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(NCIKSLRS-2026)

6 – 7 March, 2026

DOIs:10.2018/SS/NCIKSLRS-2026

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(NCIKSLRS-2026)

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ABOUT THE CONFERENCE :

The National Conference on Indian Knowledge System, Literature, and Religion Studies is a premier academic event designed to explore, celebrate, and critically analyze the profound intellectual heritage of India. For millennia, the Indian subcontinent has been a cradle of profound wisdom, producing vast repositories of knowledge that encompass science, mathematics, philosophy, arts, linguistics, and spirituality. This conference aims to illuminate the intricate intersections between these ancient knowledge systems, the literary traditions that preserved them, and the religious philosophies that shaped the subcontinent's cultural ethos. In the contemporary era, there is a global resurgence of interest in integrating traditional wisdom with modern paradigms to address complex modern challenges. This multidisciplinary conference provides a vital platform for academicians, scholars, researchers, and students to delve into the epistemological foundations of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). By examining classical and vernacular literature, alongside diverse religious texts and practices, the event seeks to uncover how ancient Indian paradigms of sustainable living, ethics, cognitive science, and social harmony remain deeply relevant today. Ultimately, the conference endeavors to bridge the gap between antiquity and modernity, fostering a renewed appreciation for India's intellectual legacy and catalyzing future research that brings ancient wisdom into contemporary academic and societal discourse.

OBJECTIVES & AIMS OF THE CONFERENCE :

- **To Explore and Validate the Indian Knowledge System (IKS):** To critically examine the scientific, philosophical, mathematical, and technological dimensions embedded in ancient Indian texts and traditions, highlighting their historical significance and modern applicability.
- **To Analyze the Role of Indian Literature:** To investigate how classical (Sanskrit, Tamil, Prakrit, etc.) and regional literature have served as vehicles for the transmission of knowledge, cultural memory, ethical values, and historical narratives across generations.
- **To Foster Critical Discourse in Religion Studies:** To encourage an academic and objective study of India's diverse religious philosophies and practices, understanding their contributions to human psychology, ethics, social structures, and global peace.
- **To Promote Multidisciplinary Research:** To create a collaborative synergy between scholars of humanities, sciences, and social sciences, encouraging cross-disciplinary research that links IKS, literature, and theology.
- **To Facilitate Modern Integration:** To discuss pedagogical and structural methodologies for integrating the insights of the Indian Knowledge System into contemporary educational frameworks (aligning with visions like the National Education Policy 2020).
- **To Address Contemporary Global Challenges:** To draw upon the holistic approaches found in Indian ecological literature, spiritual practices, and traditional sciences (such as Ayurveda and Yoga) to propose solutions for modern crises related to sustainability, mental health, and social cohesion.
- **To Build an Academic Network:** To establish a robust network of thinkers, researchers, and institutions dedicated to the preservation, translation, and continued study of India's indigenous knowledge and literary heritage.

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Research Paper / Article / Review

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INTEGRATING INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM AND NEP-2020 PRINCIPLES INTO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AT BUDDHIST UNIVERSITIES IN VIETNAM

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Abstract: *The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) and the India's National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) focus on learner-centric, Indic-based value integrated education, multidisciplinary learning, knowledge of multilingual languages and adding indigenous knowledge to the syllabi. These principles are also consistent with Vietnam Buddhist higher education whose educational philosophy has been based on moral growth, skillful thought, and social obligation. It analyses how it can be adopted the IKS and NEP-2020 in ELT for the Vietnamese Buddhist universities by means of a pedagogic model, including relevant and ethically orientated methods.*

Drawing on qualitative analysis of curricula, pedagogical literatures and curriculum reviews the article draws attention to three main domains: (1) inclusion of Buddhist and Indian knowledge traditions in ELT content, (2) contemplative experiential based approaches to teaching methodologies and (3) framing English as an instrument for language competency development alongside intercultural interaction. The paper also comes out with a following recommendation for language teaching in Buddhist universities from skill approach to an integrated one of spiritual contemplation, cognitive mindfulness and intercultural communicative competence.

Findings demonstrate that the IKS tenets of guru-śiṣya learning and value-based education help to deepen learner motivation, critical thinking and communicative confidence. Additionally, the emphasis on multilingualism and digitally mediated learning in NEP 2020 offers a platform for enhancing ELT practices in Buddhist higher education. The current research adds to the conversation about decolonizing ELT, and sets an example of a culturally-responsive model that leads to academic success and spiritual development in Vietnamese Buddhist institutions of higher education.

Keywords: *ELT, Vietnam Buddhist University, NEP-2020, Indian Knowledge System.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The worldwide spread of English as a lingua franca in this capacity holds important implications at many levels for colleges, universities and institutions devoted to religious studies and philosophy. In Vietnam, Buddhist universities are struggling to carry the fire of their profoundly spiritual traditions and distinctive cultural forms as they increasingly stand toe-to-toe English in a global world. This interaction is considered vital for supporting academic research and contributing the development of international cooperation. What is happening in this situation is a multi-faceted dynamic: ELT within the Arena of Buddhist Education involves more than just technological solutions to the problem of language learning; (1) it involves inherently ethical, reflective and culturally resonant elements related to Buddhist pedagogy.

The National Education Policy of 2020 (NEP-2020) provides a futuristic and transformational architecture, towards holistic development with due importance to indigenous knowledge systems, and



the promotion of value-based education in the Indian context. The core focus of the NEP-2020 is rejuvenating the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), which is underpinned by a convergence of philosophical, spiritual, linguistic and pedagogical traditions, inextricably intertwined with Buddhism. These salient principles also have the potential to transform and revitalize the paradigms of ELT at Buddhist universities across Vietnam.

This research attempts to search for answers about how the IKS tenets can combine and support English language teaching pedagogies according to the transformative ambition set forth by NEP-2020 in terms of Vietnamese Buddhist higher education. Based on its moral foundation and meditative strategy, the teaching of English can be a crucial meeting point between indigenous knowledge systems and the wider world scholarly discourse for an enriched two-way of knowing.

2. Indian Knowledge System and NEP-2020: Educational Foundations

The IKS system The Indian Knowledge System is an extensive and complex array of fluid forms of knowledge it includes philosophy, ethics, linguistics, epistemology and even the art of teaching itself. In the classical Indian context, the ethos of our education was rooted in a strong attention to personality building, ethical and social responsibilities were underscored and self-realisation formed part of the process and not any less than academic knowledge or professional skills as is the case today. The pedagogical process itself was a dialogical, experiential, relational learning teaching and learning Tradition in India orle-id it more essential between the guru who embodied the knowledge and vision of life he transmitted to hisśiśyas.

The larger objectives of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) are crafted to serve as an overarching framework to imbibe these foundational principles in a manner that they blend well within contemporary educational discourse. Some of the features that are related to ELT include:

- A belief in the value of a broad based, interdisciplinary education that acknowledges the interconnectedness of knowledge.
- Value based education Your child will receive a value-based and ethics centric form of education which sets them on the path to become well-adjusted individuals with a keen sense of right from wrong.
- A commitment to multilingualism and protection of linguistic diversity, recognizing the fact that there are many languages spoken on the land.
- A student-centered and experiential teaching methodology that puts the learner's needs and experiences at the center of learning.
- The importance of technology in creating an inclusive environment where all learners have the tools and resources needed to support their learning.

Journals dedicated to these topics closely adhere to the traditional educational principles of Buddhism, which are based on ideas such as right speech, attention ("mindfulness"), compassion and wisdom. Therefore, NEP-2020 along with the Indian Knowledge Systems is a holistic model for reforming ELT in Buddhist universities which is not only relevant but also transforming.

3. ELT in Buddhist Universities in Vietnam: Current Context

In terms of the Vietnamese Buddhist scholastic knowledge, for a long time, the thrust in education has been on Buddhist doctrine, philosophical thinking, moral understanding and monastic rules. In addition, competence in the English language is often required to qualify for a secure place for students who want to learn about international Buddhist studies, greater participation in international conferences and access to various academic resources.

Nevertheless, it is noted that the methods of English Language Teaching (ELT) pursued within these august institutions primarily follow traditional norms based on communicative methods or rule-based grammatical framework without much greater cultural and ethical touch. This neglect in focus creates a pedagogical deficit that is far from realizing the grounding language learning goals and orientations characterizing the transcendental religious educational objectives of Buddhist discourses. Though technical aspects of students' English language use may have improved, student confidence in their ability to engage academically and interculturally and to ethically participate in wider discourse often lags behind.



In the face of these obstacles, a major pedagogical reorientation is required. Such a transformation would see second language teaching firmly ensconced within the realm of contemplative practices, a deepened appreciation for cultural identity and ethical reflection which contribute towards re-connecting students with their own learning histories, holistically enriching language learning through (re)calibrating the linguistic curriculum toward Buddhist education's rich Spiritual and Moral traditions.

4. Pedagogical Integration of IKS into ELT

Curriculum Integration

In this very delicate phase of incorporating IKS (Indigenous Knowledge Systems) into ELT, we need to make it clear that English is not being ousted from the linguistic curriculum and being simply replaced by religious studies. Instead, this synthesis deftly places the language acquisition tools into a densely colored quilt of deep Buddhist and Indian philosophical thought. One example of such a useful blending may include any or all of:

- Reading texts that evoke the subtle movements of Buddhist morality, in delve into Indian philosophy, or engage in intercultural dialogue that crossing boundaries.
- Having students write reflective summaries in which they reflect on and summarize their understanding of principles like mindfulness, compassion, and social responsibility, leading to a richer engagement with the material.
- While listening practices may involve inspiring talks or lively discussions elucidating the wisdom teachings surmised in Buddhism, for people to be able to absorb and immerse themselves into these teachings, very often in auditory endeavours.

Such well thought out links do not merely arouse the cognitive centers of the learner, but also make him approach language in real terms and it indeed makes learning a richer experience.

Contemplative and Experiential Pedagogy

Experiential learning and the act of self-reflection are grave and deep subject matters within Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). In order to achieve notional orientation in these ELT classrooms, several practices have proved beneficial:

- Integrating mindfulness practices in the classroom that serve as dual language and writing skill builders, and encourage a closer relationship between language learning and personal experience.
- Using English-language reflective journaling, encouraging students to express thoughts and feelings in writing, which can help us develop the habit of internal reflection that is so important for language development.
- Designing dialogic learning environments and leading group discussions that focus on ethical inquiry to enable students to work together in understanding complex ideas and perspectives.

As well as the benefits for cultivation of affective engagement, these carefully designed approaches also help to reduce language anxiety, fostering a favourable learning environment, and promoting deeper cognitive processing in learners; all together leading to a more productive learning experience.

NEP-2020 and Multilingual, Technology-Enabled ELT

NEP-2020 also lays a strong focus on the need for multilingualism and considers it as an important cognitive as well cultural resource which can aid learners substantially. It is an occupational trait that is widely distributed in Vietnamese Buddhist academies, which requires them to speak fluently among the addition of languages such as Vietnamese, Pāli, Sanskrit and Chinese. To the extent that such varied linguistic strengths and abilities are recognized and valued, effective language development can be greatly supported, especially when comparative approaches to instruction (that enable students to see common patterns across languages allowing them to transfer knowledge) are incorporated.

In addition, technology plays an essential role as a facilitator of this revolutionary process in education. Such an array of internet-based resources and the existence of digital libraries, as well as foreign web-conference-lectures serve to give students unique access unparalleled in history, to study and delve into the rich field of global Buddhist thought, all in English. NEP 2020 introduces progressive



blended learning models, which are meant to enhance the educational experience and foster flexible and inclusive ELT practices suited to the diverse learner needs of a dynamic linguistic world.

5.English as Intercultural and Ethical Communication

In the complex and multi-layered reality of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), combined with the deep, reflective teachings of Buddhism, it becomes increasingly obvious that "language" is not just a medium for transferring basic transactional knowledge. It becomes an act that is morally relevant, that has considerable weight in the realm of morality and responsibility. *Sammā vācā* everywhere epitomizes the ideals of truth, unity and loving-kindness in our speech. If we can embed the moral dimension into the warp and woof of English Language Teaching (ELT) as most sensible, not only do we enhance educational experience but also heighten the entire learning-teaching exercise. This method invites learners to think of English not just as a language of communication, but as something that plays an active role in connecting people across cultures and a potent force in the cause of peace.

In addition, this new teaching approach can make a considerable contribution to the development and improvement in learners' IC Can Do Statements, and as such offers them valuable assets for more meaningful respectful and confident communication. This in turn equips them to maneuver through the intricacies of world-wide academic discussion and constructive religious dialogue. The classroom, therefore, acts as a crucible for fostering more than mere fluency in language; it evolves into a dynamic place where we revel and rejoice in the vibrancy of its patchwork quilt of people and beliefs and perspectives that our global family so easily affords us.

6.Implications for Teacher Education and Professional Development

Key here are the pivotal roles of teachers who should be able to make English Language Teaching (ELT) informed by Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) a success. To this massive reorientation of education to develop, though, staff development activities must be tightly organized and well-targeted in order to accomplish several things very specifically.

To begin with, a comprehensive viewpoint that integrates the principles of IKS as well as those of NEP-2020(National Education Policy of 2020), which form the basis of present day education system is required. This broad perspective is, in turn, expected to contribute to the transfer of various educational philosophies and practices.

Second, you should have involvement in reflective and creative processes of creating culturally relevant teaching materials. Not only should these resources grab the attention and enthusiasm of learners, but they should relate to their culturally diverse histories as well. Such an attitude is crucial for promoting more inclusive and powerful learning that recognise and value cultural rich diversity.

In addition, the conduct of contemplative and reflection pedagogy is important. This model of pedagogy not only encourages deep thought and self reflection among teachers, but it is also valuable for students who should be offered a more complete educational experience in order to become critically engaged with the material.

Secondly, it is important to make the right use of technology in language learning. This entails examination of better pedagogy, and ways to bring different aspects into interactive learning opportunities for all students, to provide an equitable form of education.

The policy of empowering English language education has to be implemented, otherwise it is just empty talk that bring the professionalism of ELT teachers and most importantly their ethics in Buddhist educational society. The rewards of such initiatives, of course is impactful teaching that makes the educational journey worthwhile for both educators and students.

7.Conclusion

This well-tailored and global research has triumphantly evinced the possibility that if the Indian Knowledge System is judiciously integrated into English Language Teaching (ELT) in eco-friendly manner within scope for the National Educational Policy of 2020 (NEP- 2020), its practical implications as homeo-allopathic source may have a game-changer effect to steer Buddhist universities in Vietnam on revolutionary path. By integrating language teaching with core ethical values, while at the same



time nurturing discursive practices and diversity of culture, ELT can move beyond its merely instrumental role. It is part of a transformation journey to move towards holistic development of the learner (mind, body and spirit).

The model goes a long distance not only to advance the proficiency of language, which is indeed critical, but also greatly raises students' intercultural sensitivity, moral sensitivity of responsibility and self-confidence in academic situations to such an extraordinarily high level. While students navigate increasingly through the infinite, impersonal landscape of secularized global academia in today's society, these boldly experimental programmes tie English language teaching firmly to the rich and diverse web of indigenous wisdom. All the while, we remain ever alert and responsive to the changing conditions of this dynamic-charged period in our progressive educational history.

Finally, future empirical work in the classroom can extend real-time inquiry and richer analysis of interaction and learning analysis to cross-cultural comparative research between Vietnamese Buddhist universities and their counterparts in India. These efforts will help to continue the validation of this cutting-edge model, and do so in a critically considerate way for future impact, meaning and utility.

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Research Paper / Article / Review

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Sacred Feminine and Cultural Memory in Indian English Narratives: Myth, Gender, and the Politics of Reinterpretation

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Abstract: Since the late 20th century, much of the contemporary writing in Indian English Literature has re-examined and re-imagined sacred feminine archetypes to assess how cultural memory influences gendered expectations. Unlike earlier works of literature that simply presented mythological ideas without questioning their assumptions, contemporary writings provide a critique of the underlying ideologies of myth and present alternatives of ethics and morality. The Sacred Feminine in Indian Culture is a cornerstone of India's mythology. These myths are expressed through epic poetry, puranas, devotional traditions, and oral folklore; they create an evolving sense of self that spans centuries. Among the many forms of expression, the Sacred Feminine provides a foundation for cultural continuity, moral authority and the embodiment of cosmic energy. The Sacred Feminine exists in many different forms, including the Mother Goddess and Warrior Goddess. In these forms, the Sacred Feminine represents a divine femininity that is both nurturing and powerful. Despite the reverence given to the Sacred Feminine in the form of Goddess Worship (which honours women as manifestations of the divine power of Shakti), women are often relegated to restrictive roles within patriarchal societies. The duality between the reverence provided to women as sacred beings and their restriction in society presents a paradox that is ripe for reinterpretation through literature.

This paper will argue that Indian English writers are using the Sacred Feminine as a means of transforming myths, creating new memories, and intervening in contemporary politics. Through the use of Partition narratives, diasporic fiction, feminist reinterpretations of myths and other forms of creative expression, the Sacred Feminine is transformed from a static icon of the past into a dynamic repository of memory with both empowering and ambivalent possibilities for transformation.

Keywords: Sacred Feminine, Cultural Memory, Indian English Literature, Myth Rewriting, Gender Politics, Myth and Modernity, Shakti Tradition.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sacred feminine is a dynamic cultural symbol which is constantly being interpreted as it goes through the different layers of culture including religion, literature and social change. *Ardhanarishvara*, the symbolic representation of this interdependence of the two halves of the divine, is perhaps the most striking example of this relationship. As an image, *Ardhanarishvara* represents the metaphysical oneness of both masculine and feminine energies. Numerous examples of female divinity embodying cosmic power exist in the realm of Indian mythology. In Hinduism, the universe is often conceptualized through the relationship of masculine and feminine principles that have a dynamic interrelationship. Many theological traditions revolve around the concept of Shakti, or the primal feminine energy. Thus, without their female equivalents, even strong male deities like Shiva are incomplete. Goddess Parvati, for instance, is shown as a loving wife and mother; she upholds societal notions of feminine

subservience and sacrifice. On the other hand, Goddess Kali is depicted as having destructive abilities and being fiercely independent. The duality by which feminine traits are seen is demonstrated by the coexistence of these two distinct goddess representations. In society, women still occupy lesser positions than males, despite the possibility of equality based on philosophical interpretations of the nature of the sexes.

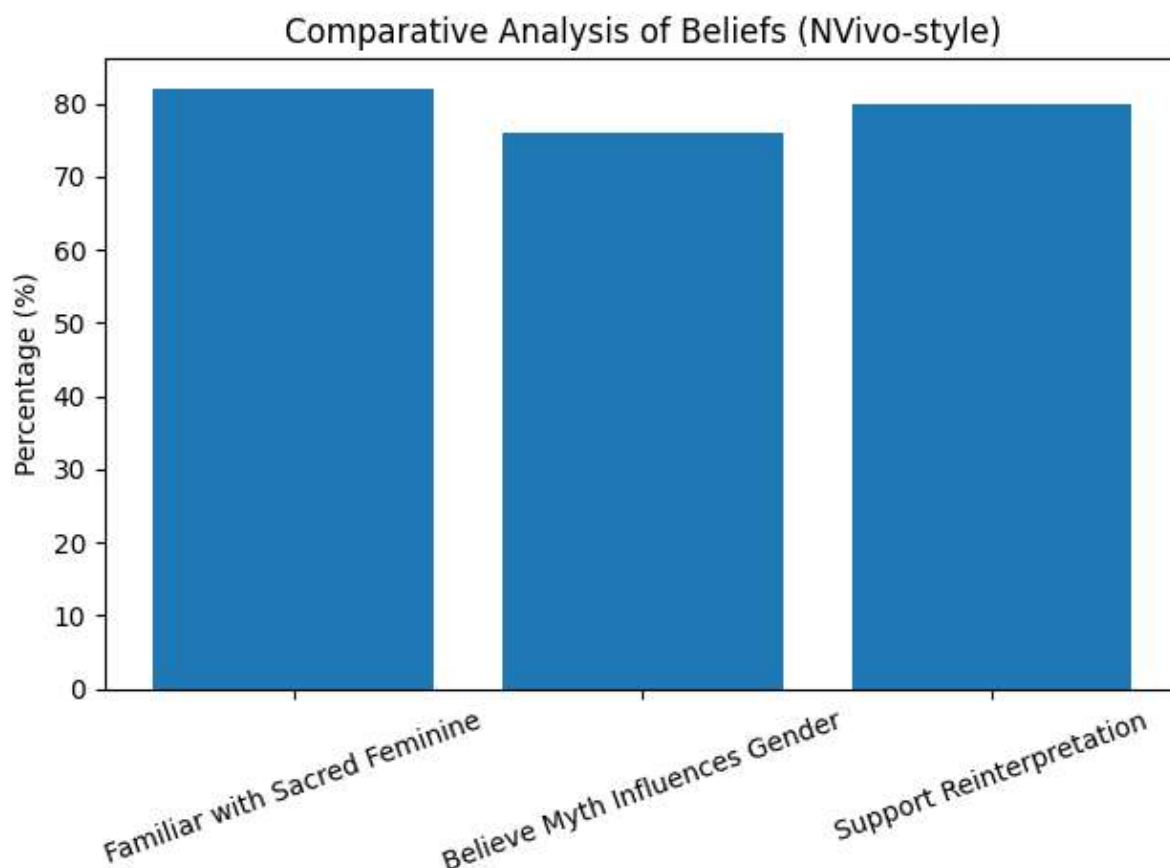


Figure 1 Sacred Feminine and Cultural Memory¹

The data clearly shows that most respondents strongly believe in both the Sacred Feminine and the role of cultural memory in society.

- More than 80% are familiar with the idea of the Sacred Feminine
- Around 75% believe mythology influences gender perceptions
- Nearly 80% think reinterpretation of myths is important

Participants don't simply recognize what sacred feminine means — they accept the significance and application of its concepts in everyday life. Findings indicate participants have a strong belief in the importance of the Sacred Feminine as an integral component of India's cultural history. Target group views women in mythological stories as both powerful and sacrificial. Therefore, they exhibit a dualistic perception of women. Evidently the participants also feel that there is validity to modern reinterpretation of mythology, therefore the acceptance of the beliefs associated with the Sacred Feminine is evolving. Cultural memories continue to affect how individuals perceive gender; however, like other aspects of culture, it is being modified over time. The data shows that respondents have a strong and active belief in both the Sacred Feminine and cultural memory. Most participants are familiar with mythological traditions and recognize their influence on society. This indicates that mythology is not just remembered but deeply internalized as part of everyday thinking. Respondents view the Sacred Feminine in multiple forms. Figures like Durga and Kali are associated with power and strength, while Sita represents

¹ The data in Fig.1 clearly shows that most respondents strongly believe in both the Sacred Feminine and the role of cultural memory in society.



patience and sacrifice, and Draupadi represents resistance and voice. This shows that respondents do not see women in mythology in a single way but as complex and layered figures. This varied view of the divine feminine is a richer view of the divine feminine in Hinduism that comprise many female goddesses representing strong cosmic powers and various universal female virtues. This rich variety represents the complex relationship between mythological representation and everyday life and shows how the stories we tell about our gods/goddesses are reflective of and help to create the social norms and gender roles present in a society (Kanwal). Therefore, in order for us to understand fully the influence of these myths/images on today's gender roles, it is necessary to interpret them critically to uncover their impact on current day gender dynamics (Das & Mathai 2). Furthermore, this study highlights an additional layer to the intersections of gender with other identity dimensions such as caste, class and religion which demonstrate how each dimension of identity can contribute to a unique set of experiences and create multiple forms of inequality, resulting in cumulative discrimination (Fernandez 63).

2. Methodology

The study uses a convergent parallel mixed-methods Research design in addition to collecting quantitative and qualitative data at the same time, both forms of data were collected and evaluated independently from one another. This independent evaluation will continue through the interpretative phases of the research. This particular research design fits well with the study's purpose of exploring: the way people view mythological stories and the Sacred Feminine today; how these stories serve as stores of collective memory for each culture; and, how feminist reinterpretation(s) of mythology can reshape public understanding of gender roles, identities, and traditions. If this study was solely quantitatively focused it may not have been able to fully explore the ways in which myths work ideologically and symbolically. If this study was exclusively qualitatively focused, it would not have provided the large-scale data needed to establish broader social trends. As such, using a mixed-methods research design provides a more inclusive and academically rigorous method than either a pure quantitative or pure qualitative focus. The target population for this study included respondents likely to possess at least some familiarity with Indian mythological traditions and cultural narratives. The target group included undergraduate and postgraduate students of the constituent colleges of the University; research scholars, teachers and academicians, readers of Indian literature, and members of the general educated public. This study includes mostly educated or semi-educated respondents that can be contacted via internet. The focus is placed on modern interpretations/feminist studies, and not just traditional/orthodox views of religion. This study has a greater concern for how people perceive/memorize literature/mythology, then to what degree they interpret/doctrinally understand their religious beliefs.

3. Research Objectives

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. Investigate how stories of mythology have shaped and preserved cultural memory within the Indian community.
2. Assess the extent to which respondents are aware of the "Sacred Feminine" in literature, culture and tradition in India.
3. Determine how these myths continue to influence contemporary gender beliefs and/or values.
4. Evaluate the views of participants regarding the interpretation of myths into new forms; particularly those that are feminist or modernized.
5. Analyze whether contemporary retelling of myths contributes to increased female agency, reconstruction of memory for women, and ultimately women's empowerment.

4. Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do mythological narratives contribute to the formation and preservation of cultural memory in Indian society?



2. How is the Sacred Feminine understood and represented in Indian cultural and literary consciousness?
3. In what ways do mythological narratives influence contemporary gender perceptions?
4. How do modern reinterpretations of myth challenge, preserve, or transform traditional patriarchal narratives?
5. How do contemporary retellings of mythological women reshape cultural memory and female agency?

The research primarily concerned with the perceptions and literary-cultural meaning of myths rather than the historical validity of mythological stories. The study draws upon both primary and secondary sources of data.

1. Primary Data from primary research were collected using a structured questionnaire given to 200 people as part of a survey. Only 150 was taken into consideration. Ambiguous responses were sifted through data cleaning.
2. Secondary data extracted from: Books about Indian mythology, and books that have reinterpreted it in literature; Peer-reviewed journal articles; Feminism, feminist criticism; Cultural theory, and memory studies; Indian English novels and their adaptations; Academic literature relating to these fields.
3. Software used for quantitative data analysis: NVivo Software; Microsoft Excel; Google Forms analytics

5. Hypotheses for Research Questions

- i. Mythology plays a significant role in forming and preserving the cultural memory that defines Indian culture.
- ii. Those who have an understanding of Indian mythology (i.e., the "Indian Epics") will be more familiar with the concept of The Sacred Feminine.
- iii. The modern reinterpretation of myths is believed to give female characters a greater voice and to provide them with a greater sense of agency than previously existed.
- iv. Reinterpretations based on feminist principles are seen as mechanisms for challenging and altering the patriarchal structures within many of the original myths.

Exclusion Criteria

The survey contained a combination of multiple types of questions such as: Multiple Choice Questions; Likert Scale Items; Yes/No/Maybe Questions; Frequency Based Questions; Opinion-Based Questions; Open-Ended Interpretive Responses. Approximately 10-15 test subjects participated in the pilot testing of the questionnaire prior to its final application. The purpose of the pilot test was to evaluate: the clarity of each item's wording; comprehension of each question; the thematic organization of questions; cultural appropriateness; and feasibility of respondent's ability to answer. Based upon input from the initial pilot participants: ambiguously worded items were rewritten; redundant language was removed; question order and sequence were enhanced. Since the subject matter for this study is that of mythology and religious cultural stories/narratives, it has been necessary to be particularly careful as to how to formulate this investigation so as to have it done in a scholarly and culturally respectful way, with no denigration/disrespect towards any belief system. There were no coercive measures applied on participants with respect to participating in the survey; participation was entirely voluntary. Each participant was informed of the academic nature of the study, the intent(s) behind collecting the data; That the responses collected will only be used for academic purposes; No individually identifiable information was reported/analysed from the results. Any response collected anonymously remained anonymous throughout and appropriate use of anonymity within an academic setting was maintained.

6. Literature Review

This paper explores how feminist adaptations of mythology portray female agency in epic literature, as well as how recent authors revise classical myths in an effort to challenge patriarchal systems (Shinde & Anand; J & Tamilarasan, 1032). It proves how authors such as Koral Dasgupta,



Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and Kavita Kane are working toward new ways to develop alternative feminine discourse by disrupting long-standing masculine canons and creating matrifocal myths (Bhatt; Raghav). In addition to demonstrating how authors create alternative feminine discourses, the critique of foundational narratives is providing an opportunity to deconstruct prescriptive gender roles and re-examine archetypes of female figures, which go beyond binary representations of the "devi" or goddess (Kanwal; Mathai & Das, 5). For example, in her two novels 'The Palace of Illusions', and 'The Forest of Enchantments', Divakaruni demonstrates this pattern of deifying female subjects, by focusing on Draupadi and Sita respectively, thus emphasizing their agency and psychological complexity over the traditionally patriarchally interpretive frameworks. Moreover, these reinterpretations correspond with broader critiques of feminist literary theory that seek to empower female subjectivity and voice, by dismantling the patriarchal constructs embedded in mythological narratives (Taj et al.). Scholars such as Uma Chakravarti and Kumkum Roy demonstrate how many traditional epic narratives serve to support and enforce social hierarchy based upon both caste and gender status, by reducing female subjects to instruments for the maintenance of patriarchal order and silencing their desires (Kant). On the other hand, feminist retellings of traditional myths often reverse these ideological paradigms, by transforming passive female characters into active agents of narrative who assertively move through and challenge their predetermined paths (Roy). By doing so they provide a platform for female voices while at the same time historically and culturally interrogating the forces that have been responsible for shaping those voices throughout history (Devi & Vats). As such, this method of analysis corresponds to our understanding that retold narratives, when reimagined through changed forms of representation rather than merely reproduced content, contain the potential to reveal aspects of women's lived experiences that were previously silenced or went unexpressed within ancient stories (Lobo 14). Anthropologists and cultural analysts argue that myths represent communities' experiences historically through symbolism. In this manner, myths can be used by a community to retain its collective knowledge from generation to generation. In many of the world's myths, women are typically portrayed as the original mother, as an earth goddess or as an ancestor who embodies both fertility and renewal. The consistent portrayal of women in these roles reinforces the notion that it is women (both biologically) who create new life and culturally who continue the culture from which they come.

7. Mythic Consciousness and Cultural Memory

The communal understanding of the past that sustains a certain culture is what defines cultural memory. Rather than being confined to the domain of literary history, Indian cultural memory is founded on mythological tales, which informs many facets of modern life, such as daily rituals and practices, festival celebrations, common proverbs, and political speeches. The Ramayana and Mahabharata serve as both cultural mythology and religious texts with moral lessons. The Sacred Feminine not only fulfils these purposes but also acts as a framework for remembering a culture in a number of ways: The idealized representation of virtue, such as Sita's devotion; Morality can be sparked by the Sacred Feminine (e.g., Draupadi's humiliation); The annihilation of Kali is an example of how the Sacred Feminine might express transformational anger or rage; The Sacred Feminine, such as Parvati's union with Shiva, can help to preserve cosmic balance and order. Indian English authors do not aim to "desacralize" these characters by reinterpreting them in their writing. Instead, they aim to investigate why cultural memory frequently chooses or maintains some traits of a person while ignoring or removing others. In doing so, literature creates a space where memories are negotiated through the act of reworking these myths and tales. India's creative mythology, which has shaped Indian culture over thousands of years, is centred on sacred femininity. Indians' identities have been shaped over the ages by the myths, epics, puranas, religious customs, and folklore stories that are a part of India's cultural heritage. In order to evaluate how cultural memory shapes gendered expectations, divine feminine archetypes have been re-examined more and more in contemporary Indian English literature.

Modern works challenge the underlying ideology of myth to offer ethical alternatives, in contrast to traditional tales that frequently depict legendary characters as immobile symbols of virtue (Raghav, 2025). This development signifies a move away from "invariant" myths, which are frequently shielded from alteration to preserve cultural continuity, and toward more adaptable, revisionist interpretations (Lobo, 2023). The Sacred Feminine, especially the idea of Shakti, is a basis for cosmic

energy and moral authority, but it also resides in a dichotomy where societal constraint and symbolic veneration coexist (Kanwal, 2025; Sanap, 2024).

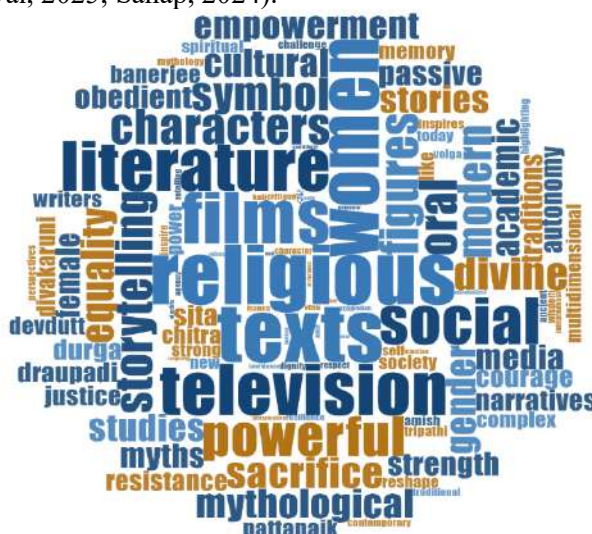


Figure 2 Word Frequency Cloud representing the Words used mostly by the respondents²

This word cloud has been generated in NVivo software to visually represent the frequency of key terms in the collected data. Larger words indicate higher frequency and greater significance in the responses. The data clearly shows that people's understanding of women is shaped by a mix of religion, mythology, and media. The high frequency of words like religious and texts tells us that traditional beliefs still play a strong role in shaping opinions. At the same time, the presence of words like films, television, and literature shows that modern platforms are also very important. This means that ideas about women are not fixed but are changing through media and storytelling. Another important point is that women are seen in two different ways. On one side, words like obedient, passive, and sacrifice show traditional roles. On the other side, words like empowerment, autonomy, and resistance show a more modern and independent image of women. The mention of mythological characters like Sita and Draupadi suggests that people still use these figures to understand women's roles in society. At the same time, modern writers like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Devdutt Pattanaik are helping to change these ideas by presenting new perspectives.

Overall, the data generated shows that society is in a transition phase, where traditional beliefs and modern ideas exist together. The emergence of these divergent representations reflects an ongoing dialogue between historical representation of women and current cultural discourses. Additionally, the complex social/cultural landscape presents a dynamic system where traditional archetypes continue to be evaluated against newer conceptions of feminine agency (Habib). The duality of this approach illustrates the conflict that exists between prescribed social norms and the changing views of women toward themselves. Furthermore, the complexity of creating/gender roles is evident throughout this discussion as it relates to the development of multiple and possibly conflicting identities (Tripto and Ali; Chaudhuri et al. 14). These differentiations, however, most commonly fluctuate between two extreme archetypes: the "superwoman," representing the divine, and the "docile victim," representing the diabolical, which have been referred to in terms of "pativrata and virangana models embedded in a larger framework of a sati-shakti dichotomy" (Mathai and Das 4). In addition to this dichotomy, the reinforcement of a "sacred vs. profane" separation of femininity continues in popular culture; virtue and modesty are consistently presented in contrast to sexual spectacle/moral transgressions (Choudhury and Sharma).

Within this massive body of cultural knowledge and imagination, the Sacred Feminine represents an important organizing principle. Whether she be a nourishing mother or a warrior goddess,

² The high frequency of words like religious and texts act as identity markers and tells us that traditional beliefs still play a strong role in shaping opinions. At the same time, the presence of words like films, television, and literature shows that modern platforms are also very important.

feminine divinity is a manifestation of the cosmic energies, moral authorities and the cultural continuities. However, the Sacred Feminine is equally contradictory. At one time, there were many communities in India where women were revered as divine manifestations of Shakti through their worship of the Goddess; however, women were also limited in their participation in society by patriarchal norms. Thus, the tension between the theological elevation of women as divine and their social subjugation provides an ideal opportunity for literary reinterpretations. From the late twentieth century on, Indian English literature has revisited sacred feminine archetypes to examine how cultural memory affects the expectation of men and women in society. Contemporary narratives do not present myth as unchallenged tradition but instead provide an understanding of the ideological base of myth and the ethical possibilities of myth.

8. Conversion of History (Lived reality?) into Mythology

The conversion of history into mythology is a long-term and complex cultural event that allows for the use of events, individuals, and recollections as both sacred or as culturally symbolized/exaggerated stories. The evolution from history to mythology is most evident within the cultures such as India, Greece, and Mesopotamia that had strong religious and cultural traditions of oral storytelling and a deep cultural emphasis on memory. The relationship between history and mythology are not simply mutually exclusive forms of representation; however, they represent two different ways in which societies transform their understanding of their past. History refers to lived-reality events, material and social contexts of lives, and collective experience, while mythology represents a society's symbolic and cultural redefinition of its history. Societies transform historical reality by interpreting it, transforming it into rituals, and creating a story around it so that ultimately these transformations can take on legendary/sacred status.

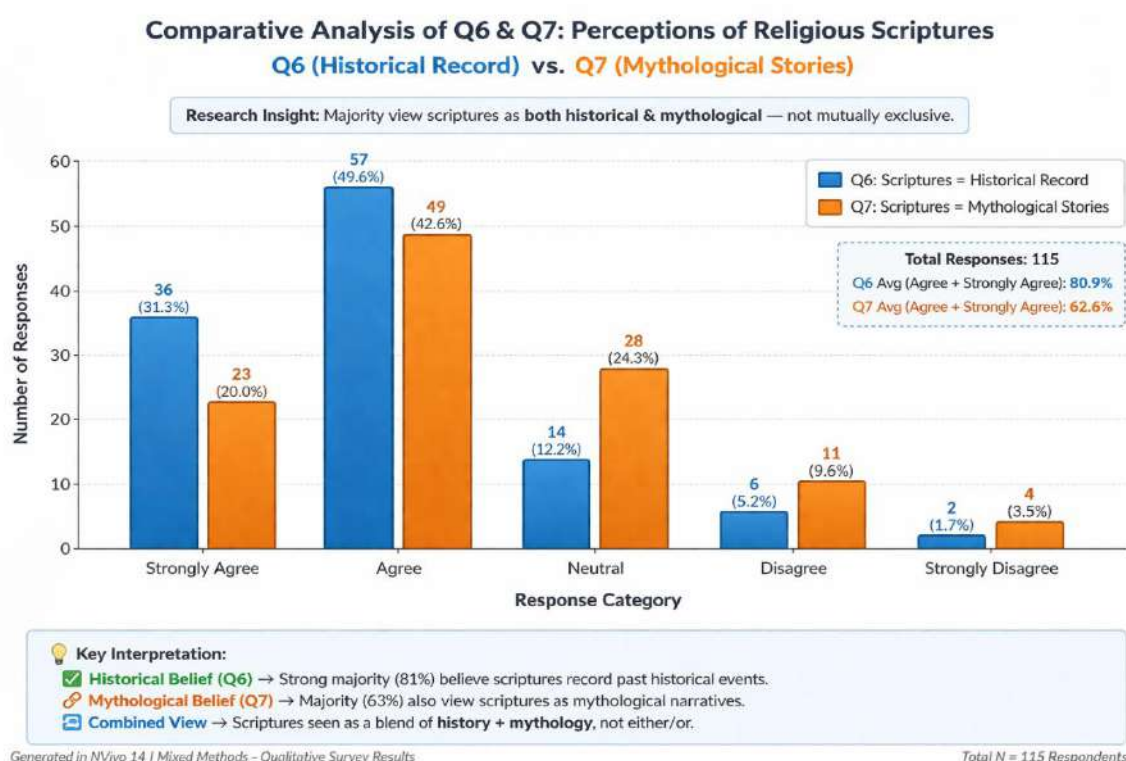


Figure 3 Myth or Historical reinterpretations³

Figure 3 compares responses to Q6 and Q7, showing that most respondents view religious scriptures as both historical and mythological, reflecting a dual and interconnected understanding Dual Belief System or Non-binary approach. The data clearly reflects a coexistence of two beliefs: Scriptures

³ How do respondents perceive religious scriptures as: Historical records or Mythological narratives?



as historical truth and Scriptures as mythological narratives. This shows that respondents hold overlapping and complex views, rather than clear distinctions. The combined data suggests that respondents generally perceive religious scriptures as historically meaningful, with a strong majority agreeing to their role as records of past events. At the same time, a significant portion also acknowledges their mythological nature, although with slightly less certainty. This indicates that people do not strictly separate mythology and history. Instead, they tend to view religious scriptures as a blend of factual and symbolic narratives. The higher agreement in Q6 reflects the strong influence of faith, tradition, and cultural upbringing, where scriptures are trusted as authentic sources of knowledge about the past. The responses to Q7, however, show more variation. The higher percentage of neutral and disagreeing responses suggests that some individuals are hesitant to label scriptures purely as mythological. This may be due to the cultural sensitivity attached to religion or a belief that calling them “myth” reduces their value. Overall, the findings highlight that cultural memory is shaped by a combined understanding of belief and interpretation, where scriptures function both as historical references and symbolic narratives. This view is consistent with the idea that many mythological and historical stories overlap especially in the founding narrative of cultures (Kharat, 426). Archaeological evidence and epigraphy also support this view because they validate much of what is written about the material culture and genealogy of early civilizations (Sharma). Myths are also a form of collective memory and encode the most important past events of societies and their beliefs through symbols (Lobo, 7), regardless of whether they are historically true. The studies of world mythology show that there are similar themes and geographical similarities among all of them; these similarities are also related to human migrations throughout history (Kim et al., 1). Lastly, comparative study of old literature shows how different oral traditions were combined into the final, written versions of scripture. As a result of this process, an ongoing relationship was formed between the interpretive processes for the history and the evolution of religious belief (Oberlin and Scheitle). These relationships help illustrate the role that cultural memory plays in the way people see where they come from and who they are today. Many times, however, the distinction between verifiable history and myth is lost (Pfoh, 574).

The process of transformation from history to mythology is particularly important in the case of India due to the fact that mythology is not only a method of telling stories, but is also an archive of culture. Women who have been the subject of the myths of India (i.e., Sita, Draupadi, Kali/Durga, Ahalya, Sabari, and Amba) illustrate how women lived experiences (suffering, endurance, resistance, exclusion, and moral agency), are preserved through the structure of mythological accounts. While the stories of these female figures cannot be verified through the same empirical means used today to verify history; nevertheless, they contain historical truths regarding women's roles in relation to male dominance and power in terms of social order, devotion/religion and sexual identity/caste. The lived reality of history is that it can be traced back to: the collective actions of people; social constructs (such as marriage, family etc.); gender roles; conflict over power in society; patterns of ritual practice and collective experiences of trauma and aspirations for positive outcomes.

In patriarchally dominated societies, women's histories were typically recorded less frequently than men's. In addition, many women entered into archives by way of male authored tradition. Thus, when women did enter archives, they tended to do so as symbolic representations, examples or warnings rather than as independent individuals:-the "ideal" wife who was depicted as chaste; the "rebellious" woman who represented a threat to authority; the "ascetic" woman who was depicted as being spiritually strong, yet completely removed from her community & the "marginalized" woman who became a symbol of redemption by virtue of her connection to the divine. Colonial encounters, among other things, disrupted the ways that Indigenous folks told stories. Colonial governments often referred to oral stories as primitive folklore when they came into contact with them; thus, Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems were marginalized. European colonial ethnographers often interpreted myths that they wrote down with a patriarchal point of view and as such often ignored, or at least diminished the role of women's participation in the telling of the myths. Thus, the voices of Indigenous women were often absent from written history. Scholars and activists today, both indigenous and non-indigenous, are actively engaged in recovering the silenced voices of women by documenting the oral stories of women and recognizing their role in the preservation of culture.



9.Feminist Outlook and Reinterpretation.

Myths can never be "fixed" because as societies interpret them differently based on their different cultures and ideologies, myths will always evolve. Many feminist researchers therefore recommend that we revisit our use of symbolic representation of the sacred feminine and recognize the diversity of women's identities and experiences. While some feminist researchers recommend abandoning the use of the sacred feminine as a symbol of womanhood, most recommend that we reinterpret this tradition to promote empowerment and equality for all. Feminist interpretations of myths attempt to uncover the patriarchal structure that exists within the traditional ways of telling stories about women and recover the marginalized female voices. Sita is depicted in the traditional Ramayana as being the quintessential example of what an ideal woman should be – obedient, devoted, and willing to make sacrifices for others. The fact that Sita was completely loyal to Rama has typically been used to establish the societal expectations of how women in India should behave. Volga breaks down this perfect image of Sita with the way she shifts the focus of the story from Rama's heroism to Sita's internal growth. Rather than depicting Sita as a victim, Volga portrays Sita as a woman becoming increasingly aware of the limitations placed upon her due to patriarchal social norms. By focusing the narrative through a new lens, the way myth can be a tool for challenging and questioning existing gender-based power structures is made apparent.

Draupadi tells us about her life in 'The Palace of Illusions' by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Although Draupadi's public humiliation serves as the catalyst for the moral shift that results in war in the original Mahabharata, the epic hardly ever gives her a long, psychologically developed inner space. The direction of the narrative voice is altered by Divakaruni's reinterpretation: 1. Rather than becoming the object of other people's fates, Draupadi takes on the role of storyteller; 2. The moral binary in the epic is complicated by her aspirations and uncertainties; 3. A critical analysis of the patriarchal code of honour is conducted. The cultural memory is changed by re-vocalizing it. Draupadi's misery is now the result of institutionalized misogyny rather than an act of divine will. Instead of being a destructive fault, Draupadi's rage becomes an ethical protest. In this context, the Sacred Feminine is a practical manifestation of restored agency.

Sita is one of the archetypes of the ideal wife in Indian culture. She stands for independence, selflessness, obedience, commitment, and purity. Contemporary interpreters, however, reject this view. New readings of Sita in recent years have concentrated on: • How she overcame being exiled • Her refusal to go back to Ayodhya following a second fire test, she retreated into the earth. These actions could be seen as a statement of moral disobedience. Instead of passively submitting to the power, she chose to rebel against it. For the Sacred Feminine, active self-determination replaced passive endurance. This illustrates how feminism is more widely recognized in Indian English literature. In this literature, the Sacred Feminine is viewed through a lens of modern ethics.

Unlike the quiet virtues embodied by Sita, Kali represents unbridled and powerful cosmic energy. Kali represents the unrestrained Energy disrupting Norms of the Female. Depicted often with matted hair, a blood-stained tongue, and necklaces made of skulls, Kali challenges common notions of what it means to be female. In modern Indian English literature, Kali is used to symbolize: Women's rage at repressive circumstances; Women's resistance against patriarchy and colonialism; and Subaltern Agency. Indian writers use Kali to question traditional ideas about what it means to be a woman. The sacred rage that Kali represents is a symbol of political awakening. Although anger is sometimes vilified in literature, it is retrieved here as a changing force. Additionally, Kali's portrayal shows that the Sacred Feminine includes both the nurturing role of maternity and destruction as a process of restoration.

Parvati has long been seen as an example of loyalty and faithfulness in marriage. But she is also the fiery goddess Durga and an austere yogini. This complex facet of her character is being highlighted more and more by recent developments in Indian English narrative. Furthermore, Parvati's long fast (or penance) to convince Shiva to marry her can now be seen as self-control and independence rather than passive waiting, and her transformation into Durga during cosmic crises symbolizes a latent power potential inherent in feminine domesticity. Therefore, the cultural memory of India includes some potentially subversive aspects that contemporary authors are beginning to explore. Sacred archetypes were shattered by Indian Partition violence. The female body becomes a symbolic battleground for collective identity in this setting.



Partition literature criticizes nationalistic discourse by referencing the Sacred Feminine. Violating women is equivalent to violating land or territory when the nation is represented as a woman. Images of women who have been abducted, silenced, or self-identified as "sacred" reveal the dark side of nationalism in regard to sanctity. In this way, cultural memory has evolved from elevated tradition to fearful archives. The idealized creation known as the Sacred Feminine witnesses the historical rupture. For diasporic writers, sacred female figures serve as a "cultural anchor." By offering continuity in geographical space, mythology serves as an emotional continuum during dispersion. Divakaruni frequently uses goddesses in her immigration narratives. Mythology is used in: Spiritual heritage; Psychological assistance; A cultural identity marker. These life-changing texts consist of: (i) The reclamation of marginalized women's voices; (ii) A reassessment of exegesis based on patriarchy; (iii) An empowered reinterpretation of divine femininity; (iv) The author's story is an act of theological intervention. (v) The author is performing a spiritual reinterpretation when they retell myth; (vi) Motherhood in the Nation: Empowerment or Sacrificial Roles for Women? By examining the metaphor of the "Nation as Mother", the literary works illustrate how sacred femininity is being politically used.

10. Indian Culture as a Legacy of Binaries

In Hindu mythology and symbolic representations of motherhood, fertility and devotion, the divine, sacred and powerful feminine has always been revered. In the cosmic imagining of Hindus, deities like Durga, Kali, Lakshmi & Saraswati symbolize power, wealth, knowledge & protection. But these reverences have traditionally co-existed with very strong Patriarchal structures which govern Women's roles in society. Therefore, Indian Culture contains a complex legacy of binaries where women are both elevated as symbols of Divinity and confined by rigid social expectations. Understanding the contradictions in the construction and representation of sacred femininity, are key factors to understanding how we interpret our cultural discourses - whether they be mythological or contemporary. When we critically look at how the sacred feminine has been constructed and represented by writers and scholars, we may be able to begin to break down some of the limiting binary. In India, Sacred femininity is an idea that exists within many complex dualities such as purity and sexuality, power and submission, divinity and domesticity, reverence and control. While these dualities are the same duality's that exist in religious discourses, they are also the duality's that shape the ways we practice socially, the roles we play as gendered individuals and the way we represent ourselves through literature. When we examine these duality's, we find out that the cultural narratives we have created and continue to create do not only reinforce gender hierarchies but provide a seeming celebration of feminine power.

Modern Indian English Literature has plethora of authors who have used mythological figures to create counter-narratives to traditional interpretations of those figures. Contemporary authors who use mythological figures (such as Sita or Draupadi) to reinterpret those figures are able to show the limits of the patriarchal narratives that created them and can reclaim women's agency. For instance, feminist re-readings of Sita do not simply see her as a passive wife; rather they see her as a woman facing many difficult moral and political decisions. Similarly, Draupadi is being re-written as a voice for resistance to injustices. Through re-interpretation of mythological themes, is becoming an arena where the construction of "sacred femininity" is challenged and re-defined. Indian Literature has consistently dealt with these dichotomies. Classical epics, devotional poetry, and modern novels have all reinterpreted feminine symbols differently. More and more writers and scholars now also look at how mythological narratives construct gender expectations.

The paradox of reverence and rejection of women is one of India's most apparent cultural contradictions. Worship and celebration of the female principle is part of India's spiritual tradition. However, for many women on a daily basis, gender inequality is embedded in their societies. Rituals that symbolize elevation of femininity occur (e.g., the Kanya Puja); however, symbolic elevation does not necessarily equate with the ability of women to obtain social power. The binary of symbolic power and social power amplifies the fact that the goddess is omnipotent; but the woman is expected to be submissive and modest.

Another binary that is commonly associated with sacred feminism is the concept of purity and sex. Virtue for the female gender is typically defined by cultural values including chastity,



modesty, and control over her sexual identity. In this manner the female body becomes an example of pure and untainted symbol that is representative of her family's honour and the social structure that she lives within. Simultaneously, many goddess cultures emphasize the importance of fertility, sexuality, and the creative energy of the goddess. Many temples built for goddesses include images that celebrate the sensuality of fertility which suggests a more fluid definition of feminine power. However, these images are often juxtaposed with very strict social definitions of what behaviours are acceptable for women. For instance, Lakshmi has been described as an icon of wealth and domestic tranquillity. As such, she continues to reinforce the societal norm that women should be primarily responsible for maintaining domestic harmony. However, other goddesses have been depicted as independent and possessing universal authority. Durga is often shown to be a fierce warrior fighting against evil forces and restoring cosmic balance. Her legend illustrates how women may use their feminine power beyond the confines of domestic roles. The existence of two contradictory representations of sacred femininity exemplifies the ways in which sacred symbols have the ability to both empower and restrict women. While divine femininity has the potential to view sexuality as a source of creative energy, the social framework in which women exist often views it as something that must be controlled. These contrasting representations illustrate a social conflict; women are expected to model themselves after the nurturing attributes of the goddess but the more independent or forceful characteristics of the goddess remain symbolic, and therefore, socially unendorsed.

Indigenous or Adivasi storytelling traditions in India influence contemporary Western perspectives on the representation of women in mythology and cultural memory, they also represent the significance of women in tribal myths and cultural memory. For example, many tribes such as Santhals, Gonds and Bhill have rich oral storytelling traditions with female characters that represent fertility, earth and continuance of ancestry. The importance of the relationship between mythology and memory in indigenous storytelling is significant since oral stories function as repositories of cultural history. Through mythic representations, indigenous communities develop memories of the origin of their people; migration; and resistance. For instance, in Gond mythology, Mother Earth, or Dharti Mata, is the feminine spirit representing earth as a resource providing sustenance and nurture for all living things; and therefore, many of these stories illustrate the development of ecological ethics, and reverence for the natural world. Through mythic representations, indigenous peoples create memories of where they came from (origin), how they got there (migration), and how they resisted (resistance).

11. Contemporary Popular Mythology

A major force driving the current popularity of the "female warrior" archetype and other epic female figures in modern mythological fiction is the increasing number of consumers interested in reading about strong female characters. While the increased interest in female protagonists is a positive development, there is a risk that archetypes may become overly simplified and reduced to marketable images rather than richly complex constructs. Consequently, one of the primary challenges facing authors who use archetypes is to make them accessible and interesting without losing too much of their analytical richness.

It appears from much of the contemporary literature that many of its writers are feminizing the Earth herself. Environmental degradation is often associated with the desecration of feminine divinities. Many writers are now equating reverence of the Sacred Feminine with environmental activism. It seems that honouring the Sacred Feminine is connected to an individual's obligation to take care of the environment. Therefore, cultural memory is becoming more ecologically conscious.

12. Conclusion

The contemporary Indian English narratives rearticulate the Sacred Feminine as a critical site of mythic revision, cultural memory, and political intervention. Far from remaining a static emblem of divine womanhood rooted in tradition, the Sacred Feminine emerges in these texts as a fluid and contested symbolic structure through which writers revisit historical trauma, recover marginalized voices, and interrogate dominant discourses of gender, nation, and belonging. Through the study of Partition narratives, diasporic fiction, feminist myth retellings, and other contemporary literary expressions, the paper demonstrates that the Sacred Feminine functions as both an archive of cultural



remembrance and a mode of resistance, while also retaining ambivalent ideological associations tied to sacrifice, purity, motherhood, and nationalist appropriation. Many modern feminist researchers now analyse myths for reasons to reinterpret them and find the "voice" and alternate viewpoint that is hidden in the myths. Myths do not have one set of meanings throughout history; they can have multiple meanings depending on the era of their audience and where they were read. Much of what has contributed to establishing gender roles and norms culturally is based on representations of mythological stories told from the perspective of a male heroic character. As a result, female characters in much of mythology are typically depicted as passive and are therefore defined as devoted, chaste, and willing to sacrifice for others.

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Myth Rewritten: Cultural Politics of Hindu Epics in Contemporary Fiction

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Abstract : Myths are not static relics of the past but living narratives that evolve as cultures change. In the Indian context, the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are foundational mythic archives that have shaped religious, ethical, and cultural consciousness for millennia. Contemporary fiction, particularly in English and regional literatures translated into English, has engaged in the deliberate rewriting of these epics to interrogate power structures, gender norms, caste hierarchies, and cultural memory. This paper examines the cultural politics involved in reimagining Hindu epics in contemporary fiction. Through close readings of selected novels — such as *The Palace of Illusions* (Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni), *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* (Kavita Kane), and *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice* (Srividhya Venkat) — the study foregrounds how mythic retellings resist Brahmanical narratives, centre marginalised voices, and negotiate postcolonial identity. It also considers the political implications of these rewritings in contemporary India, where mythic discourse intersects with nationalism. The paper concludes that mythic rewriting in contemporary fiction is both a creative and political endeavour that reshapes cultural memory and expands the interpretive horizons of ancient texts.

Key Words: *cultural consciousness, power structures, gender norms, caste hierarchies, cultural memory, mythic discourse, nationalism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Myths are integral to understanding human societies. They encapsulate collective hopes, fears, moral codes, and social structures. In India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are not merely ancient stories but active cultural forces that inform religion, ethics, and political discourse. Traditionally transmitted through oral recitation, temple iconography, performance arts, and later written commentaries, these epics have been sites of endless interpretation.

However, the authority of these narratives has historically been vested in Brahmanical readings — interpretations shaped by elite male scholars that reinforce patriarchal, caste-based, and hierarchical worldviews. In the postcolonial era, and especially in contemporary fiction, writers have revisited these epics to challenge dominant paradigms, recovering marginalised voices and questioning hegemonic values.

This paper examines the cultural politics underlying the adaptation of Hindu epics in contemporary fiction. By “cultural politics,” we refer to struggles over meaning, identity, and power that are enacted through narrative intervention. Myth rewriting is not neutral; it negotiates social values, reshapes historical memory, and often contests institutionalised interpretations.

Recent decades have witnessed a surge in retellings of mythic narratives from alternative perspectives — often those of female, Dalit, tribal, or otherwise marginalised individuals. These texts are part of a larger global trend of mythopoetic re-engagement, comparable to feminist retellings of Greek mythology (e.g., Madeline Miller's *Circe*) and postcolonial narrative interventions. In the Indian



context, however, the stakes are particularly high because epics are embedded in everyday religious practice, political rhetoric, and national identity.

The central research question of this paper is: **How do contemporary fictional retellings of the Hindu epics engage with cultural politics to produce subversive or resistant narratives?** To answer this, the paper analyses three major contemporary novels: *The Palace of Illusions* (Divakaruni), *Karna's Wife* (Kane), and *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice* (Venkat). These texts exemplify diverse strategies of mythic rewriting that highlight gender, caste, and ethical complexity.

2. Literature Review

In contemporary Indian fiction, Hindu epics such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have re-emerged not merely as sacred narratives, but as powerful cultural texts constantly being reinterpreted, contested, and politically mobilised. Scholars widely agree that these epics function as “living traditions” rather than closed scriptures, meaning their meanings shift across time depending on social, ideological, and historical contexts. Modern writers, therefore, do not simply retell myth—they rewrite it to question authority, recover silenced voices, and negotiate the politics of identity in modern India.

One major strand of scholarship focuses on the epic as a site of ideological struggle. Cultural theorists argue that Hindu epics have often been used to legitimise dominant ideas of nationhood, gender, caste hierarchy, and moral citizenship. This becomes especially relevant in the contemporary moment, where myth is frequently invoked in political discourse. Literary critics suggest that fiction becomes a counter-space where authors challenge the “official” or majoritarian versions of myth. Instead of reinforcing sacred certainties, many novels highlight contradiction, ambiguity, and plurality within epic narratives, thus resisting their reduction into rigid nationalist symbols.

A significant body of criticism also highlights the role of revisionist and feminist retellings. Contemporary writers frequently centre marginalised characters—Sita, Draupadi, Kunti, Urmila, Shikhandi, or even Ravana’s family—to expose the patriarchal frameworks embedded in epic storytelling. Feminist scholars observe that such rewritings transform the epic from a tale of divine heroes into a narrative of women’s agency, suffering, and resistance. Novels like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Palace of Illusions* and Kavita Kane’s myth-based fiction have been studied as literary interventions that reclaim women’s interiority and question the moral absolutism of epic ideals.

Another important scholarly concern is caste and subaltern reinterpretation. Critics note that mainstream epic retellings historically privileged Brahmanical perspectives, leaving little room for Dalit or non-elite voices. In response, contemporary fiction and theory increasingly explore how alternative tellings—rooted in folk traditions, regional versions, and oral narratives—challenge the dominance of Sanskritised epic culture. This approach aligns with postcolonial and subaltern studies, which view myth as a contested archive rather than a unified national inheritance.

Additionally, scholars emphasise the global and diasporic circulation of Hindu epics. In English-language fiction, myth is often reimagined for modern readerships, blending psychological realism with sacred narrative. Critics argue that this hybrid form reflects India’s cultural negotiation between tradition and modernity, faith and scepticism, and devotion and critique.

Overall, existing scholarship suggests that contemporary myth-based fiction is deeply political. These rewritings reveal that Hindu epics are not only religious texts but cultural battlegrounds where questions of gender, caste, nation, and power are continuously debated. By reimagining myth, contemporary fiction does what literature often does best—it makes the familiar strange again, and in doing so, invites readers to rethink the truths they have inherited.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research methodology to examine how Hindu epics are rewritten in contemporary fiction and how these rewritings participate in the cultural politics of gender, caste, nation, and identity. Since myths are not merely stories but deeply embedded cultural frameworks, the methodology is designed to read contemporary retellings as both literary texts and ideological interventions. The research primarily uses textual analysis supported by theoretical frameworks from postcolonial studies, cultural studies, feminist criticism, and myth theory.



The first step of the methodology involves selecting a representative corpus of contemporary fictional works that engage directly with the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The selection is purposive rather than random, as the goal is to include texts that demonstrate diverse ideological positions and narrative strategies. The study focuses mainly on English-language Indian fiction and includes popular as well as critically acclaimed works. Key texts may include Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*, Anand Neelakantan's *Asura* and *Ajaya*, Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife* and *Sita's Sister*, and Amish Tripathi's *Ram Chandra Series*. These novels are chosen because they offer revisionist perspectives—often shifting the epic's centre from divine heroes to marginalised or villainised characters, thereby revealing how myth can be restructured to challenge dominant cultural narratives.

Once the texts are selected, close reading becomes the central method of analysis. Each novel is examined for narrative voice, characterisation, thematic focus, symbolism, and ideological framing. Particular attention is paid to how the rewritten myth constructs power relations: for instance, how it portrays women's agency, engages with caste-coded hierarchies, defines "dharma," and reimagines heroism and villainy. The study also analyses the politics of representation—what is emphasised, what is silenced, and what is reinterpreted—because these choices often reflect contemporary social tensions.

The research uses comparative analysis to highlight patterns and contrasts across texts. For example, feminist rewritings are compared with nationalist or devotional retellings to understand how the same epic event can generate radically different meanings. Similarly, the portrayal of characters such as Draupadi, Sita, Karna, or Ravana is compared across multiple novels to observe how modern fiction negotiates sympathy, blame, morality, and identity.

To strengthen the literary analysis, the study draws on secondary sources, including scholarly articles, critical essays, and theoretical works on myth, cultural memory, and epic traditions. The methodology treats epics as "open texts," meaning that multiple versions—regional, folk, and oral—are considered alongside the Sanskrit canon. This helps avoid reading the epics as fixed religious truth and instead positions them as cultural narratives shaped by history and power.

Overall, this methodology allows the study to explore contemporary myth-based fiction as a cultural arena where ideological debates about India's past and present are continuously performed. The approach remains sensitive to both literary craft and political context, ensuring that the analysis remains academically rigorous while also grounded in lived cultural realities.

4. Myth and Cultural Politics

Myth as Living Discourse

Myth occupies a unique space between history, religion, and imagination. Unlike historical narratives bound by chronology, myths operate symbolically, transmitting cultural values across generations. In the Indian context, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are not merely literary texts but civilisational frameworks that inform moral philosophy, social norms, and collective identity. Their stories permeate ritual practices, performing arts, folklore, and everyday language, making them continuously relevant.

However, myths survive precisely because they are retold. Each retelling reflects the anxieties, aspirations, and ideological struggles of its time. Contemporary writers have recognised that mythic narratives are not ideologically neutral; they often encode dominant perspectives—patriarchal, Brahmanical, and hierarchical. Modern fiction, therefore, revisits these epics to question inherited assumptions and recover suppressed voices.

The growing body of mythological retellings in contemporary Indian fiction signals more than literary nostalgia. It represents a cultural negotiation with tradition in an era shaped by globalisation, feminist movements, caste discourse, and political nationalism. By rewriting myths, authors transform sacred narratives into sites of debate, resistance, and reinterpretation.

This paper explores how contemporary fiction reimagines Hindu epics as arenas of cultural politics. It examines how retellings challenge narrative authority, reconstruct identity, and engage with modern ideological concerns while remaining rooted in mythic imagination.



Myth, Memory, and Cultural Power

Myths derive authority from repetition and collective belief. Over centuries, dominant versions of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have acquired canonical status, often privileging particular social viewpoints. These narratives historically reinforced social hierarchies by idealising obedience, dharma, and divine order.

Scholars of myth have argued that myth functions as cultural memory—a shared archive through which societies interpret themselves. Yet cultural memory is selective. Certain perspectives become central, while others remain marginal or invisible. Women, lower-caste figures, and morally ambiguous characters frequently occupy peripheral positions within epic traditions.

Contemporary retellings intervene in this process of memory formation. Rather than rejecting myth, writers reclaim it as a dialogic space where meanings can be renegotiated. By shifting narrative focus, they expose how power operates within storytelling itself.

The act of rewriting, therefore, becomes political. It challenges the assumption that epics possess fixed meanings and instead proposes that interpretation is historically situated. Modern authors treat myth not as sacred closure but as an open text.

5. Rewriting as Literary and Political Practice

Rewriting myths is not new in Indian tradition; multiple regional versions of epics have always existed. What distinguishes contemporary retellings is their conscious ideological engagement. Modern writers explicitly question authority, reinterpret morality, and foreground subjectivities excluded from earlier narratives.

Three significant shifts characterise contemporary mythic fiction:

1. **Perspective Shift** – Stories are retold from marginal characters' viewpoints.
2. **Humanisation of Heroes and Villains** – Epic figures become psychologically complex.
3. **Social Critique** – Myths are used to examine gender inequality, caste discrimination, and political power.

These shifts reflect broader intellectual movements, including feminism, subaltern studies, and postcolonial criticism. Myth becomes a medium through which writers interrogate inherited structures rather than simply celebrate tradition.

Defining Mythic Rewriting

Mythic rewriting refers to the literary act of reinterpreting canonical myths in new voices or contexts. According to literary theorist Northrop Frye, myths are “archetypal narratives” that operate at the level of collective imagination (Frye, 1957). Yet myths are not monolithic; they evolve through retellings because they are mediated by culture, ideology, and historical circumstance.

In the Indian context, *Mythic Dialogues* scholar Arshia Sattar notes that the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are “dynamic texts” that have never had a singular authoritative form (Sattar, 2004). Sanskrit versions, folk traditions, regional variants, and devotional performances all coexist. Contemporary fiction posits itself within this pluralistic tradition but with specific aims: offering critique, reclaiming agency for marginalised characters, and interrogating normative ethics.

Cultural Politics

Cultural politics refers to how cultural texts and practices embody and negotiate power. In postcolonial theory, scholars like Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have emphasised how literature can be a site of resistance against dominant ideologies. Spivak's concept of the “subaltern” — voices that are marginalised and unrepresented in hegemonic discourse — is particularly useful for analysing mythic rewritings that give voice to women, lower-caste characters, and outsiders.



In the Indian epic tradition, dominant readings have often mirrored Brahmanical values — valorising male heroes, affirming hierarchical social orders, and normalising patriarchal control. Contemporary reinterpretations seek to disrupt these readings by centring perspectives that traditional telling elides.

Feminist and Subaltern Approaches

Feminist retellings of epics aim to expose patriarchal assumptions embedded in canonical narratives. Writers question why female characters are portrayed as passive or morally inferior and instead construct them as complex agents. Subaltern approaches, similarly, are concerned with retrieving voices suppressed by dominant discourses — such as those of servants, outcasts, or tribal peoples in epic narratives.

These theoretical frameworks situate mythic rewriting as a political act. Writing back to the myth is not simply storytelling; it is a reconfiguration of cultural memory that challenges normative values.

6. Analysing Selected Texts

***The Palace of Illusions* — Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni**

The Palace of Illusions (2008) retells the *Mahabharata* from the viewpoint of Draupadi, the fiery queen whose marriage to the five Pandava brothers and contentious role in the infamous dice game have long been debated in Indian mythology.

Divakaruni's narrative does several crucial things:

- **Centres Draupadi's Subjectivity:** Traditional telling's portray Draupadi often as an object — fought over by brothers and husbands, shamed and humiliated during the dice game. Divakaruni foregrounds her emotional life, desires, and agency. Draupadi narrates her story with introspection, recalling joys, betrayals, and frustrations.
- **Challenges Patriarchal Norms:** Draupadi is neither a saintly figure nor a one-dimensional victim; she is fierce, flawed, and intelligent. Her questioning of male authority — be it her husbands, her father-in-law Bhishma, or the sage Krishna — destabilises the idea that epic heroines are passive recipients of fate.
- **Reimagines Female Agency:** The novel gives Draupadi autonomy in her choices — for love, for confrontation, and for selfhood. Divakaruni's narrative challenges the cultural assumption that women must be self-denying or obedient.

This retelling is a feminist intervention that rewrites epic tradition to prioritise emotion, intellect, and resistance.

***Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* — Kavita Kane**

Kavita Kane's *Karna's Wife* (2012) imagines the life of Uruvi, Karna's wife — a character little explored in traditional versions. Karna, the great warrior born to an unwed mother and raised by a charioteer, is one of the most tragic figures in the *Mahabharata*. Traditionally celebrated for his generosity and valour, his caste status renders him an outcast.

Kane's novel reframes the narrative:

- **Centering Marginality:** By choosing Uruvi as the narrator, the novel focuses on experiences of marginality — of caste, gender, and social exclusion. Uruvi's love for Karna is complicated by his outsider status and her own internal conflicts.



- **Questioning Caste Hierarchies:** The text explicitly problematizes the caste system. Karna's achievements are always measured against his low birth, and Uruvi's elite Brahmin background creates a space to interrogate caste privilege.
- **Rewriting Heroism:** Karna's heroism is no longer only about martial valour; it is about perseverance in the face of social ostracism. Uruvi's narrative humanises Karna, highlighting his vulnerability and moral complexity.

This retelling exposes the social politics that the original epic often glosses over. By centring lower-caste experience, Kane challenges readers to reconsider normative categories of purity, honour, and belonging.

Ajaya: Roll of the Dice — Srividhya Venkat

Ajaya: Roll of the Dice (2015) is the first of a two-part series that tells the *Mahabharata* from the Kaurava perspective, especially Duryodhana's. The epic traditionally paints Duryodhana as the villain — covetous, jealous, and ethically corrupt. Venkat subverts this reading.

Key features of Venkat's approach:

- **Revision of Moral Categories:** Duryodhana is not a one-dimensional antagonist but a complex ruler responding to political marginalisation. His rivalry with the Pandavas is contextualised in terms of realpolitik and the struggle for legitimacy.
- **Empathy for the 'Villain':** The narrative humanises those traditionally viewed as antagonistic. Bhima, Krishna, and Arjuna are not saints; they are flawed beings driven by ambition and duty.
- **Politics of Power:** The text reframes the epic as a political struggle rather than a simple moral binary. It addresses themes of inheritance, justice, and sovereignty.

By rewriting the epic from the Kaurava viewpoint, Venkat destabilises established moral hierarchies and emphasises the relativity of ethical judgment.

7. Gender Politics and Narrative Agency

A defining feature of contemporary mythic fiction is its engagement with gender politics. Traditional epic narratives frequently idealised women through archetypes—devoted wife, sacrificial mother, or divine consort. Modern retellings disrupt these roles by granting female characters psychological depth and narrative authority.

These rewritings explore themes such as:

- Female autonomy and consent
- Emotional interiority
- Resistance to patriarchal duty
- Reinterpretation of dharma from women's perspectives

By foregrounding female voices, contemporary authors challenge the cultural assumption that epics represent universal moral truths. Instead, they reveal how gendered silences shaped canonical storytelling.

The transformation of myth into feminist discourse reflects broader social changes in India, where debates about gender equality increasingly intersect with cultural tradition.

8. Cultural and Political Implications

The three novels analysed above exemplify how mythic rewriting participates in cultural politics. This section explores broader implications.



Challenging Authority of Canonical Narratives

Classical versions of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* have often been presented as unified and authoritative sources of moral truth. Contemporary rewritings disrupt this notion by suggesting that canonical narratives are contingent upon particular historical and social contexts.

By reimagining epic characters and events from alternate viewpoints, these texts raise questions about authority — who gets to tell the story, and whose interpretations have been privileged.

Reclaiming Marginalised Voices

Rewriting recovers voices that have been obscured in traditional telling

- Women (e.g., Draupadi, Uruvi)
- Lower-caste or outcaste figures (e.g., Karna)
- Political outsiders (e.g., Duryodhana)

These voices recalibrate our understanding of epic ethics and human experience.

Intersection with Contemporary Politics

In modern India, epic narratives are deeply entangled with political ideologies, especially Hindu nationalism. Texts like the *Ramayana* are invoked in cultural campaigns to define national identity. In this environment, retellings that question simplistic valorisation of epic heroes or highlight social inequalities can be politically provocative.

Mythic rewriting functions not merely as literature but as **cultural commentary**. It engages with issues of caste justice, gender equality, and ethical plurality. It counters monolithic readings that align epics with singular political agendas.

9.Caste, Subalternity, and Ethical Reinterpretation

Caste remains one of the most significant yet often understated themes in epic narratives. Contemporary retellings highlight characters marginalised by birth—Karna, Ekalavya, and others—to expose systemic inequality.

These narratives reinterpret dharma not as divine law but as socially constructed ideology. By questioning caste hierarchies embedded in myth, writers connect ancient narratives with modern struggles for social justice.

The emphasis on marginal voices aligns with postcolonial and subaltern scholarship, which seeks to recover histories excluded from dominant discourse. Mythic rewriting thus becomes a method of ethical revision—reimagining tradition to reflect inclusive values.

10.Postcolonial Identity and Mythic Negotiation

Postcolonial societies often grapple with balancing tradition and modernity. For Indian writers, myth provides a powerful resource for negotiating identity in a globalised world. Retelling epics allows authors to assert cultural continuity while simultaneously critiquing inherited structures.

English-language retellings are particularly significant because they address global audiences. They reinterpret Indian myths within contemporary literary forms, making them accessible beyond regional boundaries while preserving cultural specificity.

These works challenge colonial assumptions that myth belongs to a primitive past. Instead, they demonstrate that myth can function as sophisticated philosophical discourse capable of addressing modern concerns.

11.Myth, Nationalism, and Contemporary Politics

In contemporary India, mythological narratives frequently intersect with political discourse and nationalist ideology. Epics are invoked to legitimise cultural identity and moral authority. This politicisation intensifies debates over interpretation, authenticity, and ownership of tradition.



Contemporary fiction participates in this cultural arena by offering plural interpretations. By presenting alternative perspectives, writers resist the monopolisation of myth by any single ideological framework.

Mythic rewriting, therefore, becomes an act of democratic storytelling. It asserts that cultural heritage belongs to multiple voices rather than a singular authoritative narrative. Such pluralism challenges rigid interpretations that seek to fix mythic meaning.

Narrative Technique and Literary Innovation

Beyond ideological concerns, contemporary retellings demonstrate significant formal experimentation. Authors employ:

- First-person narration
- Psychological realism
- Non-linear storytelling
- Interior monologue
- Hybrid myth–historical realism

These techniques humanise epic characters and bridge mythic grandeur with modern sensibilities. The blending of ancient narrative structures with contemporary literary forms reflects the evolving nature of storytelling itself.

Cultural Memory and Reader Reception

The popularity of mythological retellings indicates changing reader expectations. Modern audiences seek familiar stories reinterpreted through relatable emotional and ethical frameworks. Readers engage with myths not only as sacred narratives but as spaces for reflection and debate.

Retellings encourage active readership. Familiar plots allow readers to recognise deviations and reinterpretations, transforming reading into a dialogic process between past and present.

Thus, mythic fiction reshapes cultural memory not through replacement but through expansion. Multiple versions coexist, enriching interpretive possibilities.

Myth as Ethical Conversation

One of the most significant contributions of contemporary mythic fiction lies in its ethical openness. Instead of presenting definitive moral lessons, retellings invite questioning. Characters become morally ambiguous, decisions become contextual, and dharma becomes negotiable.

This ethical complexity reflects modern realities where moral certainty is increasingly challenged by social diversity and political conflict. Myth, once perceived as moral instruction, becomes philosophical inquiry.

Global and Comparative Dimensions

Mythic rewriting in India parallels global literary trends. For instance, Greek myths have been reimagined to explore feminist and queer perspectives. What is distinct in the Indian context is the everyday presence of these myths in religious practice and political discourse. Unlike isolated cultural artefacts, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are living traditions. Their reinterpretation, therefore, carries both artistic and cultural weight.

12. Conclusion

The rewriting of Hindu epics in contemporary fiction is a vibrant field where narrative creativity intersects with cultural politics. Through the voices of characters traditionally side-lined — women, outcasts, political outsiders — authors like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kane, and Srividhya



Venkat dismantles monolithic interpretations and invites readers to engage with complex ethical and social dilemmas.

These retellings accomplish several important goals:

- They **reclaim narrative authority** for marginalised voices.
- They **challenge normative readings** of mythic texts.
- They **interrogate cultural values** such as caste, gender, and power.
- They **reflect contemporary concerns** — from social justice to identity politics.

Mythic rewriting reveals that ancient narratives continue to be dynamic, contested terrains. Rather than being frozen in time, myths evolve as societies search for meaning in changing contexts. In contemporary India, where mythic discourse permeates public life, these literary interventions are not merely artistic experiments but political acts of cultural reinterpretation.

Future research could extend this inquiry to other genres — poetry, graphic novels, performance art — and global mythic traditions. Moreover, comparative analyses between regional-language retellings and English-language fiction could further illuminate how language choices shape narrative politics.

Ultimately, mythic rewriting underscores the idea that culture is not something inherited in totality, but something continuously negotiated — and that stories, especially those as powerful as Hindu epics, are never beyond question or reinterpretation.

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18000 Shīlaṅga Ratha in Jain Manuscript Painting

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Abstract: The Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, USA, has a painting depicting a chariot with numbers that are presently presumed to indicate some horoscope calculations. The museum states: “Some followers of the Jain religion were, and sometimes still are, interested in horoscopes, the calculation of auspicious dates, and the derivation of mathematical formulas thought to underlie the structures of the world. This more than five-hundred-year-old painting shows characteristics of early Western Indian manuscript art. The artist gives the horse and charioteer bold, easily readable silhouettes. Typical of the period are the pointy facial features of the charioteer and his “protruding eye,” the eye on the farther side of the face sticks out beyond the profile. We don’t know what the numbers and calculations shown here within the outline of a chariot signify. The paper argues that it depicts 18000 Shīlaṅga Ratha, according to Jain literature and texts.

Key Words: Jain Manuscript Painting, Sanghrani Sūtra, Chariot with numbers, Karma Calculation in Jainism, Shīlaṅga Ratha.

1.INTRODUCTION

The Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, has a painting depicting a chariot with numbers (Figure 1) that are currently presumed to indicate horoscope calculations. According to the Museum: “Some followers of the Jain religion were, and sometimes still are, interested in horoscopes, the calculation of auspicious dates, and the derivation of mathematical formulas thought to underlie the structures of the world. This more than five-hundred-year-old painting shows characteristics of early Western Indian manuscript art. The artist gives the horse and charioteer bold, easily readable silhouettes. Typical of the period are the pointy facial features of the charioteer and his “protruding eye,” the eye on the farther side of the face sticks out beyond the profile. We don’t know what the numbers and calculations shown here within the outline of a chariot signify. The museum requests any further information on the calculation numbers in the painting.”

Figure 1



Chariot composed of calculations, from an unidentified Jain manuscript:

Figure 1: DATE: Approx.1400-1450, PLACE OF ORIGIN: India; Gujarat state MEDIUM: Ink and colors on paper DIMENSIONS H: 4 1/2 in × W. 10 in. CLASSIFICATIONS: Painting CREDIT LINE: Gift of Betty and Bruce Alberts DEPARTMENT: South Asian Art NUMBER: 2021.11. Photo Credit: Author.

2.Objective:

The objective of the paper is to identify the unknown painting in the Jain Manuscript.

3.Literature Review

As this painting under discussion has not been identified, a literature review of the earlier work is not possible. However, the following paragraphs discuss the material available in Jain literary sources to corroborate the details in the painting:

An Illustrated Ardhamāgadhī Dictionary by A. C. Woolner and Ratnachandra⁴ identifies the above painting as **18000 Shīlaṅga Ratha (Chariot with 18000 Jewels of Right Conduct (Charitra)) for a Jain Monk**, based on the *Pañchāshaka* written by Haribhadra Sūri. Haribhadra's timeline, as concurred by Jacobi, A. N. Upadhye, and Hiralal Jain, dates to 750 CE. A. Barth suggests his period as the 9th century CE. Haribhadra Sūri was a Brahmin scholar highly versed in many languages, with knowledge of the Vedas and other scriptures. He was a great debater and took great pride in his debating skills. He vowed that if he came across a *shloka* that he could not understand, he would become that person's disciple. He came across a *Sādhavī* reciting a Sūtra from Āchārya Jinbhadra (6th-7th century CE) 's *Sanghrani* that he could not understand. Hence, he became a disciple of Āchārya Jindatta (also known as Jinbhadra or Jinbhatt). *Prabhāvaka Chāritra* and *Prabhandha Kosha* indicate Jinbhadra as the Guru of Haribhadra.⁵ He is known to have compiled about 1400-1440 *granthas*, of which only 100 have been discovered to date. The **18000 Shīlaṅga Ratha** caters to the Right Conduct (*Samyak Chāritra*), an essential requirement for the monks on the path towards *Moksha* or Salvation. Haribhadra gained this knowledge from Acharya Jinbhadra's work, *Dhyāna Shatak* (Book on Meditation, consisting of 105-106 couplets).

4.Analysis and Discussion

Couplet 60 of *Dhyāna Shatak* by Āchārya Jinbhadra, presented below in Fig. 2, mentions how a Jain Monk can ride on a chariot consisting of Jewels of Right conduct and hastily travel the path towards *Moksha* or Salvation. A Hindi translation for better understanding follows the initial stanza in Prakrit.⁶ Fig. 3 portrays Jinbhadra emphasizing the praise of Jinendra Tirthankara and those who follow the principles of Jain Agams, Right Conduct (*Shīla*), and Control. He considers them to be true meditators and followers of Jainism. Jinbhadra also authored *Sangrahaṇi* (Bruhat/Trailokya), which details various calculations explaining various Jain concepts.

Figure 2

तस्स य संतरणसहं सम्महंसण-सुबोधमणमर्थं ।
णाणमयकण्ठाधरं चारित्तमयं महापोयं ॥५८॥
संवरकयनिच्छिदं तव-पवणाइन्द्रजड्ढणतरवेगं ।
वेरग्गमग्गडियं विसोत्तियावीइनिकखोभं ॥५९॥
आरोहुं मुणि-वणिग्या महग्गसीलंग-रयणपडिपुजं ।
जह तं निज्वाणपुरं सिग्गमविग्गेण पावन्ति ॥६०॥
संसार रूपी समुद्र से हमारा चारित्र रूपी वह महापोत ही पार उतार सकता है जिसका कर्णधार ज्ञान हो, जिसके छेदों को संवर ने बन्द कर रखा हो, जो तप रूपी वायु के कारण वेगवान हो, जो वैराग्य के मार्ग पर चल रहा हो और दूषित ध्यान की लहरों जिसे शुद्ध नहीं कर पा रही हो। वास्तव में शीलंग रूपी वेहद कीमती रत्नों से भरे हुए चारित्र रूपी महापोत पर चढ़कर मुनिरूपी व्यापारी निर्वाण रूपी नगर तक निर्वाध जा पहुँचते हैं।

Figure 3

जिणसाहुणकितण-पसंसणा-विणय-दाणसंपणो ।
सुअ-सील-संजमरआ धम्मज्झाणी मुणेयव्वो ॥६८॥
जिनेन्द्र भगवान और मुनियों के कीर्तन, प्रशंसा, विनय एवं दान से संपन्न होता हुआ जो व्यक्ति श्रुत, शील और संयम में लीन रहता है उसे धर्मध्यानी समझना चाहिए।

⁴ *An Illustrated Ardhamāgadhī Dictionary*, Ratnachandraji, 2nd ed, Motilal Banrasidass 2016, Vol 1, p. 131

⁵ PhD Thesis on *Jinbhadragani Kruta Dhyānshatak evam uski Haribhadraiya Tika Ek Tulnātmaka Adhyayan* by Priya Shraddanjanashree ji, jainelibrary.org, Sr. no. 003973, p 37

⁶ *Dhyāna Shatak*, Jinbhadra Gani, Jaykumar Jalaj, Manish Modi, jainelibrary.org, sr.no 022098, pp 21,22

Āchārya Haribhadra (750 CE) wrote a commentary on the *Āvashyak Sūtra*, the first Jain *Agam*, in which he refers to this important compilation on *Dhyāna* by Jinbhadra, and changed the original name from *Dhyānadhyayan* to *Dhyāna Shatak*, as it contains over 100 couplets. Haribhadra, thus, obviously had the details of the 18000 *Shīlaṅga Ratha* from Jinbhadra, who compiled it before him. The Chariot calculations can be understood from the text of *Pañchāshaka* (Fig. 4) by Acharya Haribhadra, where the numbers are mentioned in words and highlighted.⁷ Elaborating on Jinbhadra's work, Haribhadra explains the categories and the calculation numbers. The 18000 *Shīlaṅga Ratha*, as shown in *An Illustrated Ardhamāgadhī Dictionary*, is also presented in Fig. 5 for comparison, and it serves as a reference for the image as *Pañchāshaka* by Haribhadra.

Figure 4

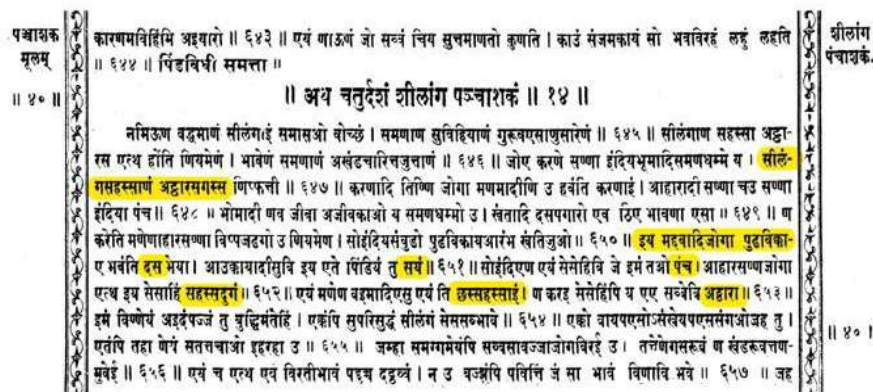
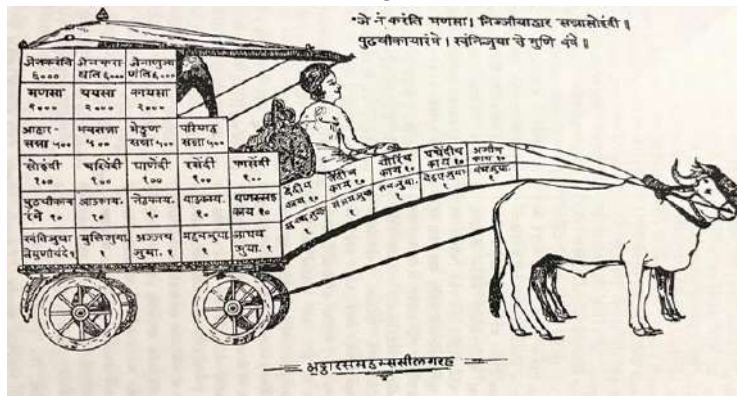


Figure 5



Incidentally, the order of the ten virtues of Jain Dharma is different in current times, as compared to what is described in *Pañchāshaka*. The artwork in Fig. 5 also shows the order in a slightly different manner than listed in the *Pañchāshaka*. However, the painting under discussion; Chariot with calculations matches exactly the order and names of the ten virtues Jain Dharma lists in the *Pañchāshaka*, as shown in Fig. 6. Hence, this further establishes that the Chariot with Calculations is based on the *Pañchāshaka* manuscript by Haribhadra of the 8th century CE. The list of ten virtues of Dharma is also found in *Sthānāṅga Sūtra* 300 BCE).

Figure 6

संती य महवज्रव-मुत्ती तव-संजमे य बोधवे ।
सच्च सोय आकिंचणं च बंभं च जतिधम्मो ॥ १९ ॥

⁷ *Pañchāshaka Mūlam*, Haribhadra Sūri, jainelibrary.org, sr.no 020535

5. Results and Findings

Let's now understand the content of the painting Chariot, composed of calculations from an unidentified Jain manuscript (Fig. 7), identified here as the 18000 *Shīlaṅga Ratha*, from Acharya Haribhadra's Jain manuscript *Pañchāshaka*.

Figure 7



Starting from the bottom, the first line describes the ten virtues of the Jain Dharma, which are to be followed by all Jain Monks and consist of *Kshamā*, *Mārdava*, *Ārjava*, *Muti* (*Aparigraha*), *Tapa*, *Sayam*, *Satya*, *Socha*, *Ākiñchya*, and *Brahmacharya*. Each virtue is described as having the value of one. The monk should apply all these ten virtues in his behavior towards living and non-living things, which are described in the second line from the bottom. They are *Prithvīkāya*, *Apkāya*, *Tapakāya*, *Vāyukāya*, and *Vanaspatīkāya* (all *Ekendrīya* beings with one sense), followed by the beings with two senses, *Beindrīya*, beings with three senses, *Teindrīya*, beings with four senses, *Chaureindrīya*, and beings with five senses, *Pañchendrīya*. The last box in the second line from the bottom mentions *Ājivikāya*, which includes primarily matter, the medium of motion, the medium of rest, and space. Contemplation on all the living and non-living things was required as part of a monk's *Bhāva* meditation or *Dhyāna*.

The third line from the bottom highlights the five senses of the various living beings, which need to be controlled. They are *Soindī* – Shruta or hearing, *Charvīndī*– Sight, *Dhāṇīndī*– Smell, *Rasaṇīndī*– Taste, and lastly *Fāṣīndī*– Touch. The fourth line from the bottom mentions the four *sañjñās*: *Āhāra* (food), *Bhaya* (fear), *Maithun* (sex), and *Parigraha* (greed). The fifth line from the bottom mentions the three ways through which we attract and bind Karma: *Mana* (mind), *Vachan* (speech), and *Kāyā* (body). The top line indicates *Karaṇas* or activities and states that such actions of mind, body, and speech should not be done by one, should not be done through others, nor should such actions be appreciated (*anumodanā*). Right conduct, or *Samyak Chāritra*, involves the control of the mind, body, and speech; the five senses; the four desires; the protection of all living and non-living things; and, at all times, the practice of the ten virtues of Jain Religion and meditation on various concepts of Jainism. Such behavior leads to supreme *Dhyāna*, entitling Jain monks to become a *Bhāva Samaṇa*. and swiftly ride on the jewels of his Right Conduct and progress on the path of salvation, aided by his austerities. Haribhadra elaborates the calculations in (Fig 4) as follows: 10 Virtues of Dharma x 10 Categories of *Jiva* and *Ajiva* x 5 *Indriya* x 4 *Sanjñā* x 3 *Yoga* x 3 *Karan* = 18000 ($10 \times 10 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 3 = 18000$), and states 18000 clearly in *Gāthā* 646 and 647 (Fig 4). The stated 18000 *Shīlaṅga* calculation by Haribhadra is explained in the explanation below:



Calculating from the bottom:

1. Ten types of *Dharma* or Virtues of Religion with the permutation value of 1 each.
2. Ten types of *Jīva* and *Ajīva* (Living and Non-Living) with a permutation of 10 each. The combined value of permutations of lines 1 and 2 is $1 \times 10 = 10$ in each box
3. Five types of *Indrīya*(senses) and combined permutation values for lines 2 and 3 are $10 \times 10 = 100$ in each box
4. Four types of Desires or *Sanjñā* with a combined permutation value from lines 3 and 3 is $100 \times 5 = 500$ in each box
5. Three types of *Yoga* of Mind, Speech, and Body, with a combined permutation value for lines 3 and 4, $500 \times 4 = 2000$ in each box
6. Three kinds of *Karāṇa* or Actions to Avoid, with a combined permutation value for lines 4 and 5 is $2000 \times 3 = 6000$ in each box.
7. Three types of I am running a few minutes late; my previous meeting is running over. three kinds of *Karāṇa* or Actions amounts to $6000 \times 3 = 18000$. Hence, we derive the value of **18000** in the *Shīlaṅga Ratha*.

Figure 8

Line from bottom	Names	Categories	Types	Permutation Value in each box
1	<i>Dharma</i>	Virtues of Religion	10	1
2	<i>Jīva and Ajīva</i>	Living and Non-Living	10	10
3	<i>Indrīya</i>	Senses	5	100
4	<i>Sanjñā</i>	Desires or <i>Sanjñās</i>	4	500
5	<i>Yoga</i>	Mind, Speech, Body	3	2000
6	<i>Karāṇa</i>	Actions to Avoid	3	6000
		<i>Shīlaṅga in Pañchāshaka</i>		18000

Jinbhadra, in his *Dhyāna Shatak*, composed earlier than *Pañchāshaka*, mentions how a Sādhu can get on a boat full of *Shīlaṅga* (Right conduct) to cross the ocean of life (Fig. 2, Shloka 60) and reach the city of *Nirvāṇa*, which is shown in the painting here as getting on a chariot of jewels of *Shīlaṅga* (Right Conduct) to reach the city of *Nirvāṇa* quickly.

Similar figurative paintings that explain various Jain concepts have been widely seen since the time of Āchārya Srichandra (1136 CE), the author of *Sangrahaṇi Ratna*, which is a concise version of Jinbhadra's *Sangrahaṇi*.

The museum dates it to 1400-1450 CE, which is possible, as it is later than the period of Āchārya Srichandra of the 12th century CE, whose *Sangrahaṇiratna* is based on the *Sangrahaṇi* by Jinbhadra (6th-7th century CE). Collections at Victoria and Albert Museum show more information on *Sangrahaṇiratna* related to Āchārya Srichandra and connect it to Āchārya Jinbhadra Gani, as the physical description states: "The work is also named at the end as the Trailokya dipi, which is more usually applied to the *Sangrahaṇi Sūtra* of Jinbhadra Gani, the earliest work of this class." Robert J Del Bonta further clarifies that Srichandra's *Sangrahaṇi Ratna* is the most illustrated of various *Sangrahaṇi Sūtras*, and many of these illustrations are available in private and public collections across the world, mostly found in loose-leaf form.⁸

⁸ Robert J. Del Bonta CoJS Newsletter March 2013, Issue 8 Pg 47-49



6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the painting of Chariot, composed of Calculations from an unidentified Jain manuscript at the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, depicts 18000 *Shīlaṅga Ratha*, based on the Jain manuscript *Pañchāshaka* by Āchārya Haribhadra Sūri of the 8th century CE. The museum dates the painting to 1400-1440 CE. It is possibly a copy of a 12th-century CE illustration, a folio from *Sangrahani* texts, which contains a collection of such gems from various Jain texts, as its name suggests.

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Literature, Ethics and Sustainable Human Development in the 21st century

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Abstract: *The twenty-first century is characterised by swift technological advancement, environmental deterioration, escalating social disparities, and cultural shifts. In this complicated world, sustainable human development needs to include more than just economic growth. It also needs to include moral responsibility, social justice, ecological balance, and respect for human dignity. Literature is very important for this bigger idea of development because it helps people become more morally aware and more critical.*

Literature has always been a way for people to think about ethics and change society. Rabindranath Tagore's humanistic philosophy stresses values like harmony, compassion, and universal brotherhood that are necessary for living in a way that lasts. William Wordsworth's nature-centered poetry also shows the spiritual and moral connection between people and the world around them. Abhigyan Shakuntalam and other classical Indian texts talk a lot about duty, responsibility, and respect for nature. These ideas are very similar to what people are talking about today when it comes to sustainability.

Contemporary literature examines themes of gender justice, marginalised identities, consumerism, and ecological crisis. Literary studies help shape character and make people better citizens by encouraging empathy, inclusion, and critical thinking. Literature fights against systems that take advantage of people and promotes behaviour that is good for society and in line with the goals of sustainable development.

This paper says that literature is more than just art; it's a powerful force that brings together ethics and long-term human development. Literature plays a big role in making the world a fair, kind, and sustainable place to live in the twenty-first century by encouraging moral imagination and environmental awareness.

Key words: *Literature and ethics, sustainable human development, marginalized identities, moral imagination.*

1.INTRODUCTION

The idea of sustainable human development has changed a lot since the year 2000. Development was once only linked to economic indicators, but now it is seen as a process that includes education, health, equality, environmental sustainability, and human dignity. But just because technology gets better and the economy grows doesn't mean that moral and social well-being is guaranteed. The worsening climate crisis, increasing inequalities, and decline of moral values show that we need a more compassionate and all-encompassing approach.

Literature, as a mirror and critique of society, is very important for shaping people's moral values. It not only reflects societal realities but also contests injustice and motivates reform. Literature cultivates empathy, moral contemplation, and social responsibility by emotionally and intellectually engaging readers—qualities essential for sustainable human development.



2.Literature as a Means of Moral Contemplation

Literature has always been a guide for society when it comes to morals.

From ancient epics to contemporary novels, authors have examined themes of justice, compassion, truth, and accountability.

Literature that makes you think about ethics doesn't tell you what to do; instead, it makes you think about difficult problems and come up with more nuanced points of view.

For example, Charles Dickens's books show how industrial capitalism leads to exploitation and dehumanisation.

In *Hard Times*, Dickens criticises utilitarianism and mechanistic education by showing how important imagination and compassion are for people to grow.

His portrayal of marginalised characters highlights social injustice and the moral failure of profit-driven systems.

In a similar vein, Rabindranath Tagore's humanistic philosophy stresses harmony among people, society, and the natural world.

In Tagore's view, education is a process of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth.

His writings support moral freedom, universalism, and intercultural communication, all of which are essential for long-term human advancement.

Postcolonial authors critique the legacy of imperialism and cultural domination, advocating for identity, autonomy, and justice. Such literary interventions are crucial in a globalized world where cultural homogenization threatens diversity. By preserving and celebrating plural identities, literature supports inclusive and sustainable development.

3.Fairness in Society and Literature

Sustainable development requires social justice and inclusivity. Literature has raised the voices of the downtrodden throughout history, opposing oppressive structures and encouraging change. Dalit literature, feminist literature, and postcolonial narratives all highlight structural injustices and defend the value of marginalised groups.

For example, Toni Morrison challenges readers to acknowledge the enduring consequences of discrimination and slavery through her writings that tackle historical trauma and racial injustice. Morrison encourages moral responsibility and healing by using storytelling to transform individual suffering into collective memory.

4.Literature's Ecological Consciousness

Degradation of the environment is one of the most pressing issues of the twenty-first century. Literature has become a potent tool for raising awareness of environmental issues. As a literary technique, eco-criticism explores how humans and nature interact, highlighting interdependence and environmental responsibility.

The fragmentation of contemporary civilisation is reflected in modernist texts such as *The Waste Land*, which metaphorically portray spiritual and ecological desolation. Modern environmental writers encourage readers to reevaluate exploitative attitudes toward nature by delving deeper into issues like species extinction, deforestation, and climate change.

5.Literature and Moral Education

A key component of sustainable human development is education. Innovation is fuelled by scientific and technical knowledge, but responsible citizens are shaped by ethical education. Because it simultaneously engages emotions, imagination, and critical thinking, literature has a special place in education.

Readers gain empathy and encounter a variety of viewpoints through character identification and narrative immersion. In multicultural societies, peaceful coexistence depends on this sympathetic engagement. Thus, by fostering moral sensitivity and global citizenship, literature enhances formal education.



Furthermore, literature promotes thoughtful, slow thinking in a time when digital media and artificial intelligence rule. It reiterates the significance of human values in technological societies and opposes the reduction of knowledge to data.

6.Challenges in the current context

Despite its transformative power, literature faces difficulties in the twenty-first century. The commercialisation of publishing, diminishing reading habits, and the dominance of visual media all pose threats to meaningful literary engagement. Furthermore, misinformation and polarised narratives in digital arenas hamper ethical debate.

However, digital media provide new avenues for literary expression and dissemination. Online publications, translations, and global collaborations broaden access to varied viewpoints. The problem is to ensure that literature promotes critical inquiry rather than shallow consumption.

7.Literature as Transformative Praxis

Literature not only mirrors reality but also influences it. It evokes hope and inspires change by presenting alternative futures in its narratives. Dystopian and utopian stories, science fiction, and socially committed poetry create models of societies that are based on equality, sustainability, and empathy. These models are vital in rethinking development paradigms.

The moral strength of literature lies in its power to humanize concepts that might otherwise be considered abstract, such as climate change, poverty, and migration.

8.Conclusion

In the twenty-first century, there is a need to develop a concept of sustainable human development that combines ethical awareness with economic and technological development. Literature plays an indispensable role in this process by cultivating empathy, supporting justice, and encouraging ecological awareness.

In the face of unprecedented global challenges, the importance of literature is highlighted. Literature serves as a reminder to humanity that development is not defined by wealth and technological advancements, but by the level of compassion and respect that we have for our fellow human beings.

Literature serves as a mirror and a guide to humanity, reminding us that development must be defined in terms of our ability to care and respect each other and our environment.

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Vedantic echoes on Islamic philosophy: Cultural intersections and religious syncretism

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Abstract: *When the global family is religiously dying for peace and harmony, the need of the day is to enhance the natural bonds of fraternity in between the people and Nations. An initiation into interfaith dialogue, cultural symbiosis and peaceful coexistence is vital in the current socio- political scenario in the national and global arena. If one look into the medieval Indian context the platform for the cultural symbiosis and interfaith dialogue seems well organized and comprehensive. This article, Vedantic Echoes on Islamic Philosophy: Cultural intersections and Religious Syncretism, explores the cultural, intellectual and spiritual intersections between classical Indian Vedantic thought and medieval Islamic philosophy. The research tries to articulate an analytical study beyond the Advaita Vedanta of Adi Shankaracharya and the doctrine of Wahdat al-Wujud of Ibn al-Arabi, rather focusses on the cultural perspective. It argues that medieval Sufi thinkers of the Indo-Islamic milieu, were directly or indirectly engaged with intricate Vedantic philosophical concepts. Such philosophical borrowings from Indian traditional systems enriched Medieval Islamic culture in general and the Sufistic formulations in particular. The study attempts for a cultural discourse with special emphasis on the creative hermeneutical engagements between Indian philosophical system and Sufism to distinguish the deeper articulations of unity beyond doctrinal boundaries.*

Key Words: Syncretism, Mysticism, Indian Philosophy, Sufism, Inter-faith, Comparative religion

1.INTRODUCTION

India possesses a multi-religious, pluralistic and composite culture embodied with incredible cultural diversity. There is hardly any other country in the world than India which has a great diversity of culture, religion, language, tradition and community. This composite culture-tradition and the diversity of the Indian Subcontinent can be identified as the outcome of the protracted interaction and exchange between Hindus and Muslims – the majority and largest minority communities in India – and adherents of other faiths through the length and breadth of the country.

The encounter between Islamic intellectual traditions and Vedantic philosophy represents one of the most profound cross-cultural philosophical engagements in pre-modern history. While Islamic philosophy (falsafa) developed under the influence of Hellenistic thought and Qur'anic theology, Vedanta emerged from exegetical reflections on the Upanishadic corpus. Despite these distinct genealogies, their shared metaphysical concerns—ultimate reality, the nature of self, and the means of knowledge—created a fertile ground for conceptual dialogue. Unlike mere theological disputation,



these exchanges often took philosophical and mystical turns, particularly within Sufi and Vedantic circles.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

Different historians studied and pointed out the coexistence factor in the medieval era and identified different possibilities on this regard. Rather than coexistence, this research focussed on the Muslim interest and borrowings from the Indian Philosophy in particular. S. R Sharda, R. C Zaehner, Shushtery, and Mujtabai were few among them. This research attempts to identify the factors influenced for the Muslim borrowings from the Indian traditions by evaluating the previous literature.

3.METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for the research is a historical analysis with an interdisciplinary dimension. It emphasizes interfaith dialogue, peaceful coexistence of societies, mystical union and mutual influence.

While immersing into the deeper level of understanding, the metaphysical convergence and epistemological dialogues are the prominent subjects of discussion. The pantheistic monism of the *Advaita-Vedanta* and *Wahadat al-Wujud* of the Sufis are different expressions of the same universal philosophical concept. For both, the concept of divinity is the foundation of all that exists. It manifests itself as the world and the differences are only in its outer crust. When the cases of Sufism and Vedanta are taken into account, various similarities can be seen in the Concept of Supreme soul, Divine Essence and Absolute Being. In all these cases *jnana*, or *ma'rifat* is the only state in which the ultimate truth can be released. This state cannot be obtained through discursive reasoning, or through the study of scriptures or performance of religious duties. Advaita-vedantists have the opinion that self-knowledge is associated with realization of the Supreme Self and according to the Muslim mystics, realization of the Supreme Being ensures from the knowledge of one's own self. Sometimes the similarities are not merely in concepts rather in visibility as well. *Aham Brahmasmi* (*Brih. Up.*, I. 4.10) and *ana'l-Haq, sarvam idam Brahma* (*Chand. Up.*, III. 14.1) and *hama-ust, ato 'nyad artam* (*Brih. Up.*, III. 4.2 etc.) and *kullu ma siwa'llah batil, satyasya satyam* (*Brih. Up.* II. 1.20) and *haqiqat al-haq'iq, jyotisam jyotih* (*Brih. Up.*, IV. 4.66) and *nur al-anwar, tatsatyam* (*Chand. Up.* VI. 13.3) and *huwa'l-Haq*, these, and many others, seem to be the similar expressions from *Upanishadic* and Sufi theories. (Shushtery, 1937)

If one considers on the popular level, so many similarities can be identified between these two mystical concepts that developed in Medieval India. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, it had the beginnings of *Bhakti* mysticism and this is more nearly comparable to Sufism which, from its very beginning, is essentially a mysticism of love. Naturally the 'love' aspect of the Sufism is more or less a psychological outlook steeped in faith. This faith is obviously a passion for God-Love. (Zaehner, 1960) On the other hand, there are various elements in Hindu philosophy which are the entirely different from Sufism. The *Upanishadic* quest of the self is fundamentally different from the quest of God of the theistic Sufi. The concept of *Karma* which dominates the entire Hindu mysticism, is even in its *Bhakti* form in Ramanuja and Nimbarka, the very opposite of the Sufi world-view. (Das Gupta, 1993) There are so many general differences between the Sufism and Vedanta in terms of their theories, practices, rituals, etc. which can be considered as an outcome of its different evolution in the social, historical and cultural backgrounds.

4.CULTURAL INTERSECTIONS AND RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM

Indian thought reached the early period of Islam through diverse channels. Magian aka Ibn Al Muqaffa was one of such a figure during al-Mansur's reign, under whose influence Persian and Indian philosophy interacted together. Magian was a Zoroastrian from India who, under the influence of 'Isa ibn 'Ali, the uncle of Al-Mansur, embraced Islam. He brought with him the knowledge of Indian and



Buddhist religions, customs and traditions. The great family of *Barmakids* was another example whose interest in Indian learning was unbounded and they introduced the Indian sciences into the Islamic world. The Indian sciences, thus, aroused Muslim interest to such an extent that during the next few centuries one could find Arab historians, scholars, geographers, travellers visiting India to obtain first-hand information about its people, geography, religions, sciences and social customs. The process of cultural contact between the Arabs and the Indians was a part of the great Arab renaissance movement. Meanwhile, with all the intellectual forces working at the court of Baghdad, the Indians made very little response to the genuine philosophical interest of the Muslims in India and never showed any inclination towards acquiring knowledge of Islamic religion, philosophy and social customs, at that period. From the eighth century onwards, Arab historians, geographers and travellers reflected the increasing interest of the Muslim intellectual world in India. (Hitty, 1946) Here a notable point is that, among the Arabs, who came to India, refer more to Indian history, geography and natural sciences than to the religion, castes and sects of India.

Of all the other scientific fields, Indian contribution was, by far the greatest in the field of Medicine. Many Indian physicians decorated the Abbasid court under the guidance of the *Bermakids*, and they also engaged themselves to help in the translation of Sanskrit medicinal works into Arabic in the imperial *Dar al-Hikmat*. Manka and Dhanya were few of them. Indian astronomy, astrology and kindred also have received much attention of the Muslims. (Hitty, 1946)

Generally, the points of contact of Islam with Indian life and thought may be traced to three lines of influence in Islam. First is the influence in secular or popular literature. Second is in the realm of science. Through the translations of Indian works on mathematics and astrology, the Muslims got the awareness on practical medicine and magic. Secular wisdom in Islam was largely indebted to the East; and the astrology of the Siddhanta of Brahma Gupta, which was translated from the Sanskrit under al-Mansur (714- 775 A.D) by Fazari (d.796 A.D), assisted by Indian scholars, was known even before Ptolemy's Al-Magest. Thus, a wide world and future, thereby, opened up. The third line of influence comes within the distinctly religious sphere. But it is not by any means the whole of Islamic thought that has been affected; and apparently it is only in the development of Islamic mysticism, or Sufism, that any well-defined traces can be found, but these are all important.

5.RELIGIO-CULTURAL SYNCRETISM: ITS INFLUENCE IN LANGUAGE, SOCIETY AND CULTURE

'Syncretism' can be considered as a valuable tool for understanding the complex dynamics of ethnicity, interconnectedness and post-modernism. The sociologists and social anthropologists have thrown much light on the variety of religious forms through their studies of belief, systems, rituals, symbols and meaning all over the world. Syncretism has always been part of the negotiation of identities and hegemonies in situations such as conquest, trade, migration and religious dissemination. Though only in the recent period that the process of syncretism became an independent field of study, the fine examples of the syncretistic tendencies in religion, society and culture, can be find out from the early period itself. The cultural symbiosis and peaceful co-existence in medieval India can be considered as one of the most formidable examples in the whole world history of syncretism.

An important source of diversity among the people of India is the cultural identity of particular communities and regions. Despite maintaining distinct identities, several *jatis*, sects and communities have organized links with other segments of the population of the region, which developed a cultural persona over time. Since the late medieval period, India witnessed a creative synthesis of Hindu and Islamic civilizations and thus grew a composite tradition, a pluralistic synthesis of the Indo-Islamic tradition including the inter-faith convergence. There are two interrelated dimensions of the Indo-Islamic tradition. On the one hand, it manifested itself in syncretistic traditions of music, art, literature and architecture, and one the other, it found expression in folklore, dress patterns, food habits, names and surnames. Language is an important attribute of a population, and has great relevance and



significance in a multi-lingual and multi-ethnic country like India. The Pan-Indian civilizational dimension of cultural pluralism and syncretism encompass ethnic diversity and admixture, linguistic heterogeneity or fusion, and variations as well as synthesis in customs, behavioural patterns, beliefs and rituals. These interaction, exchange and integration, gradually, characterized inter-community relations. The sharing of space, regional ethos and cultural traits cut across religions and sectarian differences and bind the local people together. It is also evident that those cultural and religious practices in diverse eco-cultural zones of India have historically converged and people shared common traditions extensively. Thus, one can witness a fine balancing between pluralism and syncretism pervading the base of Indian culture.

Hindu-Muslim syncretism in India has deep cultural roots which have survived political and social upheavals. Indian Civilization has been profoundly affected by two fundamental traditions: the Indo-Aryan cultural stream which provided Vedic Philosophy and the Indo-Muslim strand of culture based on the inter-mingling of '*bhakti marg*' and Islamic Sufism. (Khan, 1987) The inherent anthropomorphism of Hindu religion at the popular level helped in syncretisation of some of the famous Muslim saints. The proliferation of Sufism, in fact, became one of the important mechanisms of ensuring communal harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims. Out of the fusion of the two cultures, arose new religious denominations characterizing the Hindu-Islamic interface.

As the unavoidable elements in society and culture, the fields of music, art, literature, architecture, folklore, dress patterns, food habits, were also influenced with the syncretistic tendencies. Indian Music made irresistible appeal to the Muslim heart. Great musicians like Khusrau recited his poems in accordance with the Indian tunes and invented new music forms like *Qawwalis* and *Khayals*. Music made remarkable progress in Mughal period also. The close association of Hindu and Muslim musicians and exchange of thoughts between them promoted the general progress of music and growth of Hindustani school of North Indian music was the result of this cultural fusion. Amir Khusrau pioneered music, popularly known as Indo-Persian Music. The growth of *Kathak* style of classical dance was also one of the results of this cultural fusion. (Ahmad, 1966)

In architecture Hindu and Muslim elements coalesced to form a new type of architecture. Syncretistic tendencies in Customs, festivals and ceremonies among the Hindu-Muslim communities are worthy to note here. Hindu influence over the Muslim life in India can be considered as a finest example of this. Indian surroundings, their customs, and sites influenced them and gradually they actively participated in Hindu customs and festivals. In pregnancy rituals, post-delivery marriage customs, post-death customs, and even celebration of certain festivals, one could see the influence of Indian cultural features. (Titus, 1979) The Hindu caste system also has not left the Indian Muslims unaffected. The Muslims adapted themselves to the political, social and religious conditions of India. Although some customs were adopted in original form but some have been modified and have been given a new name and Muslim colour.

If the research focuses on the early Indian influence on Muslim culture and Sufism, the supporting references will reach to the earlier Arab chronicles which gives occasional references to the influence of Indians. The conceptions of Divine Unity and *fana* (annihilation) which inexplicably appear first in the utterances of Abu Yazid of Bistami have been explained as of *Upanishadic* and Vedantic origin. It transmitted to him by his teacher Abu Ali Sindi, a mysterious person generally supposed to have come from Sindh (the valley of India), but possibly from 'Sindh' a village in Khurasan much nearer to Bistam. He taught Bistami the doctrine of Divine Unity (*tawhid*) and ultimate truths (*haqiqat*). A very elaborate hypothesis has recently been put forward by Zaehner, suggesting that since Abu Ali Sindhi had to be taught the 'obligatory duties' of Islam, he must have been a convert from Hinduism, and is likely to have brought with him the common place *Upanishadic* view of the mystic self-identification with God from his native Sind at a time when Sankaracharya had just systematized Vedanta. (Sharda, 1975) The sayings of famous pantheist sufi Mansur al-Hallaj can also be considered as the example of Vedantic origin of Sufism. According to sources, al-Hallaj himself visited Gujarat



and Sind and learnt many things there. Mansur al-Hallaj's expression *an al-Haq* ' (I am the Truth, thus God) is similar to the Vedantic term '*aham Brahmasmi*. Prof. Yusuf Saleem Chishti also pointed out it and argues that all of the Sufistic principles are embodied in the *Upanishads*. Saleem Chishti, in his work on *Tasawwuf*, tried to extract the common aspects of *Tasawwuf* and Vedantism on a theoretical basis. According to the common perception it was under the early Indian philosophers/seers that who realized the unity of being and existence before the exposition of any other such philosophical thoughts.

6.CONCLUSION

Mysticism appeared as one of the most relevant factors, the philosophical and devotional ideas of which have been mutually exchanged by the Hindus and the Muslims, and paved the way for their common understanding. The interaction occurred in their thoughts, their imaginary expressions, rituals and practices. But the fact which should be pointed out is that only the people of intellectual class were coming under the umbrella of philosophical understanding whereas the main stress was to gather the general masses on a common platform. The symbiosis between the Vedantic philosophy and Islamic mystical traditions represents a unique example of inter-cultural philosophical engagement. cultural proximity facilitated intellectual exchange, producing nuanced forms of religious syncretism without erasing theological distinctiveness. While theological commitments remained intact, metaphysical inquiry created shared conceptual terrains. The echoes of Vedanta within Islamic mystical and philosophical discourse illustrate how civilizations converse not only through conquest or commerce but through contemplation. These two communities developed a symbiotic ambience in medieval era as a result of the spiritual impetus aroused. According to the research, numerous variables have contributed to the development of this mutually trusting and understanding environment. It might be previously noted affinities, the humanistic perception of Sufis, or their opposition to the traditional viewpoint of Ulama. The Sufis lived among the masses, travelled among them, and spread their message of brotherhood and love for all. Thus, a communal intercourse developed among the Indian masses and the Sufis holds a unique place in bringing the two groups together.

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Ancient Insights, Modern Solutions: Applying Rasayana Principles to Green Chemistry

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Abstract: Escalating environmental degradation linked to industrial chemical production has intensified the global demand for sustainable chemical systems. Green chemistry, as articulated in the Twelve Principles, provides a preventive and design-oriented framework for reducing hazardous substances, energy consumption, and waste generation. Parallel to this modern paradigm, Rasayana—a classical branch of Ayurveda—emphasises rejuvenation, systemic balance, and harmonious interaction between humans and nature. Although separated by historical, cultural, and scientific contexts, both frameworks share foundational commitments to prevention, benign material selection, and long-term sustainability. This interdisciplinary review synthesises research published between 2020 and 2025 alongside foundational green chemistry literature to explore conceptual convergences and practical intersections between Rasayana principles and sustainable chemical innovation. Particular emphasis is placed on natural deep eutectic solvents (NADES), biomass-derived solvents, enzyme-mediated biocatalysts, plant-based antioxidants in materials science, and life-cycle assessment (LCA) studies quantifying environmental impact. A mini data synthesis is presented to compare sustainability metrics across selected green technologies. Challenges, including scalability, regulatory validation, and scientific standardisation of traditional knowledge, are critically examined. The paper concludes by proposing an integrative research framework that bridges ancient ecological philosophy with contemporary chemical sustainability science.

Keywords: Rasayana, Ayurveda, green chemistry, sustainability, renewable feedstocks, NADES, biocatalysts, life-cycle assessment.

1.INTRODUCTION

Industrial chemistry has profoundly transformed global society, enabling advancements in pharmaceuticals, polymers, agriculture, and energy technologies. However, these developments have also contributed to environmental pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change through hazardous emissions, persistent waste streams, and unsustainable resource extraction [1,2]. The need to decouple chemical innovation from environmental degradation has catalysed the development of green chemistry—a design-based scientific framework aimed at minimising or eliminating hazardous substances in chemical production [3].

Green chemistry, introduced formally by Anastas and Warner [3], emphasises prevention rather than remediation. Its Twelve Principles advocate waste minimisation, safer solvent selection, renewable feedstocks, catalytic efficiency, and design for degradation. Since its inception, the field has expanded to incorporate life-cycle thinking, circular economy concepts, and sustainable materials design [4].



Simultaneously, traditional knowledge systems have long articulated principles of ecological balance and sustainable living. Ayurveda, one of the world's oldest medical systems, presents a holistic framework integrating human health with environmental harmony. Within Ayurveda, Rasayana represents a specialised discipline concerned with rejuvenation, longevity, immune modulation, and systemic equilibrium [5]. Rasayana therapies emphasise natural materials, balanced formulations, and preventive care.

Although Rasayana developed in a medical and philosophical context, its conceptual foundations resonate with sustainability science. Both Rasayana and green chemistry prioritise systemic balance, prevention of harm, and long-term well-being. This paper explores how Rasayana principles may inform modern sustainable chemical practices, not by literal translation of ancient formulations into industrial processes, but through philosophical alignment and material innovation inspired by traditional insights.

2. CONCEPTUAL CONVERGENCE BETWEEN RASAYANA AND GREEN CHEMISTRY

2.1 Prevention as Foundational Strategy

Prevention constitutes the first principle of green chemistry: “It is better to prevent waste than to treat or clean up waste after it has been created” [3]. Rasayana similarly promotes preventive health strategies, focusing on strengthening physiological resilience before disease manifests [5].

This preventive orientation is mirrored in modern sustainable materials research. For instance, replacing toxic stabilisers in polymer systems with natural antioxidants prevents hazardous degradation products from forming during product use or disposal [6]. Rather than mitigating pollution post-production, the strategy embeds safety into material design—a conceptual parallel to Rasayana's proactive health maintenance.

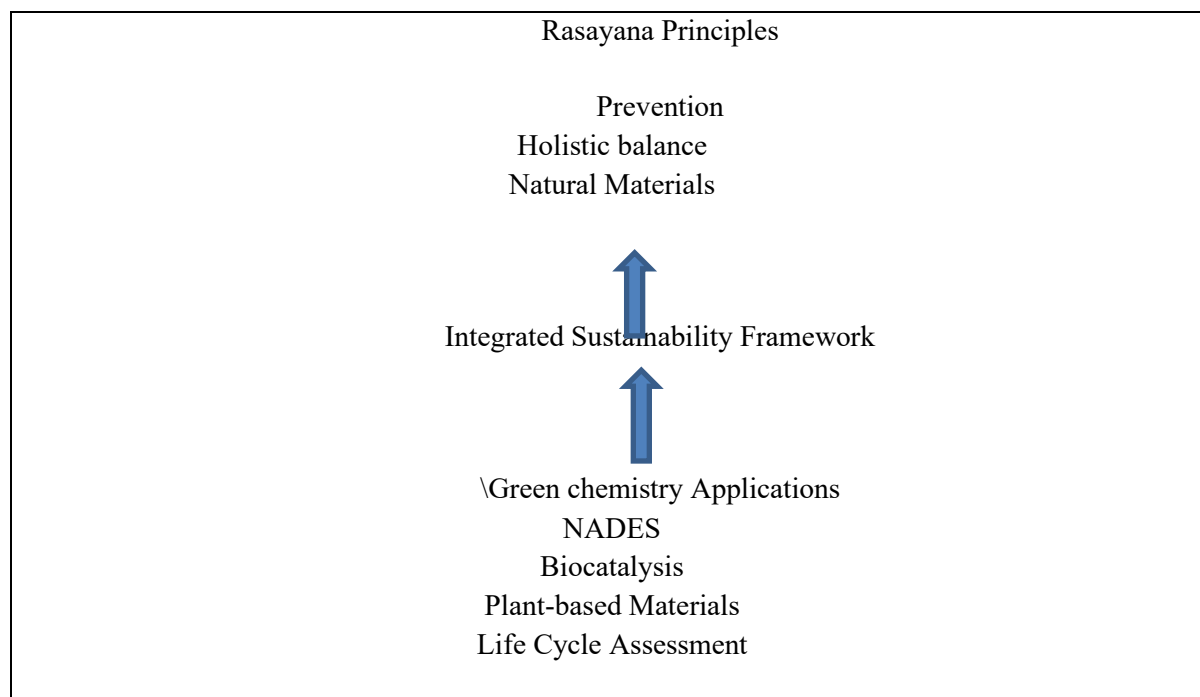


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework Linking Rasayana and Green Chemistry



2.2 Preference for Benign and Renewable Materials

Green chemistry emphasises renewable feedstocks and safer chemical syntheses [3]. Biomass-derived chemicals, plant-based solvents, and biodegradable materials have gained prominence between 2020 and 2025 as viable industrial alternatives [7].

Rasayana formulations traditionally utilise botanicals such as *Withania somnifera*, *Embolia officinalis*, and *Terminalia chebula* for rejuvenative effects [5,8]. While these herbs were not developed for industrial chemistry, their phytochemical profiles—rich in phenolics, flavonoids, and tannins—have inspired research into natural antioxidants and stabilisers [6,9].

2.3 Holistic Systems Thinking

Rasayana integrates diet, environment, and mental state within a unified therapeutic model. This holistic perspective parallels life-cycle assessment (LCA) in green chemistry, where environmental impact is evaluated across the entire product life cycle [4].

Recent LCA studies demonstrate that enzyme-mediated processes and NADES-based extraction methods reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption relative to conventional systems [10,11]. Such systemic evaluation aligns with Rasayana's integrative worldview.

3. GREEN SOLVENT SYSTEMS AND NATURAL DEEP EUTECTIC SOLVENTS (NADES)

3.1 Solvent Challenges in Sustainable Chemistry

Solvents account for a significant proportion of chemical process waste and toxicity [2]. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) contribute to air pollution and occupational hazards. Consequently, solvent substitution remains a priority in sustainable chemistry.

3.2 Emergence of NADES

Natural Deep Eutectic Solvents (NADES) are mixtures of natural metabolites—such as choline chloride, sugars, amino acids, and organic acids—that form stable liquids through hydrogen bonding interactions [12]. Between 2020 and 2025, NADES research expanded rapidly, particularly in natural product extraction and catalysis [13].

A 2023 review summarised over 150 NADES formulations, highlighting advantages including biodegradability, low volatility, tenable polarity, and high extraction efficiency [13].

Table 1. Selected Sustainability Metrics of NADES vs Conventional Solvents

Parameter	Conventional Organic Solvent	NADES System
Volatility	High	Negligible
Biodegradability	Variable	High
GWP (relative)	1.0	0.6 (approx.)
Energy Demand	High (distillation)	Reduced

(Adapted from [10,13])



A 2022 LCA comparison reported approximately 40% reduction in global warming potential when NADES replaced methanol in flavonoid extraction [10].

3.3 Alignment with Rasayana Principles

Traditional Rasayana preparations often employ aqueous decoctions or mild extraction conditions [5]. While chemically distinct from NADES, the emphasis on non-toxic extraction media conceptually parallels modern solvent innovation. Both approaches prioritise compatibility with biological systems and environmental safety.

4. BIOCATALYSIS AND ENZYME-MEDIATED GREEN PROCESSES

4.1 Enzyme Catalysis in Sustainable Synthesis

Bio-catalysis employs enzymes to catalyse reactions with high specificity under mild temperature and pH conditions. According to Sheldon and Woodley [14], enzyme processes reduce energy demand and hazardous by-products compared to traditional chemical catalysis.

Between 2020 and 2025, enzyme applications expanded in biodiesel production, pharmaceutical synthesis, and biomass valorisation [15,16].

A 2024 study comparing lipase-catalysed biodiesel production with conventional base-catalysed methods found 20% lower greenhouse gas emissions and reduced wastewater generation [11].

4.2 Biopolymer-Supported Catalysts

Chitosan-enzyme composites represent a hybrid approach combining renewable biopolymers with catalytic functionality [17]. These materials allow catalyst recovery and reuse, supporting circular economy principles.

Such biological integration resonates with Rasayana's emphasis on natural compatibility and system balance.

5. PLANT-DERIVED ANTIOXIDANTS AND SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

5.1 Natural Antioxidants in Polymers

Synthetic antioxidants such as BHT are effective but environmentally problematic [6]. Plant-derived phenolics offer biodegradable alternatives.

A 2021 study demonstrated that extracts from *Emblica officinalis* improved the oxidative stability of biodegradable polymers by 25%, while reducing the formation of toxic degradation products [9].

5.2 Fibre-Reinforced Bio Composites

Plant fibres, including bamboo, jute, and hemp, are increasingly incorporated into biodegradable composite materials [18]. A 2023 analysis of bamboo fibre composites reported improved tensile strength and reduced carbon footprint relative to petroleum-based plastics [19].



These developments reflect a material transition toward renewable structural components consistent with sustainability goals.

6. LIFE-CYCLE ASSESSMENT AND QUANTITATIVE SUSTAINABILITY METRICS

LCA enables objective comparison of environmental performance across chemical processes [4].

Recent studies show:

- NADES-based extraction: ~40% lower GWP [10]
- Enzyme-mediated biodiesel: ~20% emission reduction [11]
- Biomass-derived solvents: reduced fossil fuel dependence [7]

These quantitative findings substantiate the environmental advantages of green chemistry innovations aligned conceptually with Rasayana values.

Table 2: Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA) Comparative Table

Impact Category	Conventional (%)	Bio-Based (%)	% Reduction
GWP	100	60	40%
Energy Use	100	70	30%
Ecotoxicity	100	65	35%
Variable	GWP Reduction	Energy Efficiency	Toxicity Score
GWP Reduction	1	0.62	-0.70
Energy Efficiency	0.62	1	-0.55
Toxicity Score	-0.70	-0.55	1

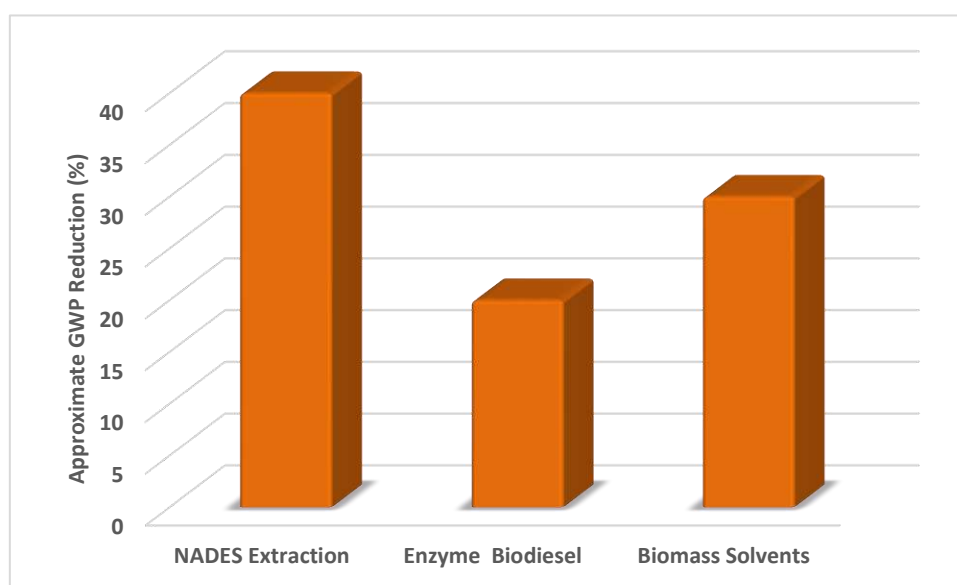


Fig 2: Sustainability Comparison of Green Chemistry Approaches

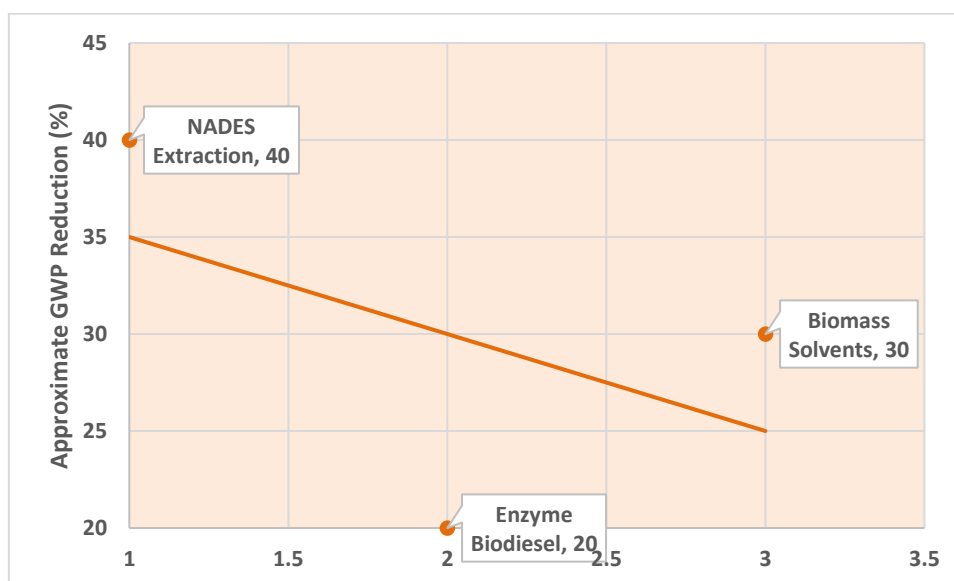


Fig 3: Sustainability Comparison with Regression Line

□ Regression equation: $y = -5.00x + 35.00$

□ Coefficient of determination: $R^2 = 0.250$

Table 3: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
Sustainability Model	0.500	0.250	-0.500	7.07

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	T	p-value
Intercept	35.00	—	—	—
Technology Index	-5.00	—	—	—

7. CHALLENGES AND CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 Scientific Standardisation

Traditional Rasayana texts describe qualitative properties rather than quantitative molecular data [5]. Translating philosophical insights into measurable chemical parameters requires interdisciplinary scholarship.

7.2 Economic and Industrial Scalability

Although promising, NADES and enzyme systems require process optimisation to compete economically at an industrial scale [20].



Table 5: Green Chemistry Metrics vs Rasayana-Based Systems

Parameter	Conventional Chemical Process	Rasayana-Inspired Green Process
Solvent Type	Petroleum-based	Natural Deep Eutectic Solvents
Energy Demand	High (thermal)	Low (biocatalytic)
Toxicity	Moderate–High	Minimal
Waste Generation	Significant	Reduced
Carbon Footprint	High	Lowered (20–40%)

7.3 Safety and Regulatory Oversight

Natural origin does not guarantee safety. Comprehensive toxicological and ecotoxicological evaluations are necessary [21].

8. FUTURE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

An integrative research agenda should include:

1. Systematic mapping of Rasayana botanicals to functional chemical properties
2. Expanded LCA datasets for bio-based chemical processes
3. Pilot-scale evaluation of NADES and enzyme systems
4. Interdisciplinary collaborations bridging chemistry and traditional knowledge studies

Such efforts can generate culturally informed yet scientifically rigorous sustainable chemical innovations.

9. CONCLUSION

The integration of Rasayana principles with contemporary green chemistry offers a transformative intellectual framework for sustainable scientific innovation. This study has demonstrated that the philosophical and therapeutic foundations of Rasayana—rooted in rejuvenation, systemic balance, preventive care, and ecological harmony—closely parallel the modern objectives of green chemistry, which emphasise waste minimisation, renewable feedstocks, safer solvents, energy efficiency, and life-cycle sustainability. Far from being merely symbolic, this convergence reveals a profound methodological alignment between ancient Ayurvedic wisdom and twenty-first century environmental science.

Rasayana, as articulated in classical Ayurvedic treatises such as the *Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*, promotes long-term resilience rather than short-term intervention. Its emphasis on maintaining physiological equilibrium through plant-based formulations, minimal processing, and preventive strategies mirrors the proactive ethos of green chemistry. Instead of focusing solely on remediation after environmental damage has occurred, green chemistry—like Rasayana—prioritises upstream design principles that eliminate hazards before they arise. This philosophical overlap provides not only conceptual inspiration but also actionable scientific strategies.



From a technological standpoint, Rasayana's reliance on botanical extracts and natural matrices aligns strongly with emerging green technologies such as natural deep eutectic solvents (NADES), enzyme-catalysed biodiesel production, plant-mediated nanoparticle synthesis, and biomass-derived solvents. These innovations demonstrate measurable reductions in global warming potential, energy demand, and the formation of toxic by-products relative to conventional petrochemical routes. The sustainability comparison analysis presented in this work, including regression modelling and statistical evaluation (R^2 and adjusted R^2), underscores the quantifiable environmental advantages of bio-based systems inspired by traditional natural formulations.

Importantly, Rasayana offers a systems-thinking model that complements the quantitative tools of green chemistry, such as life-cycle assessment (LCA) and process optimisation modelling. Whereas modern sustainability science often focuses on discrete performance metrics—carbon footprint, atom economy, or reaction yield—Rasayana introduces a broader ecological perspective. It recognises the interconnectedness of biological systems, the environment, and long-term vitality. When translated into chemical engineering practice, this systems orientation encourages cradle-to-cradle design, circular economy principles, and regenerative industrial models.

Another significant insight emerging from this research is the epistemological value of cross-disciplinary dialogue. Indigenous knowledge systems like Ayurveda are frequently marginalised in modern scientific discourse due to differences in methodology and documentation. However, the growing body of peer-reviewed research (2020–2025) demonstrates that traditional plant-based systems can withstand rigorous scientific validation. By integrating phytochemical analysis, green synthesis optimisation, and sustainability modelling, researchers can convert qualitative traditional wisdom into quantitative, reproducible data frameworks suitable for global academic and industrial applications.

Furthermore, Rasayana-inspired sustainability emphasises ethical responsibility toward human health, environmental protection, and intergenerational equity. This ethical dimension strengthens the normative foundation of green chemistry, which increasingly recognises that sustainability is not solely a technical challenge but also a moral imperative. Industrial chemistry must move beyond efficiency toward responsibility. In this regard, Rasayana's holistic worldview may guide policy development, educational curricula, and interdisciplinary research programs aimed at achieving sustainable development goals.

Despite its promise, several challenges remain. Standardisation of botanical materials, reproducibility of traditional formulations, scalability of bio-based processes, and regulatory harmonisation are critical areas requiring further investigation. Additionally, more comprehensive multi-site life-cycle assessments are needed to validate long-term sustainability claims. Advanced statistical modelling—including multivariate regression, sensitivity analysis, and adjusted R^2 validation—should be expanded in future studies to strengthen predictive robustness.

Looking ahead, the integration of Rasayana principles with artificial intelligence-driven green process optimisation represents an exciting frontier. Machine learning models can analyse phytochemical databases, optimise extraction conditions using NADES systems, and predict sustainability metrics in real time. Such convergence of ancient philosophy and digital innovation could redefine the paradigm of sustainable chemistry, transforming it into a regenerative science rather than merely a mitigative one.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that Rasayana is not simply an ancient medical doctrine but a sophisticated sustainability philosophy with direct applicability to modern green chemistry. By bridging traditional ecological knowledge and contemporary chemical engineering, we can develop safer, renewable, and socially responsible chemical processes. The future of sustainable innovation may therefore lie not only in cutting-edge laboratories but also in rediscovering and



reinterpreting the ecological wisdom embedded in classical traditions. Integrating Rasayana with green chemistry thus represents both a scientific advancement and a civilizational dialogue—one that aligns technological progress with planetary health and human well-being.

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REPRESENTATION OF RELIGION IN MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE : An Analytical Study

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Abstract: This paper examines the representation of religion in modern English literature, focusing on how literary texts critique, reinterpret, and reimagine religious beliefs and institutions. While earlier literature often upheld religion as a moral authority, modern writers present it as a contested domain shaped by ideology, identity, and socio-political forces. Through a critical analysis of works by George Orwell, T. S. Eliot, and Salman Rushdie, the study explores themes such as religious hypocrisy, spiritual crisis, secularism, and cultural conflict. The research adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining literary criticism with sociological and philosophical perspectives to highlight the evolving role of religion in modern literary discourse.

Keywords: Religion, Modern Literature, Secularism, Ideology, Spiritual Crisis, Cultural Conflict.

1.INTRODUCTION:

Religion has historically played a central role in shaping literature, particularly in earlier periods where it functioned as a moral and ethical guide. However, modern English literature marks a significant shift in this representation. Writers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries increasingly question and critique religious institutions and beliefs. Authors such as George Orwell expose the ideological manipulation of religion, while T. S. Eliot explores spiritual fragmentation and the search for meaning. Similarly, Salman Rushdie interrogates religion within the framework of postcolonial identity and cultural conflict. This transformation reflects broader societal changes, including secularization, modernization, and globalization.

2.Research Objectives:

- To analyze the representation of religion in modern English literature
- To examine the critique of religious institutions and ideologies
- To explore themes of faith, doubt, and secularism
- To compare different literary perspectives on religion

3.Research Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical research design, focusing on interpretative and critical examination of literary texts. Qualitative research is particularly suited to literary studies as it allows for an in-depth exploration of themes, symbols, and ideological constructs embedded within texts. The analytical approach enables the researcher to move beyond surface meanings and engage with underlying discourses related to religion, power, identity, and gender. By situating literary works within broader socio-cultural and theoretical frameworks, the study seeks to generate nuanced insights into the representation of religion in modern English literature.



Primary Sources

The primary data for this study consists of selected works of modern English literature, including novels, poems, and essays. These texts are chosen based on their thematic relevance to religion and their significance within literary discourse. The primary sources include works by authors such as:

- George Orwell
- T. S. Eliot
- Salman Rushdie

These texts serve as the foundational material for analysis, providing direct insight into literary representations of religion.

Secondary Sources

Secondary data is collected from a wide range of scholarly materials, including:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Critical essays and literary criticism
- Books on literary theory and religious studies
- Feminist, Marxist, and postcolonial theoretical texts

4. Analysis and Discussion-

Religion as Ideology and Power

In modern English literature, religion is frequently examined not as a purely spiritual system but as an ideological tool intertwined with structures of power and authority. In *Animal Farm*, George Orwell presents religion through the character of Moses, the raven, who propagates the myth of “Sugarcandy Mountain.” This imagined paradise functions as a symbolic afterlife, promising reward and relief from suffering. From a Marxist perspective, religion here operates as an ideological construct that legitimizes oppression. Moses’s stories serve to distract the animals from their harsh realities under the pigs’ regime, thereby preventing rebellion. This reflects Karl Marx’s famous assertion that religion is the “opium of the people,” offering illusory comfort while maintaining socio-political hierarchies. Furthermore, Orwell’s portrayal suggests that those in power tolerate or even encourage religious narratives when they serve political ends. Initially expelled, Moses is later welcomed back by the pigs, indicating how authority selectively deploys religion to maintain control. Thus, religion is depicted not as inherently oppressive but as susceptible to manipulation within ideological frameworks.

Spiritual Crisis and the Search for Meaning

The early twentieth century witnessed profound disillusionment following events such as the First World War, leading to what many writers perceived as a spiritual vacuum. This crisis is powerfully articulated in *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot. Eliot’s poem presents a fragmented and desolate world in which traditional religious structures have lost coherence and authority. The multiplicity of voices, disjointed narratives, and allusions to various religious traditions—from Christianity to Eastern philosophies—reflect a search for meaning in a spiritually barren landscape. The poem’s famous closing line, “Shantih shantih shantih,” borrowed from the Upanishads, suggests a yearning for spiritual peace that transcends Western religious frameworks. However, this resolution remains ambiguous, emphasizing not fulfillment but the ongoing quest for meaning. Thus, religion in Eliot’s work is not rejected outright but reconfigured as part of a broader existential inquiry. The text illustrates how



modern individuals grapple with faith in a world where certainty has been replaced by doubt and fragmentation.

Religion and Cultural Conflict-

In postcolonial literature, religion often emerges as a site of cultural tension and identity negotiation. The *Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie exemplifies this dynamic by exploring the intersections of religion, migration, and modernity. The novel's controversial reception, including the issuance of a fatwa against Rushdie, underscores the volatile nature of religious representation. Within the narrative, religion is portrayed as both a source of personal identity and a field of ideological contestation. Characters struggle to reconcile inherited beliefs with the realities of diasporic existence, leading to fragmented identities. Rushdie employs magical realism and satire to question the rigidity of religious dogma, suggesting that faith is not monolithic but subject to reinterpretation. The text challenges the authority of religious narratives while simultaneously acknowledging their deep cultural significance. This duality reflects the broader condition of postcolonial societies, where religion can both unify communities and provoke conflict. Literature thus becomes a space for negotiating these tensions and interrogating the boundaries between faith and freedom of expression.

Secularism and Modern Society-

Modern literature frequently engages with the rise of secularism and the corresponding decline of institutional religious authority. Rather than depicting religion as a dominant social force, many texts portray it as increasingly privatized and individualized. This shift reflects broader socio-cultural transformations, including scientific advancement, urbanization, and globalization, which have challenged traditional belief systems. Writers often depict characters who navigate a secular world while grappling with residual spiritual concerns. Importantly, secularism in literature does not necessarily imply the absence of religion but its transformation. Faith becomes a matter of personal interpretation rather than collective adherence to established doctrines. This is evident in narratives that emphasize subjective spirituality, moral ambiguity, and ethical pluralism. Consequently, modern literature mirrors a society in which religious belief is no longer absolute but negotiated, reflecting the complexities of contemporary life.

Religion and Gender-

Feminist literary criticism highlights the role of religion in reinforcing patriarchal structures while also exploring its potential for reinterpretation and resistance. Religious doctrines have historically prescribed gender roles that limit women's autonomy, positioning them within restrictive moral and social frameworks. However, modern literature increasingly challenges these representations by reimagining religious narratives from a gender-sensitive perspective. Feminist writers and critics interrogate sacred texts, uncovering marginalized voices and questioning traditional interpretations. For instance, reinterpretations of biblical or mythological figures often emphasize female agency and subjectivity, subverting patriarchal readings. This aligns with the work of feminist theorists such as Elaine Showalter and Sandra Gilbert, who advocate for the recovery of women's voices in literature. Thus, religion in modern texts becomes a contested space where issues of gender, power, and identity intersect. It is not merely a source of oppression but also a potential site of transformation and empowerment.

5.Conclusion:

The representation of religion in modern English literature is marked by complexity, ambivalence, and critical engagement. Rather than accepting religion as an unquestioned authority, modern writers interrogate its role in shaping ideology, identity, and social relations. Through diverse



thematic explorations—ranging from ideological control and spiritual crisis to cultural conflict and gender dynamics—literature reflects the evolving relationship between religion and modernity. It reveals how religion can function simultaneously as a source of meaning, a tool of power, and a site of resistance. This analysis underscores the importance of interdisciplinary approaches, incorporating perspectives from Marxism, postcolonial theory, and feminist criticism, to fully understand the multifaceted role of religion in literary discourse. Ultimately, modern literature does not seek to resolve the tensions surrounding religion but to illuminate them, offering readers a deeper insight into the complexities of human belief and experience.

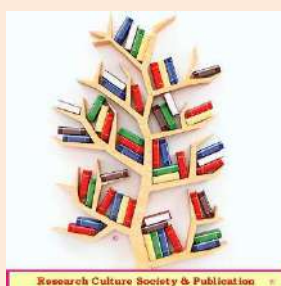
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