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Editorial

Technology today is evolving at a rapid pace, enabling faster change and progress, causing an acceleration of the rate of change. However, it is not only technology trends and emerging technologies that are evolving, a lot more has changed this year due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Few new technology trends are discussed here.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning

Artificial Intelligence, or AI, has already received a lot of buzz in the past decade, but it continues to be one of the new technology trends because of its notable effects on how we live, work and play are only in the early stages. AI is already known for its superiority in image and speech recognition, navigation apps, smartphone personal assistants, ride-sharing apps and so much more.

Robotic Process Automation (RPA)

Like AI and Machine Learning, Robotic Process Automation, or RPA, is another technology that is automating jobs. RPA is the use of software to automate business processes such as interpreting applications, processing transactions, dealing with data, and even replying to emails. RPA automates repetitive tasks that people used to do.

Edge Computing

Formerly a new technology trend to watch, cloud computing has become mainstream, with major players AWS (Amazon Web Services), Microsoft Azure and Google Cloud Platform dominating the market. The adoption of cloud computing is still growing, as more and more businesses migrate to a cloud solution. But it's no longer the emerging technology trend. Edge computing is designed to help solve some of those problems as a way to bypass the latency caused by cloud computing and getting data to a data center for processing.

Quantum Computing

Next remarkable technology trend is quantum computing, which is a form of computing that takes advantage of quantum phenomena like superposition and quantum entanglement. This amazing technology trend is also involved in preventing the spread of the coronavirus, and to develop potential vaccines, thanks to its ability to easily query, monitor, analyze and act on data, regardless of the source. Another field where quantum computing is finding applications is banking and finance, to manage credit risk, for high-frequency trading and fraud detection.

Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality

The next exceptional technology trend - Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR), and Extended Reality (ER). VR immerses the user in an environment while AR enhances their environment.

Internet of Things (IoT)

Another promising new technology trend is IoT. Many “things” are now being built with WiFi connectivity, meaning they can be connected to the Internet—and to each other. Hence, the Internet of Things, or IoT. The Internet of Things is the future, and has already enabled devices, home appliances, cars and much more to be connected to and exchange data over the Internet.

July 2021

Dr. S.T. Deepa
Editor

Concept Note on International Conference on Mythology: Western & Indian Approaches February 24, 25, 2021

Dr. Rajshree Vasudevan
Director, Centre of Excellence- Art & Culture
Shri Shankarlal Sundarbai Shasun Jain College for Women
Chennai

Shri Shankarlal Sundarbai Shasun Jain College for Women is a self-supporting institution committed to the cause of education: general, professional, moral and technical, catering to the educational aspirations of the society at large. It embodies and strives to deliver world-class education and research in Science and Humanities. In keeping with this vision, The International Conference on Mythology: In Literature & Culture' (Western & Indian Approaches) on February 24th & 25th, 2021 was conducted by two departments of the college-Centre of Excellence, Art & Culture and Dept of B.A. English.

About the Department of B.A English

The Department of BA English was started in 2018 with forethought to inculcate the love for Language and literature. The objective is to enhance the learning experience through smart classrooms, state-of-the-art libraries & E-learning methodologies. The focus is to make students understand the relevance of literature and offer insights into its social impact. The department envisions to design and foster a community of creative students and skilled faculty, collaboratively promoting the study of English language and literature.

About Centre of Excellence- Art & Culture

The Centre of Excellence for Art & Culture in partnership with the National Skill Development Council, Govt. of India, was launched by Shri Subhash Ghai, Eminent Filmmaker & MESC Chairman and Padma Bhushan Dr. Padma Subrahmanyam on November 14th, 2018 in our College. The centre has embarked on an ambitious plan of creating opportunities for awareness, study, teaching, performance, research & documentation of the Arts, from India and Abroad.

Concept Note

"I believe that legends and myths are largely made of truth" J.R.R. Tolkien once famously said. Mythology is a breeze, which comes and touches our mind and soul. Several attempts have been made to define Myth and explore its nature, range and impact. The Cambridge Dictionary defines Myth as an ancient story or set of stories, especially explaining the early history of a group of people or about natural events and facts. Be it Literature or Culture, the beauty of Myth is captivating and endearing. The deliberations of the conference enabled the literary world and laymen to understand the consistent involvement of Myth in shaping modern literary texts and its influence on Language, Literature & Culture in everyday life.

The International Conference included a series of lectures by experts in the field, followed by interactive sessions, paper presentations by PG Students, Research Scholars, Independent Researchers & Members of the Faculty. The emphasis on day one was on the Western Approach while day two was on the Indian.

The Convenors of the Conference were Dr. Rajshree Vasudevan, Director, Centre of Excellence-Art & Culture & Dr. Kuljeet Kaur, Head, Dept of B.A. English assisted by Ms Subha Jasmine R Dr. Sharon Grace, Ms Priyanka Rout, Ms S. Srividhya & Ms. R.S Shankari

THE MYTHS AND LEGENDS OF THE OCEAN **Water I Venerate Thee!!!**

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As I walk into the sea, the land under my feet seems to disappear and there is nothing but water all around me. As the first rays of sunlight break into a million lamps on the waves, I pick up the same water and offer it back to Varuna, the Lord of water, thanking him for sustaining life on earth:

आपःपुनन्तुप्रुथिवींप्रुथिवीपूतापुनातुमाम् ॥

आपः or water is generally considered to be the first of the 5 elements as found in:

- (1) ॐ आपोज्योतिरसो अमृतं ब्रह्मा in the Gayatri mantra sloka and
- (2) यासृष्टिः सृष्टुः आध्या in the Nāndi shloka of Mahakavi Kalidasa's Shakuntalam which refers to 'that which was created first'.

Three-fourths of our earth and 3 sides of our country has water; and it is the water bodies that have shaped the cultures and tradition of the most ancient and urbanized civilizations, the earliest among them being our very own Saraswati-Indus civilization.

Water as a life source becomes something divine to the untainted mind and thus, veneration and awesomeness are automatic associations. The Rig Veda, the earliest mental moorings of the earliest civilized people on earth speaks of water deities as legendary. Over a period of time several myths and legends related to the oceans and seas and rivers become, for the Bharatiya, the basis for many-a- spiritual, theistic, economic, technological and cultural concepts and their evolution, right until this day. Mythology or story that passed on through the oral tradition for several millennia in the form of mantras, verbatim, seemed to them, the best form of preserving their experience rather than any other material committed to a script. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, myth is a traditional narrative usually involving supernatural or fancied persons and embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena. Imaginary person or thing is also referred to as myth. Myth also means widely held but false notion. For eg., the popular notion is that when Indra is angry, he throws his Vajrayudha or thunderbolt, which results in thundering sound in the sky, whereas we all know it is a normal natural phenomenon resulting from rain laden clouds colliding together. On the other hand, the Oxford Dictionary explains the Legend as – story (true or invented) handed down from the past. For instance, the legendary King Dushyanta created by Kalidasa is a highly glorified version of the original one of Mahabharata.

There is but just a thin dividing line between myth and legend. Albeit fiction is associated with the word myth, it is nothing but the glorification of certain concepts that mattered to a set of people at a given point in time such that it shapes the very thinking and behaviour of that population for generations to come. Thus, every myth must be sieved through carefully for they throw considerable light over building the historic traditions from grassroot levels. Delving into water myths from the hoary past, one cannot but turn first at the Rg Veda.

“समुद्रायेवसिन्धवः” points to us that the RgVedins, already understood the different types of water bodies on earth, and saw the ocean as an entity that was venerated by every river which bowed down before it.

The RgVeda states that Varuna was the Lord of the ocean, living below the waters in a palace with thousand doors or entrances and he knew every navigable route. Varuna was not only identified with the vast expanse of the ocean on earth, but also with the star-studded sky where his thousand eyes glittered and sparkled in the darkness. He is believed to have held the watery vapours above to be released as torrents of rain.

This Vedic myth brings home an important point that there already was a knowledge of the several navigable rivers which finally joined the sea. The 1000 doors and entrances would probably refer to the various seaway openings for trade and commercial relations with other lands. The story also reveals the fact that the scientific concept of the water cycle was already identified and understood, but giving it a divine identity was a typical characteristic of the Vedic Indians.

Another interesting legendary character mentioned in the Rg Veda is Bhujyus. The story goes that Bhujyus, at the direction of his father, King Tugra, organized an expedition to punish some recalcitrant islanders and it was during this voyage that he was shipwrecked and rescued by the Aswins in their 100-oared boat, after voyaging for 3 days and nights. This particular legend reveals a highly civilized society of the Vedic Indians who had developed an advanced technique of seafaring with a 100-oared boat that sustained their travel for 3 days in the sea.

Sage Vasishtha is said to have made a sea voyage with Varuna, and he himself has described how the voyage was enjoyed and the vessel rocked and rolled over the waves. Likewise, in the legend of the Asvins, the verse speaks of their house fashioned in the sea of spectacular dimensions and luxurious construction with golden wings swelling as if in flight.

Both of the above references are drawn upon to show the knowledge of ship building and the use of huge sails that would be required to gauge the direction in which the ship headed. The house of the Ashwins is akin to the modern submarine.

The mention of these few myths and legends from the Rg Veda are used here to throw light upon the fact that they inform us about the maritime activity of a period of great antiquity.

The motto of these Rg Vedic mariners was ‘नावानक्षोदःप्रदिशःप्रिथिव्याहा’ meaning ‘*may our ship embark to all quarters of the earth*’, and at last, as all sea farers would wish ‘मधुमनमेपरायणमधुमत्पुनरायणम्’ : ‘*May my going abroad be pleasant and may my return be pleasant as well*’.

Just as the earliest of the Vedas have so many myths and legends related to the ocean and sea, water myths are abundant in the Puranas as well, the most prominent and popular being the associations in the Dashavatara of Vishnu. We know of the story of the Matsya avatara mentioned in the Matsya Purana wherein Maha Vishnu assumes the form of a huge fish that saves mankind from the Pralaya.

In the Samudra manthan story, the ocean is churned for precious secrets of the earth and the Kurma or tortoise becomes the aadhaar or the support that enables this churning. In the Varahaavata, Maha Vishnu is said to have rescued Bhumi Devi from Hiranyaksha who had managed to submerge earth under the ocean.

In all the three of the above-mentioned Avatars, it is a clear visualisation of the concept of the life forms that God created on earth. Water was always an important element and the fish was the best developed of the aquatic creatures. There is another story in the Brihaddevata and the SatapathaBrahmana about the birth of the Brilliant Fish that came to save Manu from the great deluge. Since it is supposed to have helped to continue the lineage, it is often treated as a symbol of fertility.

The Kurma or tortoise became an important creature in the next stage of evolution as it could not only live both on land and water, but also was self sufficient with its own shelter carried along with it.

The Varaha or wild boar depicts a further evolved creature, living on land, having the horns for self defence and able to eat almost anything to survive, but should take refuge in water, if attacked, as it can survive in water for hours.

The common undercurrent here in each story is the mysterious depths of the ocean as well as its strength in its volume and fury; it is the ocean wherein lies several precious things as also things that can be hidden away forever; Water thereby becoming the genesis as well as end of life.

This concept is further strengthened by the image created through popular mythology. Vishnu sleeps on a coiled serpent couch in the centre of the ocean thereby subduing the fear and force of the unfriendly ocean. The story of Rama building the sethu over to the shores of Lanka is another interesting example of how legend, becomes mythology, yet absolutely real and up-to-date.

Hanuman is said to have been sent to gauge the ocean and while he flew over it, the demoness Surasa opens her mouth wide to swallow the overgrown Hanuman, who shrinks himself so suddenly that he easily enters and exits through her mouth, unharmed. His intelligence pleases her. While this brings an interesting imagery to the mind, the real fact to be gleaned is the pointer to the existence of Tsunamic waves in the Indian Ocean. The finds of the remains of the Ramasethu by NASA forces us to rethink on our nomenclature of these stories as mere mythology.

Similarly, there is a very interesting legend connected with the Krishna Avatara. It is believed that in Puri, Orissa, King Narsimha saw three logs of wood floating in the Bay of Bengal towards Orissa. That night, the King had a dream in which Krishna is said to have instructed him to make three idols of Krishna, Balabhadra and Subhadra out of those three logs. The instruction further given was that Krishna's asthi (ashes/remains) should be collected from the tribal chieftain in whose custody it was.

Narsimha immediately executed his Lord's command by fighting the Karavela chief and getting back the bones of Krishna. The idols were then sculpted in a way that at the chest of every idol, there would be a niche that would hold the bones.

As these idols are made of wood they would perish, and hence, three logs of wood come floating every 40 years, till date, for the idol to be re-sculpted. After the sculpture was ready, as a practice that nobody should see the bones of the Lord, the person from the Karavela family would fast for 40 days and thereafter blind fold themselves and replace the bones from old to new idol. They believed that the power of the remains of the Lord was so immense that the naked eye would be blinded.

Here, myth and reality co-exist until date, having their total impact on man's religious thought with water becoming the main carrier of this thought forward. There are several legends mentioning oceanic fire in certain directions. According to Harivamsa, it is the South East. In the Bhagavada Purana, it was in the East and according to Bhaskaracharya it was in the South.

But the Western Chalukyan King, Someshwara III (Ad 1126-38) located it in the Western ocean. The traditions of this fire, reached the distant islands of Malaya peninsula. Ibn Khurdardbih (AD 864) and Kazwini (AD 1263-75) have recorded that according to reports of sailors, in the islands of Zabej (Sumatra) there existed in those parts, a steed with a mane so long that it trailed on the ground. This image probably stood as a description for the Volcano overflowing with lava. In certain Malayan chronicles like Seraj Malaya and the chronicles of Pasei, the marvellous Steed Sembrani (winged horse), had its progenitor- the marine horse.

These suggestions of the ocean fire in the south or south-eastern direction all seem to point to a marine experience of that region which was not unknown to Indian writers even from early times. This is a direct reference to the turbulence of the Indian ocean, caused by the volcanic eruptions under the sea commonly known as Jalagni.

The myths connected with water are innumerable in Indian literature and each reveals a certain aspect of development in nature, in man's thinking capacity, in man's inroads into scientific theories which he experimented and propounded and codified to make them available to us as scientific formulae. But all his experiences with nature, are recorded as his associations and experience with the Supreme Lord, as that is the core of Indian religion, Indian philosophy, the Indian way of life- its civilization- and its unbroken cultural traditions. We don't see only one God but we see God in everything.

I would like to conclude with pride that even the small area of my study has revealed to me the fact that world maritime knowledge, history and development has its roots in the Vedas. Whether one calls them Vedic lore, exaggerations, myths, or legends one cannot brush off the fact that they are authentic sources of history, that stand testimony to the feat of great civilized men of a great land called Bharata Varsha.

KṚṢṆA – KALĀKĀR, RASIKA, AND GURU (Inferences for artistes from the tenth canto of the BhāgavataPurāṇa)

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The words *Itihāsa* and *Purāṇa* are often translated to simply “mythology”. By definition, “*iti ha āsītyatretītiitihāsaḥ*”¹, i.e. that which speaks of events as they happened is an *Itihāsa*, and “*purāpinavambhavampurāṇam*”², i.e. that which is new even though it is ancient is a *Purāṇa*. In the Indic tradition, the *Itihāsa*s and *Purāṇa*s are not mere myths or legends, but history. They are records of events as they happened. Often, these events are explained through symbolism and metaphors, hence a superficial reading and interpretation of these texts will not be accurate. These texts continue to fascinate the Indic mind with the vast wealth of knowledge they contain.

Among the *Purāṇa*s, the *BhāgavataPurāṇa* shines forth like a jewel. Spanning twelve *skandhas* or cantos, it contains, among other events, a record of the various *avatāras* or incarnations of Lord Nārāyaṇa. Among the twelve cantos, the tenth canto is the longest, running to 90 chapters, and is dedicated entirely to the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa. Among the 90 chapters are several chapters which are considered to contain the crux of Kṛṣṇa’s life, and among them are the five chapters³ describing in detail the *Rāsālīlā* of Kṛṣṇa and the *Gopīs* of Vraja. These five chapters, collectively known as the *RāsaPañcādhyāyī*, as well as a couple more chapters before and after, contain beautiful descriptions of Kṛṣṇa as an expert dancer and a divine musician.

Verses from the tenth canto beautifully establish him as an artiste par excellence. While one verse refers to him as “*naṭa-vara-vapuḥ*”⁴, the greatest of actors/dancers, another verse describes how Kṛṣṇa and his brother Balarāma would often sing and appear as if they were the best of actors performing on stage (“*raṅgeyathāṇaṭavaraukvacagāyāmānau*”)⁵. Yet another verse from the episode of “*KālīyaNartana*” refers to Kṛṣṇa as “*akhila-kalā-ādiguruḥ*”, the Supreme Master of all arts⁶.

Kṛṣṇa has been a popular favourite for Indian artistes for centuries together. The *BhāgavataPurāṇa* containing his various *līlā*s has been the source for many inspired works of art. Though these events still enthrall those who indulge in them, a deeper reading of the *Purāṇa*’s

¹*Amarakośodghāṭana* (commentary on the *Amarakośa*) of Kṣīrasvāmin, “Śabdādī-varga”, pg. 28 of the Poona critical edition of the *Amarakośa* edited by Krishnaji Govind Oka

²*Ibid.*

³Chapters 29-33 in the ISKCON edition, Tenth Canto, Part II

⁴*ŚrīmadBhāgavatam*, 10.21.5

⁵*Ibid.*, 10.21.8

⁶*Ibid.*, 10.16.26

verses reveal important lessons for those who read them depending on their individual thought processes and even profession. For artistes, critics, and *rasikas*, some fundamental lessons can be inferred from the tenth canto, which contains wonderful accounts of Kṛṣṇa as a complete artiste beyond compare. A few such inferences have been given below.

When the *Gopīs* hear Kṛṣṇa's flute beckoning them on a moonlit night in the forest, they run to him, leaving home and family behind. However, once they reach him, the thought that they have obtained Kṛṣṇaall for themselves only increases their vanity and makes them proud.

एवंभगवतःकृष्णाल्लब्धमानामहात्मनः।
आत्मानंमेनिरेस्त्रीणांमानिन्योह्यधिकंभुवि॥

*evambhagavataḥKṛṣṇāllabdhamānāmahātmanah
ātmanammenirestrīṇāmmāninyohyadhikambhuvi*

(ŚrīmadBhāgavatam, Canto 10, chapter 29, verse 47)

The arts field is a place where compliments are aplenty. If an artiste lacks humility and steadiness of mind, it is easy to let praise increase one's vanity. For the *Gopīs*, the thought that they have the good fortune of having captured the exclusive attention of Kṛṣṇa causes pride to momentarily grow stronger than the love they have for him. As a result, Kṛṣṇa decides to disappear from the spot, in order to teach them a lesson.

तासांतत्सौभगमदंवीक्ष्यमानंचकेशवः।
प्रशमायप्रसादायतत्रैवान्तरधीयत॥

*tāsām tat-saubhaga-madam vīkṣyamānam ca Keśavaḥ
praśamāyaprasādāyatatraivāntara-dhīyata*

(ŚrīmadBhāgavatam, Canto 10, chapter 29, verse 48)

Praise and criticism are two sides of the same coin, especially in the arts field. Along with praise comes criticism as well. Some forms of criticism are meant only to point out the flaws, while others are genuine critiquing of the artiste's performance, work, and approach to the art. Such constructive criticism contributes to the growth of the artiste rather than discouraging them. When Kṛṣṇadisappears, his disappearance is in itself a "*prasāda*", a merciful favour that he bestows upon the *Gopīs* for their own good. It is constructive criticism of sorts, a lesson in humility meant for the *Gopīs* to realize their mistake. Humility is an important quality when it comes to accepting criticism. If the *Gopīs* had been too proud to acknowledge their false pride, Kṛṣṇawould never have reappeared and the *Rāsālīlā*would not have taken place. Similarly, humility is a quality that an artiste needs to develop to be able to accept constructive criticism, thus enabling positive growth as an artiste and as an individual. It is only when the *Gopīs* embrace humility that Kṛṣṇareturns and allows them to experience the blissful dance of the *Rāsālīlā*.

Such open-minded acceptance of good criticism and its due application to one's art canincrease the respectability of and appreciation for the artiste and their art. During the *Rāsālīlā*, while Kṛṣṇais singing, two*Gopīs* join in with him.

काचित्सममुकुन्देनस्वरजातीरमिश्रिताः।
उन्निन्येपूजितातेनप्रीयतासाधुसाध्विति।
तदेवध्रुवमुन्निन्येतस्यैमानंचबह्वदात्॥

*kācit-samamMukundenasvara-jātīr-amīśritāḥ
unninyepūjitātenapriyatāsādhusaadhviti
tadevadhruvam-unninyetasyaaimānam ca bahvādāt*

(ŚrīmadBhāgavatam, Canto 10, chapter 33, verse 9)

When a *Gopī* joins Kṛṣṇa in his singing, her voice rising above his in melodious harmony, he praises her exclaiming “*Sādhu! Sādhu!*” (“Very good! Excellent!”). Another *Gopī* joins, singing the same melodic phrase in a different style and also receives appreciation from Kṛṣṇa. The arts field is also a place where, today, there is quite a bit of competition, healthy and unhealthy. Genuine appreciation of talent, especially among peers, comes from mutual respect and admiration for each other, as displayed here by Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Artiste himself. Humility plays an important role here as well. Unless an artiste is humble, appreciating the talent in others, especially when they are better than oneself, will be difficult. Here, Kṛṣṇa recognizes the expertise of both the *Gopīs* and enthusiastically commends their singing. Such unconditional appreciation forms the basis for a conducive environment where both the art and artistes can thrive, through mutual give-and-take. In such an environment, jealousy has no place.

On the topic of appreciation of talent, a later chapter where the *Gopīs* are talking about Kṛṣṇa wandering in the forest contains the following verse.

दर्शनीयतिलकोवनमालादिव्यगन्धतुलसीमधुमत्तैः।
अलिकुलैरलगुगीतमभीष्टंआद्रियन्यर्हिसन्धितवेणुः॥

*darśanīya-tilakovanamālā-divyagandha-tulasī-madhumattaiḥ
ali-kulair-alaghugītam-abhīṣṭamādrīyanyarhisandhita-veṇuḥ*

(ŚrīmadBhāgavatam, Canto 10, chapter 35, verse 10)

Intoxicated by the fragrance of the *tulasī* garland around Kṛṣṇa’s neck, a swarm of bees buzz around him as if singing, and he gratefully acknowledges their artistic contribution by placing his flute on his lips and playing on it. For Kṛṣṇa, talent existed in the *Gopīs* as well as the bees, in the people as well as in nature around him. He respected the music of the bees as much as the music of the *Gopīs*. Appreciation and encouragement of talent, regardless of age or stature, is important for the growth of the artiste and their art. Another important point to be noted here is Kṛṣṇa’s acknowledgement of the bees’ contribution.

Today, when the arts field is facing issues of plagiarism of artistic content, such as original music and choreography, it is imperative that the practice of acknowledging one’s sources and inspirations, however small or big, is actively cultivated.

In the same chapter comes a descriptive verse of Kṛṣṇa playing on his flute.

वामबाहुकृतवामकपोलवलितभ्रुरधरार्पितवेणुम्।

कोमलांगुलिभिराश्रितमार्गगोप्यैरयतियत्रमुकुन्दः॥

vāma-bāhu-kṛta-vāma-kapolovalgita-bhrur-adharārpita-veṇum

komalāṅgulibhir-āśrita-mārgagopyairayati yatra Mukundaḥ

(ŚrīmadBhāgavatam, Canto 10, chapter 35, verse 2)

When Kṛṣṇa is playing on the flute, he has his left cheek on his left shoulder, his eyebrows moving, the flute placed on his lips, and his tender fingers moving over the holes. The phrase “*adharārpita-veṇum*” is significant here. The word “*arpita*”, though generally translated as “placed upon”, also refers to the act of *arpaṇa* or offering. When taken in that sense, the flute seems to have offered itself to Kṛṣṇa’s lips. In Indian thought, the body is often equated with a flute. If the flute’s body is blocked with no space for air to enter or pass through, the sound will not emanate. The flute needs to be hollow in order for the music to be created. Similarly the body, which houses the *ātmā*, needs to be cleansed of ego for the right knowledge to enter. An artiste, with humility and an open mind, can attract and is also receptive of positive knowledge which can become an inspiration for creativity.

The flute can be taken both literally and symbolically. In the literal sense, it is an instrument that gains significance through Kṛṣṇa because he creates his divine music through it. Symbolically, like the flute in Kṛṣṇa’s hands, the individual becomes a mere instrument in the hands of Divinity through which the Divine works. With this background, the artiste realizes that they are one of many such mediums through which their art expresses itself. This concept of the individual being but an instrument is seen in the 11th chapter of the *BhagavadGītā* in the iconic verse where Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna, “[...] *nimitta-mātram bhava Savyasācin*”⁷.

In India, all arts are considered to be divine. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharatamuni says that the end result of all art is to be *Rasotpatti*, i.e. the evoking of *Rasa* or aesthetic experience. This experience of *Rasa* is equated with the experience of *Brahmānanda* or experience of the ultimate spiritual bliss itself. Ācārya Abhinavagupta, the 11th century CE Kashmiri philosopher and aesthetician proposed that there were not eight or nine *Rasas* but only one which is *ānanda*, that endless spiritual bliss experienced when one attains realisation of the Supreme. The *Rāsalīlā* of Kṛṣṇa and the *Gopīs* is said to be a confluence of all *Rasas*.

The *BhāgavataPurāṇa* mentions that the *Rāsalīlā* went on for one entire night of Brahma, i.e. 1000 *Caturyugas*, but they felt as if it had taken place only for one night. The *Gopīs* had realised the Supreme simply by taking part in the *Rāsalīlā* with him, hence experiencing near timelessness in the span of a single night.

Though the *Nāṭyaśāstra* mentions *Rasa* to be the final output for any art, the very purpose for which it was composed was to instil values and ethics in people through an audio-visual aid

⁷Chapter 11, verse 33

which is *Nāṭya* or theatre. In fact, the *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*, often misunderstood to be mere collections of mythological stories, are so much more than that. To the Indian mind, they are the repositories of the history of our gods and goddesses, kings and queens, sages and seers, and common folk, composed and compiled to cultivate certain fundamental values in people which would develop refinement in their thought, word, and action, both in their personal and professional lives.

Kṛṣṇa is one of the most evergreen inspirations for artistes. Time and again, he has proven to be a wonderful enigma and there are still many interpretations of his life that continue to be created, yet it never seems to be enough. The *BhāgavataPurāṇa*, especially its tenth canto, proves that not only is Kṛṣṇathe *PūrṇaPuruṣa*, the complete man, but he is also a *PūrṇaKalākāra*, the complete artiste and *rasika*. In fact, the early-18th century poet-composer OothukkāḍuVenkata Kavi has immortalized this quality of Kṛṣṇain one of his compositions where he calls Kṛṣṇathe greatest of *rasikas*—“*rasika-mahottamaKṛṣṇaśrī-rāsa-mahotsavadāsa-janārcita*”. The exquisite descriptions in the *BhāgavataPurāṇa* of Kṛṣṇa, either when he is dancing on the hoods of the serpent Kālīya, or taking part in the *Rāsālīlā* with the *Gopīs*, or when he is playing on the flute—in short, in his role as an artiste—have subtle lessons for artistes worldwide. This way, Kṛṣṇaalso becomes the ideal *Guru*, always ready to impart knowledge to the one who actively seeks it with humility and devotion.

In an age of social media and quick fame, especially in a field like that of the arts, it is imperative that the serious artiste understands the importance of staying rooted to avoid getting carried away by the superficial glamour. The *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* have been major sources of inspiration for artistes in terms of the sheer wealth of stories they contain, but the values that they stand for are often overlooked. For the growth of one’s art and the artiste, both as an individual and a professional, it would indeed be beneficial for the artiste to realize, acknowledge and apply these values—values that are as timeless as the histories they are contained within—to their art as well as to life in general.

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Voicing the Mute: A Feminist Prespective of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Forest of Enchantments*

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Abstract

Mythology is a recent taste of writers and readers. Contemporary writers are very much interested in this genre; retelling mythology. As writers take up this kind of strategy, it leads to this genre evolving worldwide. There are many women writers who take up of the job of writing, not only creative writings but also retelling of stories, folktales, fairy tales etc., in the form of retelling mythology in their works. There are many women characters in the novel *The Forest of Enchantments* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Even Sita, a princess and queen of Ayodhya, is stereotyped in the original version of *The Ramayana*. The characters presented in the novel rather than Sita are minor characters and they are twice removed from the main stream. They are Urmila, Kaushalya, Kaikeyi, Surpanakha, Ahalya, Mandodari, Sarama and other women. All these characters are more subjugated and being marginalized by the men in their society. Women are always placed in secondary position and they are subaltern, they can't occupy the centre position since it is always meant for men. The perception that men, not women, should be in the main stream of the family and society is a fabricated one. All the minor characters in the story take the lion's share of attention in this novel. According to Divakaruni, all these suppression and subjugation of women will be solved by taking writing as a tool. Only writing will give voice to the voiceless. Everyone can share their sufferings and pains to the outer world through writing. It is a weapon used to make the mute characters as unmuter.

Moreover, other than Sita, there are many women stereotype characters are presented in the novel *The Forest of Enchantments*. The characters are Urmila, Kaushalya, Kaikeyi, Surpanakha, Ahalya, Mandodari, Sarama and etc. All these characters are more subjugated and being marginalized by the men in their society. The portrayal of Sita's character is not only to save her own life from the vein but also to save the lives of the other women in their community. The author has portrayed the real life situations and sufferings of these women

characters through Sita. She not only gives voice to their sufferings and pain but also gives voice to these women characters in the novel.

I dipped my quill into the inkpot, they rose inside me. Voices. Some clamouring, some tentative, some whispering, so that I had to still my breadth to hear them. Write our story, too. Yes, I'll write your stories as best as I can, for without them, mine can't be complete. (The Forest of Enchantment 4)

Women are always placed in secondary position and they are subaltern, they can't occupy the centre position since it is always meant for men. Sunaina, an intelligent woman, who is the real governor of Mithila, is never acknowledged by anybody for her intelligence. She is a minister in Janak's bed chamber and provides military advice as well. Such a woman's greatness is not touched by the original writer of Ramayana. Divakaruni senses the greatness of Sunaina by the voice of Sita.

Then, the character of Urmila takes the lion's share of attention in this novel. She, being the sister of Sita, is also a woman of courage and is independent like Sita. The loneliness that Sita overcomes in the forest and Lanka is more or less the same with regards to Urmila's sufferings. She is portrayed as a typical Indian girl wants to live her life the fullest.

She loves Lakshman and wants to marry him. She is very much attracted to his appearance and personality. But she can't marry him because Sita is not looking to marry anyone, so Urmila's desire to get married is shattered by Sita and also by the custom of Mithila. "The unfortunate rule of our royal house is that the older daughter must be married before the younger one" (TFE 13). She falls in love with him without knowing him completely; he is very short tempered and hurts people as a result. He does not make others happy, whereas Urmila does it often. She shares her happiness with others while Lakshman does not. She loves him truly but Lakshman's love for Urmila is dictated by his devotion towards his brother Ram. Similarly, Sita's love for Ram is also dictated by her desire to make Urmila happy. So, this love between Lakshman and Urmila is not real. She does her job as a wife soul fully but he fails to be a good husband to her like Ram is to Sita. He is not in a state to understand Urmila's feelings and their interactions are not portrayed much, thus making it harder to judge their relationship, unlike Ram and Sita's. At least a few caring words or a loving sight from Lakshman enough for Urmila, but Lakshman did give her those either. She longs for his love and affection; would have been wants to be with him all the time. But Lakshman is more faithful to his brother Ram than to his wife.

After marriage Urmila does not feel happy with Lakshman and her mother-in-law Sumitra. She very much worries about her mother and father as she leaves Mithila for Ayodhya. Her only hope is her sister Sita, who also accompanies her to Ayodhya. She can enjoy Sita's company in the absence of Lakshman. Sumitra's love for her son is portrayed clearly by Divakaruni, but this love prevents Urmila from completely loving Lakshman.

His complete focus is on Ram and his orders to him. He never thinks about his wife and does not have any kind of feeling towards her. He is unemotional as he accepts all her offerings without complaints and leaves without acknowledging them. She lovingly does everything for him, but soon Sumitra dismisses her and starts doing all the things for Lakshman herself. In her chamber, Urmila is all alone, waiting for Lakshman to come and share his daily experiences. From the time of her marriage she doesn't know that her life is meaningless. When she is in Mithila she dreams of getting married. But after her marriage to Lakshman she hates everything marriage life has to offer. She hates living in a world of loneliness. She used to be such a happy and joyful character who was never alone and never worried about anything. But now she worries about her life and Lakshman's and Sumitra's behaviour all the time.

Being a woman, Sumitra fails to understand Urmila's relationship with her son, and she interrupts between them always. In the novel by Kavitha Kane, Sita's sister reveals her side of the story. Her suffering and pains are portrayed in detail in this novel. She is a sufferer as well as a sacrificer. Without any reasonable explanation she is abandoned by her husband for fourteen years.

She is not able to digest the injustice that Lakshman did to her. This made her insane and unconscious throughout the fourteen years he spent in Ayodhya. She loves him but the reason he accepts her is because Ram accepted Sita. Love can never be taught by anyone, it should happen naturally. When Ram asks Sita to undergo the chastity test in front of the army in the battle of Lanka, Lakshman feels pity for her. But he fails to sympathise, with Urmila's condition, and her expectations, from him. He always treats her as an ignorant woman, who is not aware of things happening around her. But she is as trained as Sita to handle a family in the course of their married life. She is very much angry with Lakshman and Sita, because it is she who is punished and made to suffer for their self-sacrifice.

Lakshman said he had his hands full taking care of Ram, who was his duty and says you'd be a burden on them. I'm ordering you to stay here and take care of the mothers. If you really love me, you'll do what I'm asking you. You'll do your duty. Your duty is to obey me. (TFE 116)

The male society frames these kinds of rules for women. They consider a woman who marries them and accepts them as their husbands, are objects of pleasure, a package of dowry, salary free worker, reproducing tools etc. Their real wishes are always hidden behind their tears. Urmila doesn't cry because she has already in a state of 'comma', as soon Lakshman and Sita goes away Ayodhya. This condition of hers is a cruel punishment that is given by her husband, whom she has always trusted. She shows love to everyone and makes everyone around her happy, even Sumitra, who often controls her when it comes to Lakshman.

Her loving nature makes her feel calm and gives hope in her life. So much so that she finally forgives Lakshman and Sita and accepts their love after their return from the forest. She feels sad about Sita's banishment from throne and back to the forest life again. Later she feels happy when she sees her in the Ashram and also when she returns to Ayodhya.

Like Urmila, there is another character, which also punished despite not committing any wrong deed of her own. Ahalya is a young and charming girl whose fate decides that she should marry an old sage named Gautama. Their marriage life is not fruitful to her. She is not an extraordinary wife as Sita and Urmila in the story. She is just a helper to sage Gautama in his Pooja's to god. Nothing more than a saviour to her husband, throughout her lifetime.

Sita feels pity for Ahalya and her role of helper to her husband all the time in her marital life. Not only this, she is condemned by Gautama for being immoral and seeking physical pleasure with Lord Indra. But in reality, Lord Indra is very much attracted to Ahalya's beauty and wants bed her. So, using his magical powers, he turns himself into Gautama to be with her, knowing that Gautama is away from his house. After Gautama returns, he suspects that she had sought pleasure from Indra. It was very cruel of Lord Indra to do that to Ahalya. She is as innocent as a new born child. Disguising oneself into another and cheating with a woman is legally punishable. Lord Indra is punished by Gautama for his evil deed but he also punishes Ahalya for her action.

After understanding that Ahalya is a victim of Lord Indra's desire, he promises her that her curse will be broken with Ram's pure and powerful touch. With Sita's help, Ahalya can also give voice to reveal her to the world. It is ironic that a woman would be deceived by a man without her knowledge by disguising himself as her husband, and again the same woman is allowed to be touched by another man with her husband's consent. The concept of irony of men is that treating women as puppets in their hands. There is no one to question them for dictating.

So, men are the actual sinners and they should be held accountable and punished for their evil deeds against women. Gautama cursing her wife without knowing the complete truth in itself is a crime, but then he offering to break her curse by the touch of Ram's foot is the cruellest crime that he committed against her. How can men be much more holistic than women? How can they treat themselves as a celestial being when compared to women? Both men and women are born equal and die equal, so there is no idea of best or worst amongst them. A man without a woman is only single man but a man with respect to a woman will form a family, a society and a generation.

Yet another powerful character in this novel is Surpanakha. She is also a beautiful girl, but often the most misunderstood character in *The Ramayana*, who falls in love with Ram at first sight. She is also portrayed as a central character in Kavitha Kane's novel *Lanka's Princess*. In this novel Kane portrays Surpanakha as a strong and vicious female character. But she is often hated by everyone because of her appearance, with that ugly and dark complexion. She wants to marry Ram with his whole hearted love for her. But Ram refuses her by saying, he took a vow in his marriage that he would be faithful to only one wife in this incarnation. Soon, the dialogue heats up, Ram says jestingly that Lakshman hasn't made such vows and she could choose him instead. The thing Ram says to her is no way to treat a woman. She really loves Ram, so she asks for his permission. But Ram degrades her love for him by asking her to choose his brother.

Then, both Ram and Lashman start to mock her by saying choose the other. Sita feels that they both are mocking the girl, so she wants to save the girl from them. So she signs her to go away from the place but Surpanakha misunderstands Sita's sign and wants to kill Sita, thinking that she is the problem between Ram and her. So, Lakshman cuts off her nose and ears inhumanely. She wants something that each and every young woman her age craves for. She just expresses her wish to Ram, that's all. But the way they mock her raises her temper and she explodes against Sita. As an Asura girl, the way she greets and speaks to them is very polite and calm in manner. But Ram, Lakshman and Sita are divinely characters who hurt a young girl's heart and her body very cruelly.

Surpanakha is insulted by the two of them because; she reveals her love for a man bravely, is treated like an immoral woman who wants to marry Ram, who is already married to Sita. But in her view, Ram seems to be handsome and lovable, so she is attracted towards him.

It is naturally happens to all woman in her situation. But portraying her as an immoral woman for this aspect is wrong judgement. Presenting a woman an immoral to the society is the easiest

job for men. Projecting women like this will spoil her whole life. She is always looked upon with an opinion, that she is a rakshashi, who misbehaves with Ram and Lakshman, even in the original script. She is not an illicit woman but she is victimized by the men.

Mandodari is another character like Urmila in that she is the queen of Lanka, but doesn't have any kind of power or right to rule over. She is a puppet in the hands of Ravan, her husband who uses her to extract what he wants from her. Ravan is the king of Asuras in Lanka, a terrifying man who never respects others. Mandodari is a good companion to Ravan who often informs him about the dangers and evil signs, but he never accepts her advice because for him she is just a woman, and he is 'Man'. He doesn't respond to her even when she willingly tells him something eagerly. She very well knows that Sita will bring ruin to Lanka and her husband will surely kill him and demolish their kingdom. But he does not worry about all those things in that time, because he wants Sita's permission to marry her and want to be with her soon.

There is a twist in this story, that in Mandodari's point of view, Sita is a daughter of Ravan and Mandodari. While Sita was born to them, the oracle said that Sita would ruin their kingdom and Ravan will meet with his death. So, Ravan orders his servant to kill the child. But as a mother Mandodari asks the servant to leave her daughter at a faraway place safely. If she wanted to live, she will live anywhere in the world. If she is Sita's mother, her role is very complicated since it would mean that her husband wants share a bed with her own daughter. She is angry in one hand and tearful on the other hand. She is not able to tell the truth to Ravan also, because if he comes to know that the child is alive, he will surely kill Sita. If she does not tell the truth to him it would mean that he would act rude and absurd to her. She is not in a position to control Ravan or to console Sita. Such a powerless, innocent woman is Mandodari in this novel. She hasn't voiced against Ravan her whole life. In the battle field, Ravan is yet to die, in that condition Mandodari explains to him about Sita but he says that it is not possible. The perspectives of the other female characters in the novel and how they voice their problems are also portrayed by Divakaruni. Kaushalya is the eldest queen of Ayodhya but she does not have any power in the kingdom.

Other than the above characters, Kaikeyi, Trijata, Shanta, Mandavi, Srutakirti, are also portrayed in the novel. In the right place through the right role, all the characters are given voices by the author through Sita's writing. So, writing will give voice to the voiceless. Everyone can share their sufferings and pains to the outer world through writing. It is a weapon used to express ones distress.

MYTH - PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF PANCHA BHUTAM

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ABSTRACT

Myths are sacred tales that explain the world and man's experience. Myths are as relevant to us today as they were to the ancients. Myths answer timeless questions and serve as a compass to each generation. Myth is a folklore genre consisting of narratives that play a fundamental role in a society, such as foundational tales or origin myths. There are two clear divisions, fact or non-fiction and fiction. In the modern world, myth stands between fact and fiction. The main characters in myths are usually gods, demigods, or supernatural humans. Mythology is the sub-study of myth and it's real. Mythology (from the Greek *mythos* for story-of-the-people, and *logos* for word or speech, so the spoken story of a people) is the study and interpretation of often sacred tales or fables of a culture known as myths or the collection of such stories which deal with various aspects of the human condition: good and evil; the meaning of suffering; human origins; the origin of place-names, animals, cultural values, and traditions; the meaning of life and death; the afterlife; and the gods or a god. Myths express the beliefs and values about these subjects held by a certain culture. Mythology and psychology are intimately related. When viewed this way, mythology is deeply egalitarian. It tells us who we are and the rewards that await us if we would only set aside our focus on the day- to-day humdrum of life and embrace the hero's journey. Relevance of mythology: it is human thing. The moment you become human you need a myth for life has no inherent myth or meaning. You need to create the meaning. History talks about facts which are limited. Mythology talks about ideas which are subjective and unlimited. Who believes in myth it becomes fact to the person. In our Indian Concept, world comes and goes. We believe in rebirth. We believe that peace and prosperity will come and go. For us Ramayana and Mahabharata, the two great epics are biographies and not only mere stories.

Good deeds are the means to reach a higher plane and a likewise bad deed lead to destruction and doom — is the ultimate message that the Ramayana teaches. People who tend to exhibit immoral, malicious and surreptitious acts will suffer mentally and physically. All these psychological principles of wellbeing were compared with the stories of the Hindu epics-Ramayana andMahabharata. In India we believe that the God was born like a human and philosophized their life anticipating the successors to follow their path in order to maintain peace, well-being, morality, and dharma.

PANCHABHUTAM AND THREE STRONG PILLARS OF MYTH:

Myth has 3 strong pillars viz Stories, Symbols and Rituals. Devdutt Pattanaik, mythology expert, author, illustrator, columnist and lecturer on Indian mythology since 1996, has come up with his 31 books explaining how stories, symbols and rituals construct the subjective truth (myths) of ancient and modern cultures around the world, the latest being *My Hanuman Chalisa*.

1. Stories: Lord Shiva is worshipped for many reasons all over India. However, in South India, He is worshipped as the presiding deity of the five elements of Nature, and is called *Bhootapati* or *Bhootnath*.

Na | Ma | Shi | Va | Ya – these five syllables indicate the five elements (known as Bhoota in Sanskrit) – Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Ether. The five elements are the building blocks of everything in Creation, including the human body, and Lord Shiva is the upholder of the five elements.

A. The Ekambareshwarar temple, Lord Shiva is represented by a Lingam made out of sand to depict the Earth element. This is also known as Prithvi Lingam. One does not need special idols or sculptures to enshrine God, but just a fistful of sand with all of one's devotion.

B. The Jambukeshwarar Temple in Trichy depicts the water element. Here, Lord Shiva is worshipped in the form of *Appu Lingam* (a water *Lingam*). In the shrine of the temple, a stream of water flows under the Lingam. Water symbolises wisdom and the flow of water represents learning. The Jambukeshwarar temple therefore symbolises the significance of wisdom and learning in the most beautiful way.

C. The Arunachaleswarar Temple depicts the Fire element bestowed by Shiva and is represented by the *Agni Lingam*. Fire represents purity, Fire represents light, and Fire represents energy. And worshiping, chanting, and remembering the Divine brings purity into our lives, our minds, and our hearts.

D. The Kalahastheeshwara Temple depicts the Air element. Lord Shiva is worshipped at this temple in the form of Vayu Lingam, representing the wind. Air represents life. Without air,

there is no life on this Universe. Just as we worship the Air element, we worship the Shiva Tattva present in each and every living being on this Creation.

E. The ThillaiNataraja Temple in Chidambaram worships the Ether (Sky) element, the subtlest of the five elements. Lord Shiva is worshipped in His formless form in the ThillaiNataraja Temple. Apart from Nataraja, the ChidambaraRahasya, or the greatest secret, is said to have originated from this temple. The ChidambaraRahasya depicts the priest unveiling the curtain to an empty space within the inner sanctum of the temple. This symbolises the removal of the curtain of ignorance to attain the Ultimate Bliss. The ChidambaraRahasya refers to the Darshan of Lord Nataraja. No idol is visible, unless the people have bhakti within themselves. Hence, they can't see the God. It means that God has to be realised within and cannot be explained. We should experience through Deep Bliss. The goal of spiritual practices is to attain Bliss. The motive of the path is to make you hollow and empty. ThillaiNataraja symbolizes the path spiritual seekers need to take to attain the ultimate divinity.

2. Symbols: The *Panchabhoota* are the basic elements that make up any living organism on Earth or anywhere else in the Universe. '**Mudra**' is a Sanskrit word which means a symbolic hand gesture that has the power of producing joy and happiness. The fingers of human body generate energy consisting of the *PanchaBhootas*. This energy has been classified as

- Thumb = Fire
- Index finger = Vayu or Air
- Middle finger = Space
- Ring finger = Earth
- Little finger = Water

According to Hinduism, life and the various species originated from the combination of planetary globes and the five manifestations of nature namely earth, water, fire, air, and space.

Rabindranath Tagore, a Nobel laureate for literature, in his book, *Panchabhoota*, has explained the emotional faculty of the human mind is keenly sensitive to all objects of light, colour, and sound, effect of speed, sun, moon and stars.

3. Rituals: In Hinduism we have a concept known as **homology**, meaning, arranging

things according to the same relation, relative position, or structure.

The 5 elements play a very important part in Hindu ritual so in relation to the *Pañca- bhūta* or five

elements we have the following homologies:–

EARTH - goddess Bhūdevi&Brahmā - creation.

FIRE - the god Agni &Śiva - transformation

WATER – the god Varuṇa&Viṣṇu - preservation/sustentation

AIR – the god Vāyu&Hanumān - movement

SPACE – Parameśvara - that in which everything is contained. The way this is deployed can be illustrated by the funeral rituals.

The dying person is laid on the ground to die, and during the funeral rituals the coffin is kept on the ground. Mother earth is honoured and Brahmā the creator acknowledged.

The deceased is then consigned to the fire through which transformation occurs by the agency of Lord Śiva. The ashes are then scattered in running water - sea or river through which Viṣṇu the preserver and liberator is honoured. The jīva then enters into a new body which is through the medium of air - this is symbolised by feeding rice balls to crows.

MYTHPSYCHOLOGY:

The psychological “ingredient” of myths can’t be ignored; it is ever present as an essential part. Between myth and psychology, the bounds are numerous and this lead to the development of a psychology of myths (mythpsychology). The psychological interpretation finds in myths an extraordinary material, the perfect occasion to separate the setting from the object, the details from the essence, or, in psychoanalytic language, and the hidden from thenoticeable.

Mythology plays a part in explaining how the earth and its entire population were created and why. This formed the basis for many societies as they could attain some kind of understanding as to what was happening in the world around them.

Myths are to be considered more than mere stories and they serve a more profound purpose in ancient and modern cultures. They help us to understand other times and places; and they help us to see how much humankind had and has in common. Myths have become a foundation for a lot of religions that are practiced across the world today. They also help us through battles between good and evil. Myths or Mystic phenomenon represent the expression of unconscious fears and desires. Psychology exists within mythology. Mythology binds us closer and provides us with a shared sense of community. Myths are also based on human emotions and that they come from the human subconscious mind.

Fact is based on measurement whereas opinion is not based on measurement. Myth has to be in the realm of imagination because it propels you. We have Ajeeva and Sajeewa Concept. In Jain Philosophy they have Achitta (unconsciousness) and Chitta (consciousness) Concept.

Achitta- world of physics and chemistry, without hunger and fear Chitta- world of biology, with hunger and fear. That's why we have another term Charachara, meaning animals and plants.

- Mahabhuta or PanchaBhuta: (under Achitta)
- Jeeva-Predator and Prey (Charachara), they have senses.
- Human- manava, those who have mind. They can imagine and can create alternate reality.

All matter is composed of five basic elements — PanchaMahabhutas — which inherit the properties of **earth (priti)**, **water (jala)**, **fire (tejas)**, **wind (vayu)** and **space (akasha)**.

The human body is just like the entire universe. The bones and muscles are considered to be Earth, the blood as Water, our breath as Air, the calories burn is treated as Fire, the emptiness within is considered to be Space.

The principle element in the order from gross to subtler is **Earth**.

Agni has been contemplated as the symbol which consumes, transforms and conveys. Agni is considered to be the God of Sacrifice, carries human offerings to Gods and dispels the darkness of ignorance.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF PANCHABHUTAS: **EARTH:**

In fact, both the **human body** and the planet **Earth** have several connected systems that support life. The respiratory, digestive, reproductive, musculoskeletal, nervous and immune systems all important roles in **human** life. The planet's stability relies on the balance of its air, water, land, and life systems.

WATER:

The Water element is a huge life force. Water is also known to have healing powers. Almost 70% of the earth and our bodies are made up of water. Water has nurturing energies. We can observe perfect cycles of water throughout the planet. Water pulls out negativity, balances our emotions, and makes our mind calm and focused. When water is in a balanced state, it induces a spiritual and philosophical attitude to life. Since the water element controls emotions, it is important to let your feelings flow freely like water. Learn to acknowledge and respect all your feelings without labeling them as good or bad, negative or positive.

FIRE:

Fire is the driving force behind all life processes. When in a balanced state, Fire induces power, confidence, fame, recognition and money. The fire element is the element of love and all affairs of the heart. Fire represents our relationship to ourselves and to others.

It governs our ability to share love, warmth and joy with friends, colleagues, intimate partners, and in fact with the entire human race

Though Fire in its positive form is enlightenment and radiance, it can also result in negative traits like rage, hatred, greed, envy, and the desire for revenge. So, it is very important to connect with the Fire element and keep it balanced. Learning to regulate and temper your inner Fire is essential for moving ahead in life with zest.

AIR:

The Air element is our most basic connection to life. Our body can only survive if we breathe. Air represents growth and is associated with movement, joy and happiness. When in a balanced state, Air induces courage and perseverance to achieve your goals.

While balancing the Air element, it is important to understand that each of us breathes the same air, even plants and animals. This makes it easier to connect to the thought that we are all one. That we are all the same, only our surroundings, upbringing and circumstances frame us.

Once balanced, Air can positively initiate new insights, revelations and knowledge.

SPACE:

The element of Space represents expansion and enhancement. When it is in a balanced state, it induces knowledge and awareness to understand new and creative ideas. The Space element encompasses everything around us and influences the mind and the heart. Enhancing the Space element helps you smoothly sync your energies with the Universal energies.

Also referred to as Ether, the influence of the Space element is limitless. Balancing the Space element can in fact give you highest self-healing powers. You can heal anything from addictions, heartbreak to depression.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Five elements of nature, namely, earth, water, fire, sky, and wind are responsible for the creation, survival, and sustainability of human life on earth. The main occupation of the people of Vedic times was cattle rearing and they practiced agriculture by clearing the forests. People were more careful to refrain from activities that could harm nature and they always believe that Mother earth's preservation is necessary for sustenance of the environment, which in turn encompasses its vegetation, wealth and prosperity.

Yama , who is known as Yamaraja Kala, and Dharmaraja Chitragupta, is a Hindu god assigned with the task of keeping complete records of the actions of human beings on earth. He is the chief justice of Yamaloka. He assists Yama in punishing or rewarding the human beings for their actions depending on whether it is good or evil.

Thus, we see that down the centuries, this faith is rooted in the Hindu's ethical consciousness. Morality then becomes a matter of inner compulsion. Vedic mythology presents to us an earlier stage in the evolution of beliefs based on the personification of natural phenomena. But in due course of time man rather than Gods occupied the central place of Hindu Mythology. Men versus God changed after the Vedic Period, where sacrificial powers replaced ascetic and meditative powers.

The ascetic powers did not allow physical pleasures, especially for religious reasons, occupied importance. Participation in rituals took a back seat and the trend could not sustain for long. The

Puranic mythology defines God as something divine or mysterious and is above anger, malice, boastfulness, jealousy and other temptations.

CONCLUSION:

Mythology and psychology are intimately related. When viewed this way, mythology is deeply egalitarian. It tells us who we are and the rewards that await us if we would only set aside our focus on the day-to-day humdrum of life and embrace the hero's journey.

Mythology is still relevant, especially in the relationship between mythology and psychology. Mythology binds us closer and provides us with a shared sense of community. Though we may lead atomized lives as husbands, wives, sons, daughters, professionals, and members of this or that nationality, we are bound together through shared myths. The ceremonies that derive from mythology, those of birth, initiation, marriage and death, remind us that we are part of something much larger than ourselves.

The Five Subtle Elements- Earth, Fire, Water, Air and Ether or Space form the basis for all things found in the material creation, from a grain of sand to the complex physiology of every human being. These 5 elements are the essence of the entire world, both within you and outside, so it is more than essential to connect with them for tapping into the powers of the Universe. It might seem rather surprising but the 5 elements influence behaviour, emotions, and overall health. Balancing these elements in just the right way is the key to a happy and healthy life. If we take some time to understand the elements and relate to them, we can use them to stay in balance physically, spiritually, emotionally and mentally.

By understanding the positive and negative aspects of each element, we can tune our minds to use each element in the most effective way. The first rule of thumb is that we cannot dominate the Elements. Instead, we have to surrender to the elements and respect them. The more we comprehend the *PanchaMahaBhutas*, the more we will understand and relate to the universe. The best way to get to grips with these 5 elements is to figure out their basic characteristics and how they relate to physical attributes.

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Bharatanāṭyam, SadhguruTyāgarāja'sKṛti-s and Mythology

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Introduction

Bharatanāṭyam is perhaps the most popular of the eight Indian classical dance forms of India. Although there is a traditional mārgam, newer genres of compositions are constantly tried out. One such attempt has been to explore the compositions of Sadhguru Tyāgarāja.¹ He is one among the plethora of magnificent vaggeyakāra-s who has enriched Carnatic music. It is opined that he has had a considerable part in developing the kṛti format to what it today is. Experts on the compositions of Tyāgarāja believe that he may have composed more than, at rough count, around the seven hundred compositions that are available today.

Compositions Part of the BharatanāṭyamMārgam

The sāhitya of the compositions performed in Bharatanāṭyam can be broadly categorized into two
- ones which are descriptive, like in kauttuvam-s, śābdam-s, kṛti-s, kīrtanam-s, toḍayamaṅgaḷam-s
- ones in which the avastha(-s) of the nāyaka or nāyaki are brought out in various hues and shades, like padavarṇam-s, padam-s, jāvali-s, aṣṭapadi-s

It is in the descriptive pieces that mythological depictions are more explicit. Mythology is
“A body or collection of myths belonging to a people and addressing their origin, history, deities, ancestors, and heroes.”²

A number of references to such mythological incidents and episodes can be found the kṛti-s of Tyāgarāja. There are of course a number of composers in whose compositions such references or descriptions can be observed. Many, which are already a part of the Bharatanāṭyammārgam. There is however a constant quest the Bharatanāṭyam dancer(s)/choreographers have for exploring newer vistas. The kṛti-s of Tyāgarāja are a reservoir into which one could delve deep in the course of this quest.

¹ See Menon pp.56-57, where she has referred to a number of kṛti-s and the two musical operas of Tyāgarāja which have been performed in Bharatanāṭyam and Kūcipuḍi, and Vishwanathan in an article in The Hindu, where she has made a mention of a number of Tyāgarājākṛti-s she has performed to.

² American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition. (2011). Retrieved February 19 2021 from <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/mythology>.

SadhguruTyāgarāja

The details of Tyāgarāja's birth, and the various stages of life including his growth in to adulthood can be found in many books or articles and so are not again recalled here. What is more relevant here is that Tyāgarāja was quite well versed in Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and the Śivapurāṇa, to mention a few. Tyāgarāja's father is believed to have recited the Rāmāyaṇa. When he was growing up, the Nāmasaṅkīrtana tradition had gained popularity. This tradition encourages the repetition of the different names of the devotee's iṣṭādevatā. Tyāgarāja's guru Soṇṭi Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Śāstri and the other musicians preceding him as well as his contemporary musicians were practitioners of Nāmasaṅkīrtana. (Jackson 33) In his formative years Tyāgarāja is believed to have heard various episodes from mythology like Gajendra moksha, the episodes of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the gopi-s and Hanuman's absolute faith in Rāma from the wandering mendicants who practiced uṇcavṛtti. (Jackson 48) It is but natural that whatever Tyāgarāja had absorbed and imbibed during his formative years, are reflected in his kṛti-s. Of course, in doing so he was perhaps treading on a path already made. For, a majority of the kṛti-s in Carnatic music have numerous references to mythological incidents. But it would not be incorrect to say that he raised the bar considerably. Apart from kṛti-s on Rāma, Tyāgarāja composed kṛti-s on Gaṇeśa, Śiva, Devī and Āṇjaneya, to mention a few. The, there are also kṛti-s in which the greatness of music is extolled, śobilluṣaptasvara in Jaganmohini, Rūpaka and those in which he addresses his mind to focus on the worship of nāda, nādupāsana in Begaḍa. There also kṛti-s in which there are direct references to incidents of his life. To sum up, however, to quote Raghavan, 'the composer had made his songs the means of communicating his deep feelings and the varying moods of a devotee and spiritual aspirant,' (p21) Incidentally, kṛti-s of Tyāgarāja are in both Telugu and Samskr̥ta languages.

Kṛti-s of SadhguruTyāgarāja

An important feature of the kṛti-s of Tyāgarāja is the variety in terms

- of rāga-s and tāla-s used
- of varying kālapramāṇa-s
- of different contexts in which the kṛti was composed

And, added to the above, references to mythological episodes or incidents in the kṛti-s. These references make for interesting depiction in Bharatanāṭyam. A few kṛti-s have been detailed below, as a comprehensive account is perhaps not possible. The attempt also has been to consider kṛti-s hitherto not handled commonly in Bharatanāṭyam and to find mention of the incidents in Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and the like.

1. Rāmabāṇa – Sāveri – Ādi

Tyāgarāja focuses on the protective power of Rāma's arrows in this kṛti. The twang of Kodaṇḍa energizes the flagging soldiers of Rāma's army into action. The incident touched upon here in the carāṇa of the kṛti is the celebrations in Rāvaṇa's camp by way of distributing sweets upon seeing Lakṣmaṇa fatigued. Which in turn dampened the spirit of Rāma's army.

The strength of Rāma's arrows have been described in the twenty-fifth sarga of Aranyakāṇḍa by Vālmiki whilst describing the encounter between Rāma and Khara and Dūshāṇa. Rāma shot the arrows so quick that they covered the sky, darkening the area. (śl 39) In the seventy-ninth sarga of the Yuddhakāṇḍa, Khara's son, Makarāksham, challenges Rāma to a fight. Accepting the challenge Rāma's arrows not only counters the śulambut annihilates Makarāksham too with a pāvakastram. (śl 35, 36 & 39) In both instances Rāma's arrows countered the variety of missiles thrown at him by the demons.

There are two more episodes of Rāma's arrows. One, in the twenty-second sarga, again of the Yuddhakāṇḍa. Rāma threatens to dry up the ocean, by shooting an arrow-astra if he and his army are not allowed to cross over. Two, Rāma is also described in the twelfth sarga of the Kishkindākāṇḍa as shooting an arrow which pierces seven Sāla trees along with earth and returns back to Rāma's quiver (śl 2-5)

The kālāpramāṇa of this kṛti is cauka or double kalai, suitable for a Bharatanāṭyam interpretation. The rāgaSāveri is one of the rāga-s that can be explored in great detail. This kṛti is also one of those that is taken as the main piece of a Carnatic concert. The neraval point is the pallavi of the kṛti. Neraval is the repetition of a set of sāhitya exploring the hues and colors of the rāga whilst singing the sāhitya syllables at the same point as sung in the original. In a solo Bharatanāṭyam performance, focus on the arrows of Rāma is seldom seen. The episodes of Rāma's arrows piercing the Sāla trees, of threatening to dry up the ocean and of putting an end to Khara and Dūshāṇa can be depicted at whichever point the dancer/choreographer feels appropriate. Perhaps the inclusion of Makarākshasa in the carāṇa may be suitable. The carāṇa of the kṛti is set in what is called as apparent madhyamakāla. Madhyamakāla is second speed, but the carāṇa here is not in actual second speed to the kāla of the pallavi or anupallavi. But it is not in the same kāla too. The placement of the sāhitya syllables in close proximity gives an impression of apparent madhyamakāla.

2. Paramāthmuḍu – Vāgadiśvari-Ādi

Tyāgarāja describes in this kṛti the beauty of the form of paramātmā. In his inimitable style this kṛti is in the form of address to the mind to realize the form of paramātmā. It is also in the form of a statement that paramātmā is everything. He describes paramātmā as one who is both Hari and Hara. Paramātmā is the all pervading omnipresent. Paramātmā is in everyone and everything and, everyone and everything is in him. The oftportrayed Viśvarūpa form is an instance of when everyone and everything is in him. On the other hand when Hiranyakśyapu asks Prahlāda if his God would be in the pillar, God was in the pillar. This is an instance of when he is in everything. Similarly when Markaṇḍeya calls out, Śiva comes out of the Śivaliṅga. Whilst on the other hand, the entire universe is the dancing Śiva's stage. When the Mandara mountain was toppling during the churning of the ocean, Hari took the form of a kūrma. When the poison threatened to engulf the entire universe, it was Hara who drank it. There are also numerous incidents of Hari and Hara annihilating various demons. This kṛti is one in which different instances of Hari and Hara can be portrayed.

Apart from the sāhitya, the rāgaVāgadīśvari also adds to the presentation of the kṛti. This vivādirāga is not an oft sung one. The shaṭṣrutiṣhabha and antagaragāndharasvara-s combination in this thirty-fourth melakarta again is not one which is sung often. It has to be sung of course with caution.

3. Ehitri jagadīśa – Sārāṅga – miśraCāpu

Although Tyāgarāja'sisṭādevata was Rāma, there are kṛti-s on other deities too. This kṛti describes Śiva as Pañcanadīśvarar, the lord of the place where there are five rivers. In the anupallavi there is a reference to the sage Agastya, as the enemy of the ocean. In the VanaParva of Mahābhārata wherein the exile of the Pāṇḍava-s is described, the incident of Sage Agastya drinking the water of the ocean to expose the hiding demons is found. There are three carāṇa-s in this kṛti. Typically the first and the third carāṇa-s are sung. In the first carāṇa there is reference to Śiva as the Tripurahara. He is the destroyer of the three rākshasa-s Vidyumālī, Tārakāsha and Vīryavana. They had obtained the boon according to which they could only be killed when the three cities they built and dwelt in aligned into a single line, with a single arrow. Viśvakarma, the divine architect was called upon to build a chariot for Śiva.³ Each God was a part of the chariot. For instance, Sūrya and Candra were the wheels, while Viṣṇu was the arrow, Sarasvati the bow and Agni the tip of arrow. However, each of the Gods felt that he was the most important cog in the wheel without whom Śiva could not destroy the demons. Realizing this, Śiva actually annihilated the three rākshasa-s with a smile.⁴

There is also a reference to Śiva holding the deer, vidhṛtasukuraṅga. This in all probability refers to the Dārūkāvan incident.⁵ This episode has been depicted in Bharatanāṭyam many a time. However the interesting interpretation is that of the deer as a symbol of a flighty mind.⁶ The deer by nature is an animal that flits from one place to the other quickly. Much akin to the mind. Śiva holding the deer in his hand reflects his control of the flighty mind.⁷

The second carāṇa has a reference to Śiva as one who wears the elephant skin as a garment. The reference here is to Śiva killing Gajāśura and obliging him by acceding to his request to wear his hide as a garment.⁸

The rāgaSārāṅga, is a bhāṣāṅgarāga with both the varieties of madhyama. Although in comparison to Sāveri, the scope of the rāga is slightly limited, the presence of both madhyama-s

³ Chapter Eight, Rudrasamhitā, Śivapurāṇa, pp 840-3 describes in detail how the Gods made up the different parts of the chariot.

⁴ See post #46, discussion on 'pallaikāṭṭi' in Edukittanaimōḍi of MārimuttaPiḷḷai, a nindastuti on Śiva. <https://www.rasikas.org/forums/viewtopic.php?f=11&t=2906&hilit=Yedukittanai+modi>

⁵ See reference 4. <http://thyagaraja-vaibhavam.blogspot.com/2008/10/thyagaraja-kriti-ehi-trijagadeesa-raga.html>

⁶ See post #35 <https://www.rasikas.org/forums/viewtopic.php?t=15299>

⁷ <https://newbritannicaencyclopedia.blogspot.com/2015/04/shiva.html>

⁸ Chapter Fifty-seven, Rudrasamhitā, Śivapurāṇa, pp 1054-60 describes in detail the annihilation of Gajāśura.

gives different shades to the rāga. The tāla of the kṛti is miśraCāpu. By nature a miśraCāpu is slightly slow which actually provides for suitable Bharatanāṭyam interpretation.

There are some more kṛti-s which can be taken up for Bharatanāṭyam interpretation. Raghavan has given examples of kṛti-s in which the navavidha forms of bhakti can be seen mirrored. (pp.150-65) Tyāgarāja describes the daśavatāra in dīnjanāvana in Bhūpālam, Ādi. In śrīrāmaraghurāma in Yadukulakāmbhoji, samsksheparāmāyaṇa is described. Different episodes in Rāmāyaṇa are referred in this kṛti preceded with the thought, what penance did he do?⁹ For instance, Kausalya, Daśaratha, Lakshmaṇa, Viśvāmitra, are referred to as doing a particular action unique to them. Kausalya showing her motherly affection by way of kissing Rāma, Daśaratha by way of calling out to Rāma in a manner a father can, to just mention a few.

Conclusion

SadhguruTyāgarāja's kṛti-s are predominantly a part of the Carnatic musicians repertoire. There are kṛti-s in different rāga-s and tāla-s with most importantly, scope for rendering the manodharma section like neraval and kalpanāsvara. There are in some rāga-s like Tōḍi, Kalyāṇi and Śaṅkarābharanam with more than nineteen compositions. In each composition a different shade of the rāga is highlighted. And, there are rāga-s like Amruthavāhini, Baṅgāla, Bindumālīni in which there is only one kṛti. There are kṛti-s which have graded saṅgati-s that showcase a slow build up of the rāga, for instance ō raṅgaśāyī in Kāmbhoji and Ādi. There are kṛti-s having multiple carāṇa-s with different dhātu-s, for instance, brōcevārevare in Śrīraṅjani. Many vilambakālākṛti-s of Tyāgarāja are sung as the main piece in a Carnatic recital. For instance, sukhievvaro in Kāṇaḍa, svararāga in Śaṅkarābharanam or nidhicāla in Kalyāṇi. Then there are also fast paced kṛti-s like telisrāma in Pūrṇacandrika. There are kṛti-s in khaṇḍaCāpu, like gurulēka in Gaurimanohari and in miśraCāpu like ehitrijagadīśa in Sāraṅga. There are also kṛti-s in vivādirāga-s like gānamūrte in Gānamūrte. From the perspective of a Bharatanāṭyam dancer, a few of kṛti-s of Tyāgarāja have been performed to. There are, of course, more kṛti-s which can be explored. Although the choice or rāga, tāla, kālapramāṇa and the sāhitya of the kṛti matter, it may perhaps not be incorrect to point out that the main focus of the kṛti is the clinching factor. A kṛti with references to mythological incidents and episodes provides more scope for a Bharatanāṭyam dancer to explore and interpret the kṛti from different angles.

Kṛti-s like nāḍopāsana in Begaḍa or nāḍasudharasambalanu in Ārabhi or nāḍupai in Madhyamāvati may not be very suitable for Bharatanāṭyam exploration. References to mythological incidents appear to increase the suitability of the kṛti for a Bharatanāṭyam exploration. Of course taking into consideration other factors like the kālapramāṇa of the kṛti and the range of the rāga. For a Bharatanāṭyam exploration, the kālapramāṇa should be neither too fast nor too slow. Too fast does not provide for execution of the movements and too slow may make sustenance a challenge. The rāga of the kṛti having more scope for exploration is also preferable. In comparison to kṛti-s of Dīkshitar or ŚyāmaŚāstri or some others, the kṛti-s of Tyāgarāja seem to provide scope for both nṛtta and abhinaya exploration.

⁹ <http://thyagaraja-vaibhavam.blogspot.com/2008/02/thyagaraja-kriti-sri-rama-raghu-rama.html>

The flow of melody allows for interspersing the compositions with jati-s or svara-s for nṛtta presentation. In Dīkshitar's kṛti-s like Raṅgapuravihāra or Akhilāṇḍeshvari the flow of the melody is such that anṛtta interspersed would take away than add to the Bharatanāṭyam presentation. The mood of the kṛti-s of ŚyāmaŚastri are such that interspersing a nṛtta portion would not be in keeping with the general approach of the kṛti.

Of course over and above all these factors, the creative thought process of the dancer/choreographer matters. For whatever said and done, the sāhitya in the kṛti-s of vaggeyakāra-s like Tyāgarāja or Dīkshitar, to mention a few, is akin to a prop for the delineation of the rāga per se. Whereas in Bharatanāṭyam the choice of the rāga matters lesser than the phrase of the rāga as such for a particular sāhitya. The compounds or metaphors used in the sāhitya too matter. A certain amount of artistic liberty or license may have to be exercised to make for an interesting Bharatanāṭyam exploration. The well-known danseuse Lakshmi Vishwanathan mentions how she has tried to portray Sītā's point of view for the Mohanakṛti, nannupālimpa. Specifically for "...naprananadha", described Sita's emotions when she first set her eyes on the young Rama entering Mithila.....how Sita's heart skipped a beat when she saw Rama and how the women of Mithila were mesmerized too."

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Love and Longing of Urmila in Kavita Kané's *Sita's Sister*

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Myths are stories of gods and of god-like heroes. They often relate to the creation of the world and sometimes its future destruction and tell how God created man and they depict the relationship between various gods and between God and Man. They provide a moral code by which one can live and treat the lives of heroes who represent the ideals of a society. In short, myths deal largely with the significant aspects of human and super-human existence. As Mark Schorer says in *William Blake: The Politics of Vision*, "Myth is fundamental, the dramatic representation of our deepest instinctual life of a primary awareness of man in the universe, capable of many configurations, upon which all particular opinions and attitudes depend" (29).

Myths are not the creation of a single author. They evolve as it is told, over and over again. Scholars explain that the myth of a culture is created through the oral renderings of its people. A speaker tells a story and then the listener tells it again and their listeners tell it again and again—and it goes on. Because myths are told and retold, passed from one person to the other, there is often more than one version of the same story.

The main characters of the myths are usually gods, demi-gods or supernatural humans. Mythical creatures are almost literary creations that generate popularity out of literary circulation and storytelling. These legendary creatures, at a point, were believed to be real beings; some have their origin traced from literary myths. Mythical creatures can be divided into two groups; the first consists of creatures that everyone agrees to have existed or still exist and the other is composed of creatures which everybody doesn't agree as to whether they existed or not.

Myths emerged even before the formation of art, language and the written word. Myths, being one of the oldest elements of human heritage, belong to a pre-literary and pre-historic era recurring through all ages and also form part of the present. Myths sprung up before religion and very religion's stories are retellings of universal mythical themes.

In India, myth has become a powerful instrument of preservation of both history and culture. Indian religion and mythology are closely interwoven and cannot really be separated. History has a past whereas myth is ever present. The mythology of India claims unique interest by virtue of its unparallel length of life. Mythology in Indian context is perhaps the most utilised and the most admired by every generation. The Indian mythology is a chest of stories that is associated with culture. Indian mythology is one of the richest elements of Indian culture, which enriches it further and makes it a unique one in the world, as it is closely associated with the oldest religion of the world—Hinduism. The mythology has mightier deeds, more heroic adventures, and of course

far dirtier demons than anyone of its kind. In India, every Hindu belief and myth colours every aspect of India's life and culture.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, in his book *The Hindu View of Life*, said that Hinduism is a way of life. It is so because for Hindus, the spiritual, sacred and secular aspects of life are highly intertwined. Hinduism is the world's oldest religion and hence its temples, idols, temple arts and ritualistic practices are mankind legacy. Hinduism is not for Hindus or Indians only; it is a world heritage and can be applied universally by all and as other religions. Over the ages, it has remained a dynamic and vibrant way of life and worship. Hindu mythology has appealed to many in the west. The reflection can be evident from Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem "Brahma" (1800), Edwin Arnold's poem "The Light of Asia", Goethe's poem "The God and the Bayadere", etc. The interesting aspect of the stories in Indian mythology is that they are usually meant to convey subtle facts, rules and maxims to guide our daily lives.

In India, the epic is a way of learning myths. They are comprehensive as they cover almost every aspect of human life, viz. religion, aesthetics, ethics, socio-political considerations and above all metaphysics. They present a well integrated and synthetic view of life and human understanding. The two epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are two encyclopaedias of ancient Aryan life and wisdom, portraying an ideal civilization. The *Mahabharata* preaches how a man should not live whereas the *Ramayana* preaches how a man should live.

Apart from these two epics, the Indian mythologies have oceans of stories from the *Kathasaritsagara* and *Panchatantra*, collections of Indian legends, fairy tales and folk tales arranged within a larger framework. There are many major and minor characters that teach the moral of life to its readers. To make it easier for the readers the branch story plays a vital role building the mythical stories. The main purpose of the branch story is to enhance the value of the story, to understand the main story, to understand life and it is the very soul of the main story. In India, the mythical stories are narrated to people from all walks of life by the traditions of storytelling like *Kathakalakshepa*, *Kathaiyum Pattum*, *Villu Pattu*, *Puppet Show*, *Purana Pravachana*, *Harikathara*, *Patakam* and *Katha Prasangam*. Vyasa reflects on the power of storytelling at the beginning of the *Mahabharata*, "If you listen carefully, in the end you'll be someone else" (qtd. in Carrière 3).

Now-a-days many Indian writers demythify some characters in Indian mythology and make it more human and credible. Retelling of mythology is a common practice in literature. Retelling of ancient mythology is a common practice in Indian Writing in English. Starting from Raja Rao, the retelling of myth can be viewed even in the contemporary writer Amish Tirupathi. For instance, the portrayal of Shiva as a Tibetan in *Shiva's Trilogy* by Amish Tirupathi, the story of Karna through the eyes of his wife Uruvi in *Karna's Wife: The Outcaste's Queen* by Kavita Kané, Jesus surviving the crucifixion and living in India in *The Rozabal Line* by Ashwin Sanghi and several other works. The list is endless.

Indian mythology is also about the characters of strong, beautiful and divine women like Devaki, Tara, Sita, Gandhari, Mandodari, Kunti, Savitri, Uruvi, Sabari, Vrushali, Radha, Ganga, Damayanti, Andal, Ahalya, Urmila, and several others.

Through this paper, we absorb how the Indian mythology is retold in the novel of Kavita Kané's *Sita's Sister*. Kavita Kané, an Indian English Novelist from Mumbai. Her writing revolves around Indian mythology. Kané's novel always centers on minor woman characters in Indian epics. According to her, "Minor characters sometimes give you an alternative perspective to mythological stories". She used mythology as a literary expedient to expose contemporary disputes and sensibilities.

In *Sita's Sister* Kavita Kané deliberates about the attitude of Urmila and her great detriment for the victory in killing Demon Ravana by Lord Rama. Urmila is the second daughter of King Janaka and Lakshmana's wife. Urmila is one of the solidest characters but exposed petite in the epic *Ramayana*. The epic highlights various characters like Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Dhasaratha, Hanuman and Ravana.

Myth plays a vital role here to point out the sacrifice of Urmila right from her childhood. She is the only biological daughter of King Janaka. Whereas Sita, an adopted daughter found underground while performing Holy Ritual, Mandavi and Shrutakiri are the motherless nieces of Janaka. The king loved Sita more than the other three daughters. Urmila often thought, though she is the biological daughter of Janaka, she couldn't win the heart of her father, Janaka.

Urmila met Lakshmana in the *swayambara* of Sita and falls in love with him. After the marriage of four daughters of King Janaka to the princes of Ayodhya; on the coronation of Lord Rama, Ayodhya Queen Kaikeyi demanded King Dhasaratha that Rama to leave the crown and live an exiled life for fourteen years. This made Rama, Sita and Lakshmana to leave the kingdom and live in the forest. Each follows their *dharma*. Rama followed *puthradharna*, Sita follows *patnidharma* and Lakshmana follows *bharatadharna* leaving his wife Urmila in the palace and forgetting *patidharma*.

Urmila is revealed as a woman of strong will not to mourn instead she became the backbone of the family. Kané portrays how Rama, Sita, Lakshmana were in exile whereas Urmila is in a private exile. Urmila made the fourteen years to enhance her knowledge and be concerned all the family members as they were distressed by mind after the parting of Rama. The love story of Lakshmana and Urmila is known little in the *Ramayana*. Urmila's role is extensively unplaced; it is she who made the utmost expense.

In the *Ramayana*, it is revealed about *Urmila nitra*. On the first night in the forest, Rama and Sita went to sleep while Lakshmana kept a guard on them. Later, Goddess Nidra (Goddess of Sleep) approaches him; he pleaded her not to interrupt him for fourteen years as he must protest his brother and sister-in-law. The goddess was awestruck by his dedication and sworn him to leave for fourteen years, in a condition that someone must to bear the share of Lakshmana's sleep. Lakshmana demands the goddess to go to his wife Urmila, who voluntarily approve in order to

fulfill his duty. When the goddess clarified the condition to Urmila, she readily acknowledged for the victory of Lakshmana. Those days while narrating the folktale the elders never skip the story of *Urmila Nitra* to teach the importance of a true love between a husband and wife.

In Kavita Kané's *Sita's Sister*, the novelist never tell about *Urmila Nitra* instead she made her eventful for those fourteen years in gaining knowledge, being a matured daughter-in-law, caring ageing elders, advising Bharata to lead Ayodya as a land of happiness and prosperity. After the fourteen years of exile, Lakshmana was wonderstruck by seeing Urmila as a more mature and tolerance woman than before. Urmila is never fond of pride but a forgotten heroine in the *Ramayana*. Urmila, a woman living without her love, any future, a victim of fate, molds herself according to the situation and stands tall in the worst situation. She also sacrificed a materialistic life. The strength of the novel lies in Urmila's questions and criticism of the social standards of the time, an instance of the authorial voice talking over the plot. The novel provides interesting insights into the world of women, the conflicts in the domestic sphere, social restrictions on learning and scholarship, the notion of being an ideal wife, the power play of politically influential wives and the testing of emotional ties during war and conflict. Urmila's questions and criticism of the social standards of the time is an instance of the authorial voice taking over the novel. Urmila is the silent knight in not so shiny an armor. While Ram and Sita decided to go on exile and find their destiny, Urmila chose to stay back, away from the love of her life just so she could be the glue to the broken family that was left behind in the palace. Kavita portrays Urmila as a practical, witty and most of all, a strong, independent women who in her own light is the hero of the story.

Whenever we read the *Ramayana*, we think Queen Kaikeyi, the youngest wife of King Dasaratha and the mother of Bharata; as a selfish woman. Who orders King Dasaratha to direct Rama to leave the country and sent to exile for fourteen years. This shatter the joy of Ayodya, ends the life of Dasaratha and became a bad mother to his son. Everyone thinks that Kaikeyi is behaving very gravely in Ayodya, but there lies the lenient side of her.

Kaikeyi had a threatening from an astrologer that whoever sits in the throne of Ayodya in the fourteen evil years will lose their life. A great demon Ravana must be killed as early as possible and it lies only in the hands of Rama to save the world. In order to achieve this she voluntarily showed as a destructive character, not worrying about the life of her own son Bharata. Auspiciously her good mind saved her son as he placed the slippers of Rama and ruled Ayodya in his absenteeism. Kaikeyi never concerned when her son blamed her and said that he would never call her as mother again. She respected Rama more than his own son. Though Kaikeyi knew she would be battered, hated and shunned for all times but she loved to save Rama from the evil signs to be fall on him. Here lies the true motherly love of Kaikeyi. At the end of the novel Kané gorgeously revealed the sacrificing character of Kaikeyi.

Myths are the important features in every culture and they have existed in every society. Indeed, it seems to be a basic constituent of human culture, because the variety is so great, it is difficult to generalise about the nature of myths but it is clear that in their general characteristic and in their details people's myths reflect, express and explore their self-image. The study of myth is thus of central importance in the study both of individual societies and human culture as a whole.

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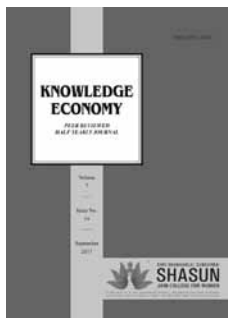
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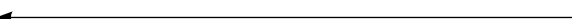
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Articles are very much knowledge oriented and enhance the research skills of the reader.

- Purnimal Iyer



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