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RELEVANCE, RE- READING AND REPRESENTATION: ADAPTATION OF MYTHS, LEGENDS AND FOLKTALES IN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Abstract

Literature transcends all barriers of caste, color and creed and recreates myth, poses problems and suggests remedies. In short, Literature can be considered as reflections of thoughts and emotions, human relations, social customs, personal sufferings and has that magnificent touch of hearts, emotional inflections of disappointed and disgusted lovers. In India, starting from Vedas till today many writers have contributed to literature taking/deriving spirit from Myth's, Legends, and Folktales. Literary renaissance first took place in Bengal. Raj Ram Mohan Roy is the torch bearer of Indian writers of English literature. He has built bridge between English and India. He wrote subject like adversity against sati, Freedom of press and English Education He was considered as the first Master of English prose. During the recent decades Indian writing in English with its depth in range and vigor has proved itself a distinct corpus of writing in the world literatures. The present article is to make an attempt to discuss the relevance, re-reading and representation and adaptation of myths, legends and folk-tales Indian English.

Keywords: Relevance, Myth, Legend, Folk- tale,ReS Reading, Adaptation

Relevance of myth, legends and folktales:

Myths and legends are relevant even today because they often convey timeless and universal themes, which are relevant both in the art of storytelling and in portraying the human experience. Myths and legends also give insight into the values and perspectives of long gone cultures. Their stories offer clues to how these people lived and what kind of societies they inhabited. For this reason, myths and legends can also show what was different about human life when these stories originated and what has stayed the same. The themes of myths and legends are the same as those that are present it all great literature, just a few of which are man versus man, man versus nature, man versus the gods, man on a quest, family

Conflict, and coming of age. Most myths and legends include at least one of these great themes and often several. These are in the earliest 'stories' the ancestors of all literature we read today. Every country has its culture, and culture has its own mythology and legends and these reflect the geography of the culture, the values of the culture, and the history of the culture. Myth can also tell us what a culture considers ethical, significant and central to its ideology, giving us insight into another culture.

Re-reading of myths, legends and folktales is necessary because mere religious reading of the story from a myth or legend or folktale will be misleading and limiting its scope, and also the modern literary theories have opened up the possibilities of many more interpretations of the stories from a myth or legends. Sometimes a myth or folktale may project wrong or bias image of the entity, in such case it is necessary to re-evaluate the same by re-reading it. Myths or legends can very well represent a history, society or geography of culture. They can function as symbols or metaphors with its representation of a world. They always document something special or general.

Folktales generally part of the oral tradition of a group and are more frequently told than read. They are passed down from one generation to another and there is no virtue in originality. In very telling and retelling, slight changes occur in the form and content of the tales, but the theme remains stable. Folk tales take on the characteristics of the time and place in which they are told. Folk tales are regarded as an object of serious literary attention by the European folk scholarship. The children as well as adult of new generation of each county are equally attracted by this genre.

What is Indian English? How do we characterize Indian English?

A few observations may be made on Indian English and its popularity as a medium of creative writing, Professor Dhurjati Prasad of Lucknow – a versatile scholar of Yesterday – says-Indian English could perhaps be defined as a language written or spoken by Indians in the belief that. It is English. The spelling is English. The tone and spirit may not be .No language is Unitary in nature. It is invariably a confederation of dialects, regional variants and professional argots. In every language, there is a perpetual conflict between law and life, between order and assertiveness. Every language tries to have a certain standard version – Oxford English Akashavani Hindi, DMK – Tamilnadu.

Well known writers like Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan. Nirad.C Choudhuri, Kamaladas, etc. claim explicitly that their usage of English is primarily Indian and not Anglo – saxon and does not represent an effort to imitate British or American English. Braj Kachru speaks of "a cline of bilingualism" which has three measuring points: the am bilingual point, the central point and the zero point.. The educated varieties cluster above the central point.

The English – speaking world consists of two groups of people those to whom English is the mother tongue- Americans, Australians , non-Africans, south Africans, and the people of the Caribbean, the other people to whom English is a foreign language – Indians, Pakistan's, Burmese, Malaysians, Sri Lankans, Nigerians, Kenyans. The speech forms of native speakers keep changing. Those speakers of a foreign language tend to be regid . Their English is bound to be Artificial being acquired. Their words, Phrases and sentence forms are very often Translations from their mother –tongue.

Myth in contemporary Indian Fiction in English

Raja Rao's Kanthapura and R.K Narayana's the Man- Eater of Malguidi are the best examples of myth in contemporary Indian fiction in English .In Kanthapura a rural novel, the myths of the folklore songs in the name of the village goddess the sthala purana, legend of the place are all evoked with such authenticity of the breeze of the peepal tree with the sonorous sound of the flowing river Hemavathy , blowing on the paddy fields and claytiles house – roofs of Kanthapura. It is a village novel rustic to the core but socially and politically awakening one too. Women in the novel are so vibrant and responsive young men with leaders like Murthy respond spontaneously to Gnndhiji all for independence.

And so in a novel where the myth and legend of Rama resting on a rock and Sita washing her feet in the river give identity to landscape, current affairs and contemporary situations which are too real and near are fused with the mythical so as to give them a certain identity to wrestle with. Hence, Harikatha Ramachar by telling the story of Rama intones Gandhi and his struggle against evil. The novel as a narrative is in fact in the puranic tradition, as a tale interminably told. The injustice of the Redman, the local Brahmin priest turned Zamindar Bhatta, the pious Murthy, the sensible Rengamma and the various major characters come out alive as if to give sustenance to this contemporary myth of independence struggle.

R. K. Narayana's fiction thrives on urban social comedy. His Malgudi is a small world of petty, Industries, middle class people whose technology is still gracefully human enough to create an amiable ambience. Though the mode is realistic the way Narayan creates his characters and situations against the too familiar landmarks one gets the impression the real loses its fierce sharpness to become the mythical. The Nallappa grove, the Albert Mission school, the printing press, the sarayee river and the Banyan tree –all lend a mythical aura to Malgudi rather than making it appear real. It is a feat of the novelist that the real is made mythical and myth of malguid is used a backdrop for the play of real common men and women and children.

From swami and Friends to The English Teacher to the Guide to Man – Eater of Malgudi to Vendor of sweets, it is the same common people, some with extraordinary characteristics. If the puranic myths are loud and aggressive in Narayan – because of the

comic mode and vision which by implication is mature, there is a low key function of the myth. Even the myth of Bhasmasura, the self-destorying Demon is subtly and creatively used in the Man –Eater of malguidi.

Use of myths in the plays of Girish Karnard

The story of king Yayati occurs in the Mahabharatha The king, for a moral transgression he has committed, is cursed to old age in the prime of life Distraught at losing his youth he approaches his son, pleading with him to lend him his youth in exchange for old. The son accepts the exchange and the curse, and thus, becomes old, older than his father. In Mahabharata, kingyayati has five sons: after the elder four refuse their father, the youngest yields to his entreaties. But the old age brings no knowledge, no self realization, only senselessness of a punishment meted out for an act in which he had not even participated. The father is left to face the consequences of shirking responsibility for his own actions. Girshkarnad's Yayati retells the age old story of the mythological King who in his longing for eternal youth sought to borrow the vitality of his own son. Karnad has borrowed the myth from the Mahabharata and other puranas.

The Mahabharata story runs thus: Yayati was one of the six sons of king Nahusha. Devayani,whose love for Kacha remained unrequited, marries yayati to spite sharmishta for whom she nurses childhood jealousy. Sharmishta is deeply in love with yayati and subjects herself to a lot of physical and mental for the love. A son is born to her out clandestine liaison with yayati. Yayati blinded by his insatiable thirst for sensual pleasures, dreads old age. Pooru, sharmishtha's son offers to exchange his youth for the age of his father. Enlightened now, yayati gives up to the thrown and retires to forest to lead a life of renunciation with Devayani and sharmistha.

In yayati, Karnad takes liberty with the original myth and invents some new relationships to make it acceptable to modem sensibilities. In the puranic story Yayati marries Devayani, daughter of the sage sukracharya and also take sharmistha a low born girl as his wife under certain nicetics of dharma .Devayani, furious and seething with Jealousy. Bring a curse on yayati,of course with a saving clause that if he desired, anybody else could also beat that curse for yayati .Drenehed in sensual pleasures, yayati promptly asks his son to exchange his youth with him. Pooru willingly offers his youth as filial devotion and yayati shuns carnality only after indulging in it for a thousand years. In Karnad's Play, Yayati has already married Devayani and marries sharmistha during the action of the play. Karnad iinvents, two characters – poorus wife chitralekha and confidant swarnalatha In karnad's play, the whole action, takes place in one night. Pooru is shown coming home after his marriage and the bed is being prepared for the newly wedded couple.

The same bed is used for yayati to solemnize Sharmishthas marriage .The curse falls and pooru loses his youth and suddenly grows old chitraleka who wants to bear a child is

disillusioned. She decides to offer herself of Yayati and then she commits suicide. This shakes Yayati and acts as an eye opener. In a moment of genuine remorse, he takes back the curse from his son. Karnads interpretation of the familiar old myth on the exchange of eyes between father and son seems to have baffled and even agreed many of the conventional critics.

Folklore and legend conflated with mythology in Karnads Plays:

- Myth is a drive towards a verbal circumference of human experience - observes North rope frye in secular scripture.
- Myth and magic have a close affinity : both are physical phenomena if myth is the eternal presence in psyche.
- Northrope Frye says: puranas in Sanskrit means though old ever new (puraapinavram) or old becomes new (pravanam Bhavati it purana). Magic is the manipulation of psychic action.
- Folk imaginative is at once mythopoeia and magical and folklore is rich in both myth and magic.

Music and theatre have always gone hand in hand in India .Yakshagana being a dance drama relies on the use of song to create right atmosphere and narrate the action.Indian playwrights derive their themes from the famous epics, The Ramayana, and the Mahabharatha epics which were poetic configurations of very old myths. The epic Mahabharatha of Vysa surprisingly has three beginnings, The first two tentative and the third a sure beginning. In the first chapter sutara, the narrator of the poem approaches his audience, a group of sages. He tells that he had gone on a pilgrimage to samantapanchalea where he was inspired by memories of the battle between pandavas and kauravas, his own ancestors and these memories were evoked by the place itself. This indicates that the historical beginning the second chapter describes some incident that happened during sacrifice the uncertainty of time and place of this incident suggests that the beginnings is fictional. The reason is that myths are permanent, They deal with the greatest of all problems. The problems which do not change, They deal with love war, sin, tyranny, courage, fate, and all in some way or other deal with the relation of man to those divine powers which are sometimes felt to be irrational, sometimes be cruel, and sometimes, alas to be just.

The song in Hayavadana verbalize the emotions deep felt feeling and intellectual musings, musings of characters especially of Padmini and Kapila in Bhagavata's song elucidate the song mixed feeling of determination and resignation which motivate Devadatha and Kapila in their final death dance.

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Conclusion: Literature can be read and understood from various perspectives. Theoretical and methodological foundations of the project are in contemporary international Folkloristic whose scope has broadened from the analysis of folklore texts to the study of their functions, performances and social sphere of impact. According to the current views, there is no need to separate folklore from its performances. Folklore can be understood as a generative process from remembering to creative textualization and application.

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