



Comparative Study of Myth and Fantasy In the Works of Girish Karnard and Amish Tripathi

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Abstract

This article tracks the brief history of comparative literature. In this paper an attempt is made to compare the works of Girish Karnard and Amish Tripathi in significance of myth and fantasy. However, both writers are expert at in different genre. Girish Karnard writes especially drama and Amish writes novels. Nevertheless, it is a matter of great consideration that depiction of characters, indebtedness of myth, folktales and fantasy from ancient Hindu texts, fictionalization of characters, re-telling of original stories are probably the same. This article stands as intervenes in the comparative study of myth and fantasy in the works of both authors. It can be examined that myth and fantasy as a language for both authors by which characters communicate and narrates the stories. Entirely or partly stories, symbols, rituals, and myths are used as language from generation to generation. There is a myth behind the myth also. Completeness is a kind of myth, Karnard is trying to remark in Hayavadana. Although many novels have written by Amish Tripathi but The Shiva Trilogy and Ramchandra Series have been especially interpreted the selected study. It is matter of assumption that both writer are using common myth that are instilled in our society. It can be state that myths have been an unavoidable theme in writing throughout history. It can be assumed that both writer is trying to rewrite and churn out the myths and fantasy from the ancient texts of India. Especially Vedas and Puranas are vital sources of their story telling and storying the myths and folktales.

Keywords: *Myth, Folktales, Mythology, Re-writing, Fictionalization, Story-telling, Storying*

Introduction

In the study of world literature and translation studies, comparative study is cornerstone. In recent years cross-cultural criticism and study are the matter of spotlighting issues that asses

any critical and cultural texts in significance of comparative concern. In the proper study of comparative literature, translation study lurks as an academic discipline. To compare is very significant way of analysis and interpretation in any genre of literature. Comparative way of knowledge demonstrates comprehensive knowledge of literary relational aspects of influences and similarities. It is a distinct way to study the multiple literatures with mutual influences crossing all types of boundaries. It can be assume that comparative way of interpretation involves the study of texts across cultures, genders, time, and place. Less or more similarities and dissimilarities occur in more than one texts of same discipline on a particular theme. As key figure of Victorian age Mathew Arnold remarked that “Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures.”¹

There is no any fix remark from where the formal beginning of comparative literature occurred. It is acknowledged that comparative literature acquired its name from a lists of french anthologies used for the teaching of literature, published in 1816, and entitled *Cours de literature comparee*. Rene Wellek states that the German version of the term, ‘vergleichende Literaturgeschichte’, first appeared in a book by Moriz Carriere in 1854, while the earliest English usage is attributed to Matthew Arnold, who referred to ‘comparative literatures’ in the plural in a letter of 1848². In 1974 by Francois Jost has made a statement to define the concept of comparative literature in very clear lucid way. Comparative literature: represents more than an academic discipline. It is an overall view of literature, of the world of letters, a humanistic ecology, a literary Weltanschauung, a vision of the cultural universe, inclusive and comprehensive.³

Explanation

We know much and less both about Girish Karnard who is a renowned bi-lingual dramatist of post-independence India, and Jnanpeeth Awardee. Girish Karnard is a contemporary author, playwright, screenwriter, actor, and movie director in Indian English literature. His works are incorporated with Indian mythology and history germinated in ancient myth. Myths are stories of uncertain origin. Myth and fantasy are integral part of drama that less or more instilled in human ethos and consciousness from generation to generation. Mythology, mythosphere, mythopoesis, and mythography are the terms by which the idea and concept behind myth and fantasy can be studied. Storying the myth, fantasy, folktales, and mythology of history in fiction is a matter of chief concern in comparative literature.

This article is organized as follow to a comparative study of Girish Kernard and Amish Tripathi in the light of myth and fantasy. Myths and fantasy are the eternal source for creative writing, it can be poetry, novel, drama etc. it can be seen as the expression of ideas rooted in unconscious mind. Mythical stories are, or seem arbitrary, meaningless, absurd, yet nevertheless they seem to reappear all over the world⁴. Everybody lives in myth. For communication symbols, signs, motifs are required which are embedded in the form of myth. Both authors have used these myths as a tool for communication within the characters of their works. Myth can be defined in two ways. First, it is sacred idea that is inherited over generations. Second, it is absurd, irrational, and fantastic concepts about the world that appeal to unsophisticated mind.⁵ Myth can be right or wrong but it is exixting in the society. Among the modern Indian writers Girish Karnard and Amish Tripathi may be taken as leading writers who have used myth and fantasy very aptly. Important works of Karnard such as Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Yayati (1961), Nagamandala: Play with Cobra, Fire and the Rain, and Bali : The Sacrifice, are saturated with the themes of myth and fantasy. In the central characters of his plays various types of Archetypal images and folklore are embedded.

Unfathomable indeed is the mercy of the elephant-headed Ganesha. He fulfils the desires of all-a grandson to a grandfather, a smile to a child, a neigh to a horse.⁶

Perhaps Karnard is trying to draw the attention of the people toward mythical god of Hindu religion 'Lord Ganesha' who is the lord of 'Riddhi Siddhi' as the destroyer of incompleteness. It can be assumed that in the entire play Karnard does not use myth and fantasy but between the conversation of the characters and gives a literary twist. It is during the middle part of the main plot of the play that the twist occurs in the life of the three characters---Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini. The play *The Fire and the Rain (1998)*, Karnard has taken the myth of Yavakri and Parvasu from 'Vana Parva' of the Mahabharata. Through the mythical story of Yavakri, Karnard is trying to encapsulate the idea the danger of knowledge without wisdom. As the title of the play signifies 'Fire' is Agni in Indian ancient mythology that is worshipped by Indians in all rituals. Karnard has portrayed Parvasu as a mark of egoist in Indian myth. As Parvasu says to Vishakha in the conversation- One can use austerities like your fool, Yavatri, to coerce the Gods to bend to ones will, Stand in a circle of fire⁷.

Nagamandala: Play with Cobra, is another important play that is saturated with the themes of myth and folk tales. It can be assumed, through the blending of myth, history, folktales and fantasy Karnard is trying to explore the socio-cultural issues that are instilled in Indian society from long past.

The story of the play *Bali: The Sacrifice (1980)* has been derived from a Kannada epic *Yashodhara Charite* in which Karnard is turned toward the exploration of the themes of violence and religion through the mythical tales of Jainism. The central story of the play revolves around a Hindu king who gets attracted towards a Jain young woman and get married with her. She changes

him into Jainism and in this manner restricts the convention of animal sacrifice as a way of assuaging the divine beings. Through the mythical tales Karnard is attempting to expose the social evil such as 'sin' and 'infidelity'. In this play playwright is trying to unveil the social evil such as Child Marriage. It is a matter to be noticed that Karnard is trying to prospect social and human evils through the mythical stories of Indian ancient texts. It seemingly seems that Karnard is trying to proliferate myth and legends as a metaphors for contemporary conditions. His plays are bound with the elements of reality, fantasy and myths in which he is portraying the socio-cultural problems. In the play *Yayati*, there is a perfect illustration and examples of fantasy used by Karnard.

Amish Tripathi is leading author who has instilled myth, folk tales, fantasy, and ancient history in his works. He is famous for writing mytho-fiction. Myth-fiction is a different kind of fiction in which author presents popular myth and folk tales in the form of fiction. It is a matter of great concern during the fictionalization of mythical characters, incidents, history, and stories that are in the original texts, they lost their originality. And this kind of modern story-telling challenges the traditional religious texts. His works such as *The Secret of Nagas (2011)*, *Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku (2015)* *Sita: The Warrior of Mithila (2018)*, *Raavan: The Enemy of Aryavarta (2019)*, *The War of Lanka (2022)* are the re-telling of the original text. He is popular for historical and mythological-fiction. His most of the works is influenced with Shivpuran. He has interpreted the popular myths of Shiva, Rama, Ravana, and Sita which are in the oral form or in story telling form in Indian society and being told from generation to generation with the virtues and morals along with aesthetic pleasure.

The Meluhan Suryavanshis live by 'Satya, Dharma, Maan, Truth, Duty and Honour' (62) which are the nucleus values of Indian cultural identity. They say about Rama's teaching: "If you have to choose between my people and dharma, choose dharma! If you have to

choose between my family and dharma, choose dharma! Even if you choose between me and dharma, always choose dharma! (The Oath of Vayuputras, 282).

The Vedas have always become a great source of reception for Indian literature in English. His novels reflects his interest for history, mythology, and philosophy as well as his ability to see the faith of human being God and divine power. And it is widely acknowledged most of the literary texts in Indian English literature more or less are influenced with Vedas, Puranas, Smriti, and great epics.

Through the characters he is trying to intertwine mythological stories. Tripathi's objective is not to glorify the traditional myths but through the story telling he is exposing socio-cultural evils. *The Immortals of Meluha*(2010) is a foregrounding works of Amish Tripathi in which he has argued socio-cultural issues through the characters who are directly or indirectly associated with Indian ancient myths. *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010) Amish is depicting Hindu God, legends in the symbolic words-

Indra Dev ki Jai.! Agni Dev ki Jai.!

Jai Shakti Devi ki.! Varun dev ki Jai.!

Jai Pawan dev Ki.!(Amish 342)

As Girish Karnard does not take entire mythological characters and stories from ancient texts Amish Tripathi is also doing the same. Amish only takes those characters and stories that are useful for the fictionalization of the stories. It is widely known that Amish writes novels especially fictions. He fictionalizes the mythological characters and builds a new story in the form of fiction. Both writers takes those God and mythical characters about whom ordinary people are aware. It is very significant to note down that Tripathi makes ancient myths in the form of ordinary character through fictionalization and imagination. He fictionalizes the story of Mahadev (God Shiva) in common life. A man becomes a Mahadev when he fights for good. A Mahadev is not born as one from his mother's womb. He is forged in the heat of battle, when he wages a war to destroy evil⁸.

Both writers take original ancient myths from the Indian epics, vedas, puranas, dharama shastras etc and fictionalize them in own way through research and interpretations. Myths are represented as the learning of a society, its knowledge and practical wisdom done through narrative and memorable stories existing in the society. Religious symbolism has been used very aptly through the story-telling. Use of folk motives in the works of both authors are more or less common, it has been as a tool and technique in the development of the story.

Selected study is based on the works written by Girish Karnard and Amish Tripathi. In the study only those works have been selected that are saturated with ancient myths, folktales, fantasy, and legends. Both authors are influenced with Vedas and Puranas. In this study ancient myths and its modern portrayal have been studied thoroughly. Descriptive and comparative research methods have been used in the study. Narratives, sacred narratives, symbols, and rituals are entirely or partly common in both writers of the selected study. It can be assumed that both authors interpreting myths, transforming myth, and studying myth in contemporary socio-cultural context.

The formal and theoretical structure of comparative study in every literature less or more are versatile. In the dimension of India, the comparative literature is quite different European, American, or African literature. Indian Literature is one that is written in different languages. In this study two writers have been selected. Girish Karnard and Amish Tripathi both are incorporating ancient Indian myths that are especially derived from the great epics. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata are vital source of their story telling. In the

prologue of the play *The Fire and the Rain* very aptly Karnard states “Brahma, the lord of all creation mind the necessary element from the four Vedas”⁹. Karnard foretells the story in present contexts like Yayati of the Mahabharata, the common man of today suffering with social illness is groping in the darkness of material and sensual pleasures that are harmful for ideal life. Yayati in Karnard finds himself detached from the society wandering here and there aimlessly, finds himself in a world in which the old spiritual values have been entirely swept away and new spiritual ones are yet to be discovered. In the process of newness he feels detached from the reality. Blind pursuit of pleasure has become the supreme religion in his life in the modern times. And it is idea of chief concern that author is trying to instill social values and culture in the form of story. This is not only portrayed by Karnard but Amish Tripathi also in very apt and insight way.

It seemingly seems that in the manner of re-telling the story, many contents are distorted from original form. It can be assume that when both of the authors narrativizes their story and folktales, both appease to be little different. In the modernization of mythical characters and story, Amish Tripathi distorts the original text, we can take the examples of Meluha. The distortion of the characters from original texts can be seen in the fastest-selling books *The Shiva Trilogy* and *Ramchandra Series*. In Meluha the role and character of Lord Shiva and Parvati are quite different from the Hindu ancient original text. In the case of Girish Karnald, the fictionalization and story- telling of mythical characters are controlled. Historical characters and events in the plays of Girish Karnard seems to be original from history. Both of the authors intermingles myth and human elements in their works for the formulation story.

Conclusion

In the process of assessing the comparative study of Girish Karnard and Amish Tripathi it can be said that this paper presents the way of decoding of ancient myth of Indian ancient texts by both authors. Ethical Wisdom and Philosophical ideas have been presented by both writers in the form of story-telling. In many ways Amish Tripathi, in accordance to Indian philosophy re-enlivens the universal field of pure consciousness¹⁰. Both writers are reworking the mythology and folklores. It can be asserted that works of both writers are reworking on myth, fantasy, and folklore.

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- ⁴ Levi-strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, 8-9.
- ⁵ Devdatta Patnaik
- ⁶ *Hayavadana*
- ⁷ *The Fire and the Rain (1998)*
- ⁸ *The Immortals of Meluha (2010)*.
- ⁹ Majumdar *Research Companion to Literature and Literary Theory*, 419.
- ¹⁰ Lata Mishra, 24.