment. This critical view suggests that current mythological literature does more than just entertain or preserve culture; it serves other purposes. These stories might make us feel nostalgic for an imagined past, which can actually pull readers away from thinking about today's real social issues. They act a bit like what Althusser called "Ideological State Apparatuses"—systems that help keep existing social relationships in place through cultural means, not by force.

Philosophers have come up with all sorts of ways to understand myths. The old struggle between what's reasonable and what's mythical goes back to the Greek philosophers and is still something people talk about today. Some viewpoints see myth as a simpler way of thinking that needs to be replaced by rational philosophy or science. Others believe that mythological thinking tackles questions that logic alone can't answer. People have explored the importance of myth in various ways: as a source of history, as religion, as moral lessons, or as expressions of where our psychology comes from. Questions about how myths are built—whether their meaning comes from clever wordplay, as Vico, Mueller, and Schlegel thought, or from a symbolic awareness, as Jung and Cassirer suggested—are still debated. These arguments tie into different ideas about what myths actually do: whether they're like rituals, theories, wish-fulfillments, or even early forms of science. Each perspective highlights different aspects but might miss others. The fact is, myths are too complex to be crammed into one single explanation.

Friedrich Nietzsche has had a huge impact on how we think about myths today. He understood that myths actually create truth; they don't just show us truths that already exist. Instead, they actively build the very systems that make it possible for us to even talk about truth. This idea connects with Foucault's work on discourse and power, showing how myths help set the stage for what we can know and believe. The fundamental difference between an event and its meaning is what truly defines a myth. Myths try to bridge this gap by giving us good symbolic ways to understand things. But their meaning stays endlessly open and universal, exactly because once we realize there's no single, fixed meaning, that very gap keeps asking for more interpretation, forever. Language, as a system where meanings are always open, means that we can never fully finish interpreting a myth.

Myths mainly work through symbols, not by taking things literally. This symbolic nature allows myths to be understood in many different situations while keeping their main point. Symbols pack complex ideas into images, stories, and characters that affect us on a deeper level than just intellectual understanding. Northrop Frye, in his 1951^[43] book *The Archetypes of Literature*, pointed out two main kinds of archetypes: those for characters and those for situations or symbols. Character archetypes include: The Hero, The Outcast, The Scapegoat, Lovers, Gods and supernatural creatures. Situation or symbol archetypes include: Journey, Task, Quest, Water, Sun, Color, Serpent, Seasons. These recurring patterns show up again and again across cultures and time periods, suggesting some universal experiences and ways of imagining things that all humans share. Seeing them pop up in literature proves that even

seemingly brand-new creative works have mythological roots. Myths don't just create culture; they also keep it alive and spread it through signs, pictures, metaphors, and symbols. This way myths use signs explains their power in culture—they give us the basic language to express cultural ideas in a way that goes beyond just what one person says. Turning a symbol into a simple lesson or abstract idea, though, can drain a myth of its power. When myths are simplified into straightforward morals or propositions, they lose that special, almost magical quality that sets them apart from mere fiction. The best mythological stories manage to keep their rich symbolism while still being relevant to what's happening now. Language and myth share some basic qualities that show how closely they're tied together. Both are systems of signs that let us communicate meanings that go beyond just what's physically in front of us. Both are things we've built as societies, but they seem completely natural to those who use them. And both shapes how we see and think, giving us ways to make sense of our experiences. Cassirer studied myth as a type of symbolic thinking, much like language, art, and science. Each of these symbolic forms gives us a distinct way to organize our experiences. Mythological thinking isn't worse than scientific thinking; it just works by different rules—rules that are better suited for certain human concerns. The way myths are structured as narratives is why they can be passed down and changed so easily. Because myths are stories, they can be translated into different languages and adjusted for different cultures, all while still being recognizable. The Ramayana, for instance, has hundreds of versions across Southeast Asian cultures, with each one adapting the core story to fit local interests, yet it's still clearly the same tale. Barthes' idea of myth as a "second-order semiological system" helps us understand this connection. Ordinary language is the first system, where signs (like sounds or written words) link up with concepts (like "flower") to make signs. Myth then works on a second level, where the sign from ordinary language becomes the symbol for a deeper mythological meaning. For example, the word "rose" just means a flower. But in myth, a rose can mean passion, beauty, or how quickly things fade away. This structural relationship explains why myths feel both obvious and mysterious at the same time. Their surface story is usually clear—anyone can follow a mythological tale. Yet their deeper meaning is endless, leading to constant new interpretations and understandings. Beyond academic discussion, myths are a living reality for millions of people. In places like India, mythological stories influence daily life, guiding moral choices, social relationships, and who people see themselves as. Characters from the Ramayana and Mahabharata act as role models and benchmarks for judging modern situations. This "lived" aspect is what makes myths different from just literature or entertainment. When people believe in and practice myths, these myths become frameworks for how they exist, not just things to appreciate for their beauty. The line between believing a myth and just enjoying it aesthetically is often blurry—many people who wouldn't say they literally believe a myth still find these stories offer meaningful guidance for life. The recent popularity of mythological literature makes this relationship even more complex. Commercial mythological products might be enjoyed for their aesthetics without the deep personal commitment that was typical of traditional mythological practices. Yet, even just enjoying them aesthetically might unconsciously pass on mythological

ideas, shaping how people see things and what they value, even if they consider themselves secular and rational. Jung's work suggests that mythological patterns are at play whether we're aware of them or not. Our "collective unconscious" holds archetypes that influence our thoughts and actions, whether or not we recognize their mythological nature. From this perspective, modern humans are just as shaped by myths as their ancestors were, even if the specific myths at work in today's consciousness are different.

Conclusion

The study of myth, culture, and language shows how deeply connected they are in shaping how we think and how societies are organized. Myths provide stories that cultures use to express their deepest values and understand their place in the world. Language acts as the way these myths are passed down and changed across generations and cultural borders. The recent boom in mythological literature in India demonstrates that myths are still very much alive, even with all our scientific and technological progress—or perhaps because of it. These works address needs that rational thinking can't satisfy: the need for meaning, for purpose, for identity, and for a connection to traditions bigger than ourselves. They do complex cultural work, both preserving heritage and updating it for modern times. A critical look shows that we can't just accept mythological literature as simple cultural preservation. These works are part of commercial systems, they serve other purposes, and they might even make social reality seem confusing while appearing to meet cultural needs. Yet, this kind of criticism doesn't mean we should dismiss mythological literature as simply manipulative. The rich symbolism in myths allows for meanings that go beyond any single interpretation, including critical ones. The relationship between myth and reality remains interestingly unclear. Myths aren't just false beliefs that need to be corrected; they are symbolic systems that give us ways to understand and act in the world. They might twist reality a bit, but they also reveal parts of human experience that a straightforward description can't quite capture. Indian literary tradition is particularly skilled at handling its mythological inheritance. The Ramayana and Mahabharata hold unique places as sacred texts, great literary works, folk tales, and sources for endless new creative adaptations, all at the same time. We don't have to treat them as historically accurate to value them, nor as purely fictional to respect them. They exist in an interesting space where different types of stories and ways of looking at things come together. For future studies of myth, culture, and language, it's important to remember this complexity. Simple approaches—whether just dismissing myth as an ancient mistake or celebrating it without question as timeless wisdom—don't capture the many-sided nature that keeps mythology always relevant. The most useful approach is one that sees myths as cultural creations that still address real human needs, as historical products that carry meaning across time, and as language structures that actually shape what meaning itself can be.

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