Myths and Mythological Readings: A Survey

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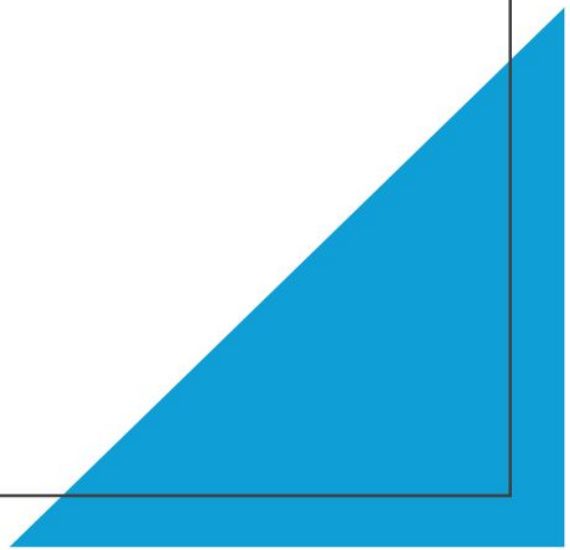
What is a Myth?

- Primitive Science
- A part of religion
- Explains creation with evaluation of ‘good’.
- Enacted rituals
- Embodies knowledge
- Dramatizes the human condition



Why do we need Myth Still?

- To understand life not-cosmologically, but existentially.
- Not to understand the nature of the World but the nature of the experience of the World.
- To feel the ‘sacred’ time- what is near-god phenomenon.
- To know about ancient history and age-old civilization.

Myths- As tool

- **Boas** called Myths as “Cultural Reflectors”
- **Bronislaw Malinowski** termed Myth as- “Sociological Charter”
- **Miss C. S. Burne** and **Professor J. L. Myres** labels Myths as aetiological
- **C. S. Lewis** identifies Myths as- “Permanent Object of Contemplation”.
- **Ernst Cassirer** -the process of humanization

Types of Myth

Types of Myth	Feature
Etiological	Explains why is something the way it is
Chthonic	Details the underworld
Divine	Details Gods and Goddesses
Morality	Defines goodness and righteousness
Pedagogical	Brings us into how many with “the ground of being”.

Myths- Recent Form

- Two sets of social myths are noticed-

1. **Master Myths** (Durable-langue durée) - Express deepest views and feelings of fears, hopes, pride, frustration “Survival Myths”
2. **Derivative Myths-** means to adopt and change for self-esteem and self-reliance

Myth- the Functions

Installation of “mystery of Existence”

Establishment of a cosmology

Supports social order

Leads towards spiritual self-realization

Mystification Process

Gérard Bouchard- Prof. of History and Sociology in Canada

- An Anchor- an event or an episode
- An Imprint- the sense of a wound
- Ethos- quest for equality, social justice and democracy
- Sacralization of the ethos- creates universal images of control through ‘awe’. S. Moscovici calls it prescriptive representations

Is Myth- a part of Literature?

- Yes, for Myths- as stories,

a) deal with the origin of the World

b) the end of the World

c) a paradisiacal state

d) describes what people can ‘never see for themselves’

e) pictures societal structures

f) provokes philosophical system of inquiry

g) contains events, plot and words in sequence.

Popular Writers on/about Indian Myths

- **Devdutt Patnaik**:
  - Indian Mythology: Tales, Symbols, and Rituals from the Heart of the Subcontinent (2003)
  - Queerness in Indian Mythology (2018)
  - Gender Fluidity in Hindu Mythology (2018)
- **Amish Tripathi**: War of Lanka (2023)
- **Ina Mukhoty**: Daughters of the Sun (2018)

- **Kavita Kané**:
  - *The Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* (2013)
  - *Menaka's Choice* (2015)
  - *Ahalya's Awakening* (2019)
- **Ashwin Sanghi:**
  - *The Krishna Key* (2012)
  - *Chanakya's Chant* (2022)
- **Deep Trivedi:**
  - I am Krishna (2022)
  - I am Gita (2023)

Eminent Theorists

❑**Claude Levi-Strauss**: French Social Anthropologist (1908-2009)

- Identifies myths as a type of speech
- Developed the concept of Mytheme.
- Example:

1. Hades and Nirvana are mythemes of after life.
2. Baithareni Nadi and River Lethe
3. Kailash Parbat and the Mount of Aeropagus

❑**Kenneth Burke**: American Literary Critic (1897-1993)

- Literature is ‘Symbolic action’
- Myth is the transformation of Metaphysics into story.

❑**Rene Girard**: French by birth (1923-2015)

- Myths on the origins of suffering
- Myths provide- mimetic desire

  - the scapegoat

Features of Chhattisgarhi Myths

- God is the first progenitor or first father of his people.
- God is associated with the concept of the ruler or king.
- Local God is the mediator between people and their environment.
- Expression of “a reality lived”
- Makes “the past” as important as the present.

Thank You