Ancient Tales, Modern Retellings: Exploring the World of Indian Mythological Fiction in English

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
Research Paper **Article History** *Received : April 06, 2023* *Accepted : May 09, 2023* **Keywords :** *Indian mythological fiction, representation, diversity, popular culture, creative freedom, commercialization.*	This research article examines the evolution and influence of Indian mythological fiction in English, concentrating on its themes, notable authors, and cultural significance. With a growing number of Indian authors reinterpreting ancient narratives for modern audiences, the purpose of this study is to investigate the research trends, challenges, and future opportunities in this thriving field of literature. By analysing the works of Amish Tripathi, Ashok K. Banker, Anand Neelakantan, and Kavita Kane, among others, the article emphasises the major themes and interpretations that have contributed to the popularity of the genre. In addition, the social and cultural impact of Indian mythological fiction, including its impact on representation, diversity, and popular culture, is examined. The difficulties authors encounter in striking a balance between tradition and creative freedom, as well as the potential dangers of commercialization, are also investigated. This research highlights the significance of Indian mythological fiction written in English as a potent medium for reimagining and reinterpreting India's rich mythological heritage.

Indian Mythology Background:

Vedic mythology began approximately 1500 BCE. The Vedas, Hinduism's oldest sacred books, include the earliest Indian tales, mostly about gods and goddesses and their accomplishments. These stories changed with India's social, political, and religious climate. Indian mythology became more varied and diverse, representing human life, ideals, and aspirations.

Indian mythology is based on the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Both books, from the 4th century BCE or before, incorporate dharma (obligation), karma (activity), and moksha (liberation) in Indian philosophy and society. The Mahabharata, the world's longest poem, tells the complicated story of the Kuru dynasty's struggle for supremacy, ending in the catastrophic

battle of Kurukshetra. However, Valmiki's Ramayana recounts Prince Rama's rescue of Sita from Ravana. The two epics have been adapted, retold, and interpreted throughout Indian history.

Indian mythology and culture:

Indian mythology has a huge impact on Indian culture. Myths have shaped Indian culture from temple sculptures and cave paintings to classical dance and folk theatre. These stories have been told verbally, visually, and in writing, changing with each recounting. Indian mythology permeates Indian literature across genres and languages.

Indian mythology in global context:

Indian mythology captivates audiences worldwide. European scholars and orientalists began to study and translate Indian manuscripts in the 18th and 19th centuries, introducing the world to Indian myths and stories. William Butler Yeats was strongly impacted by the Upanishads, while Herman Hesse's "Siddhartha" was influenced by the Buddha's biography.

Indian mythology has also shaped popular culture globally, particularly in film, television, and graphic novels. The 2010 Academy Award-winning film "Avatar," directed by James Cameron, was inspired by Hindu mythology, particularly avatars and Pandara. "Amar Chitra Katha" and Grant Morrison's "18 Days," a modern retelling of the Mahabharata, use Indian mythical characters and stories.

Indian mythology's numerous narratives, characters, and themes have shaped India's and the world's cultural, literary, and creative landscape. These myths, a vital part of India's legacy, inspire, entertain, and illuminate the complex human experience. Indian mythological fiction in English shows that these timeless tales continue to inspire new writers and readers. Echoing this opinion, Devdutt pattanaik says" "Indian mythological fiction in English often uses mythology as a starting point, creatively reimagining the stories, symbols, and rituals that form the fabric of the Indian cultural landscape" (p. 17).

Indian mythological fiction:

Indian mythology and storytelling have led to the rise of mythological fiction in literature. Mythological literature blends Indian mythology with modern storytelling to provide modern readers new insights, reinterpretations, and innovative adaptations.

Early Indian mythological fiction:

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Indian mythology became a genre of fiction. The Indian independence struggle and the search for national identity revived interest in ancient Indian writings and legends. Novelists, short story writers, and playwrights in various Indian languages reinterpreted the myths.

"Anandamath" (1882) by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, set amid the Bengal famine of 1770 and incorporating Hindu mythology and spirituality, is an early example of mythological fiction in Indian literature. Kalki Krishnamurthy's 1944 Tamil historical novel "Sivakamiyin Sabadham" mixes legendary and historical elements.

Rise of English mythic fiction:

In the second part of the 20th century, Indian authors writing in English boosted mythic fiction. Writers like R.K. Narayan and Shashi Tharoor used Indian myths and stories to construct English mythological fiction. Narayan's "The Ramayana" (1973) and "The Mahabharata" (1978) are straightforward and fascinating abridgements of the two great epics, while Tharoor's "The Great Indian Novel" (1989) is a satirical reimagining of the Mahabharata set in modern India.

Indian mythology's 21st-century revival:

A new generation of writers explored the undiscovered frontiers of Indian mythology, rewriting and reimagining the ancient tales for modern audiences. The success of Amish Tripathi's "The Immortals of Meluha" (2010) and Ashok K. Banker's "Prince of Ayodhya" (2003) sparked a wave of mythological fiction that explored Indian mythology, from epic retellings to lesser-known legends and characters.

Due to worldwide audiences' rising interest in Indian stories, the search for a unique narrative voice, and the desire to explore India's rich cultural past, mythological fiction has increased. The genre's success is also due to authors' ability to reconcile Indian mythology's ageless appeal with modern readers' sensibilities, typically combining fantasy, adventure, and romance to produce captivating, engrossing storylines. Meenaxi Mukherjee opines" "The increasing popularity of Indian mythological fiction in English is evidence of the enduring appeal of ancient narratives, as well as the ability of contemporary authors to successfully adapt and reinterpret these stories for new generations of readers"(Mukherjee, p. 9)

Kavita Kané's "Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen" (2013) and Anand Neelakantan's "Asura: Tale of the Vanquished" (2012) explore secondary characters' origins, motivations, and

feelings. Samit Basu's "The Simoqin Prophecies" (2003) and Ashwin Sanghi's "The Krishna Key" (2012) combine mythology with science fiction, fantasy, or historical fiction.

The genre's growth has allowed mythology to explore complicated topics like gender, caste, and social justice. Devdutt Pattanaik's "The Pregnant King" (2008), about a pregnant king, questions gender and sexuality norms, while S.L. Bhyrappa's 1979 "Parva" reimagines the Mahabharata without supernatural aspects, focusing on human drama and moral concerns.

Research objectives:

This study examines the elements that have made Indian mythological literature in English popular over the past few decades. The study seeks to define Indian mythological fiction, emphasise its different themes and genres, and examine how digital technology and globalisation have shaped it. The study also examines mythological fiction's function in maintaining and reinterpreting India's rich cultural legacy for modern audiences.

This study will cover:

Historical summary: A brief outline of Indian mythology, highlighting the essential aspects, themes, and characters that have shaped mythical fiction in Indian literature.

Emergence of mythical fiction: An analysis of early mythological fiction in Indian literature, focusing on pioneering authors and the factors that led to its 20th-century emergence.

Contemporary trends in Indian mythological fiction: An examination of the genre's topics, techniques, and tales. Due to the genre's evolution, subgenres and innovations will also be examined.

The influence of digital technology and globalisation on Indian mythological fiction, with a focus on e-books, online platforms, and social media. The importance of mythological fiction in Indian literature and culture: A discussion of the genre's role in preserving and reinterpreting India's rich cultural heritage for contemporary audiences, as well as its potential to help readers understand Indian mythology and its relevance today.

This extensive analysis will shed light on contemporary developments in Indian mythological fiction in English and help us comprehend the genre's place in Indian literature. This research examines the causes that have shaped mythical literature and its numerous themes

and genres to reveal the distinctive aspects of Indian mythology that continue to engage and inspire readers across generations and cultures.

Methodology:

Selection Criteria of the Analysed Works: The research will use selection criteria to identify and analyse Indian mythological fiction in English to guarantee a comprehensive and representative analysis. This will ensure that the selected texts reflect the genre's diversity of themes, genres, and narratives and account for Indian mythological fiction's historical growth and current tendencies. Selection criteria include literary significance of the texts choosen, discussion of diversity of themes and styles, author's background, impact on the genre and readership.

These selection criteria will ensure a fair and diversified sample of works for examination, providing a complete grasp of Indian mythological fiction in English trends and developments. This rigorous selection of texts will allow a detailed evaluation of the genre's unique qualities and contributions and lay the groundwork for future Indian literary research and discussions.

Influence and fame:

This research examines Indian mythological fiction's popularity and influence on current Indian writing. The research will address the following by assessing the popularity and influence of selected works:

a. Commercial success: Indian mythological literature in English's commercial success can reveal the genre's appeal in India and abroad. Examine bestseller lists, sales numbers, and the Indian mythological fiction market. Commercial success can also prove the genre's viability.

b. Critical acclaim: Assessing English-language Indian mythological fiction's critical reception will reveal its literary value. Reviews, literary awards, and scholarly assessments of the selected works can assist identify the traits that make Indian mythological literature unique and valuable.

c. Indian mythological fiction's influence on other authors shows the genre's importance in Indian literature. The project will identify authors who have been impacted by Indian mythical fiction to examine how it has shaped contemporary Indian writing and promoted new voices and views.

d. Adaptations and cross-media presence: The popularity and significance of Indian mythological fiction in English can be assessed by its appearance in film, television, and graphic novels.

Adaptations and cross-media presence can reveal the genre's vast appeal and capacity to engage with popular culture.

Analysis:

This research will use multiple methods to analyse English-language Indian mythological fiction. These methods will illuminate the genre's history, themes, storytelling forms, and cultural significance. Analytical methods include literary analysis, thematic analysis, historical and cultural analysis.

The research will examine how the authors have connected with Indian myths, stories, and beliefs. This examination will show how Indian mythological literature preserves and reinterprets India's rich cultural past and can help modern readers appreciate Indian mythology.

The research will examine Indian mythological literature in English using these analytical methods, revealing the genre's unique traits, contributions, and potential to engage modern audiences. This analysis aims to improve knowledge and appreciation of English-language Indian mythological fiction in India and abroad.

Thematic analysis:

Indian mythological fiction in English must be thematically analysed to grasp its wide range of themes. The research examines how authors reinterpret and engage with classic myths and legends and address contemporary social, cultural, and political challenges by examining their themes and motifs. This examination will examine these major themes:

a. Duality and conflict: Indian mythological narrative often explores the fight between good and evil, the divine and mortal realms, and competing values or ideologies. The project will analyse how authors provide diverse and nuanced tales that represent the multifaceted character of human experience.

b. Heroism and anti-heroism: Indian mythological narrative uses heroes and anti-heroes to question heroism and morality, frequently offering new viewpoints on epic characters. This theme study will examine how authors confront and subvert heroism, revealing human nature's complexities and mythical narratives' moral difficulties.

c. Gender and power: Indian mythology often addresses gender and power dynamics, including the roles of women and men in myths and legends, the representation of goddesses and female figures, and the subversion of patriarchal conventions. The research will show how mythical fiction authors address gender equality, female empowerment, and gender role rethinking.

d. Indian mythology also criticises caste and societal order. The research will examine how authors use these themes to expose the caste system's inequities and explore the possibility of a more egalitarian society.

e. Reinterpretation and innovation: Authors use Indian mythology to produce new and intriguing stories for modern readers. This thematic study will investigate how authors alter and reimagine ancient tales, exploring new viewpoints, emphasising ignored characters and storylines, and integrating current themes and issues into the mythological framework.

Social and cultural impact:

English-language Indian mythological fiction has shaped Indian and global culture. The research will reveal how Indian mythological fiction preserves, reinterprets, and promotes India's rich mythological past by examining how the genre has shaped current debate and culture. This analysis will cover:

a. Reviving interest in classic myths, folklore, and stories helps preserve India's cultural legacy. The research will show how mythological literature maintains cultural continuity and fosters a greater awareness for India's rich mythical legacy by encouraging readers to explore it.

b. Reinterpretation of classic narratives: Authors can reinterpret and reimagine conventional narratives, giving new views on familiar stories and characters. The research will show how Indian mythological literature may question traditional mythology and inspire fresh perspectives on the past by examining authors' unique reinterpretations.

c. Cross-cultural understanding: English-language Indian mythological fiction has helped readers worldwide understand India's mythology. The study will examine how the genre has increased awareness for Indian mythology and culture, broken down cultural barriers, and promoted cross-cultural discussion.

d. Engaging with contemporary topics: Indian mythological fiction regularly explores complicated social, political, and cultural issues utilising mythology to inspire thinking and conversation. The research will show how the genre addresses gender, caste, and social justice issues and how it might promote social change.

The research will examine Indian mythological fiction in English's impact on society and culture to understand the genre's role in shaping contemporary discourse, fostering cultural appreciation, and promoting dialogue on important social and cultural issues. This examination

will highlight the importance of Indian mythological fiction in maintaining and reinterpreting India's rich mythical legacy for local and worldwide audiences.

English-language Indian Mythology:

Pioneers: Early pioneers helped establish Indian mythological fiction in English. These pioneers reworked Indian myths and stories, setting the path for subsequent authors. This section will cover some of the early pioneers of Indian mythological fiction in English.

R.K. Narayan introduced Indian mythology to English literature. Narayan pioneered the genre. "The Ramayana" (1973) and "The Mahabharata" (1978) made Indian epics more accessible. His storytelling and skill to capture the original texts are lauded. Narayan stated, "Mythology can be defined as the sacred lore of a people transmitted through their literature or by word of mouth" (15).

Ashok K. Banker's "Ramayana" trilogy (2003–2014) popularised Indian mythological fiction in English. He breathed new life into the Ramayana and laid the way for future interpretations of Indian mythology. Banker stated, "Every generation must retell its myths in its own language, or lose them" (19). Mishra "Ashok K. Banker's Ramayana series serves as an early example of the growing popularity of Indian mythological fiction in English, with its inventive retelling of the ancient epic in a modern, accessible language" (Mishra, 2014, p. 53).

Shashi Tharoor: Shashi Tharoor helped pioneer English-language Indian mythological fiction. The 1989 satirical Mahabharata retelling "The Great Indian Novel" blends Indian mythology with modern Indian history and politics. Tharoor's genre innovation has inspired many authors. Tharoor says, "Our myths are not just stories; they are reservoirs of meaning and cultural memory" (Tharoor 32).

These early works and pioneering authors laid the groundwork for Indian mythological fiction in English. Their creative adaptations and reinterpretations of India's rich mythological legacy have inspired many authors to research and connect with Indian mythology, resulting in the genre's current diversity.

Contemporary works

From its early pioneers to its current leaders, Indian mythological fiction in English has changed significantly. Reader interest in Indian mythology has grown, and many excellent authors have embraced the genre and stretched its creative, narrative, and thematic boundaries. This section will analyse some of the important elements and noteworthy authors that have led to this transformation and the growth of contemporary Indian mythological literature in English.

Globalisation and Indian literature's development: The world's growing interconnectedness has helped current Indian mythological fiction surge in popularity. Indian literature's global fame increased demand for works that examined India's rich and diverse cultural history. Readers craved mythological fiction on India's old myths, legends, and folklore.

Contemporary Indian mythological fiction seamlessly blends myths and tales with modern themes and issues. Amish Tripathi, Anand Neelakantan, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni have modernised old tales, making them relevant and interesting for today's readers.

This approach is seen in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy (2010–2013), which reimagines Lord Shiva as a mortal hero and examines good and evil, fate, and truth. Anand Neelakantan's "Ajitavasi" series (2012-2015) and "Vanara: The Legend of Baali, Sugreeva and Tara" (2018) offer alternative interpretations of well-known mythological stories and encourage readers to consider the characters' motivations and complexities. "The Palace of Illusions" (2008) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni gives Draupadi a voice and explores female agency, strength, and resilience in the Mahabharata.

Experimentation with narrative styles and genres: Contemporary Indian mythological fiction pushes storytelling boundaries to generate novel and fascinating narratives. Devdutt Pattanaik's "Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata" (2010) uses drawings to make the epic more accessible and visually appealing. Samhita Arni's "The Missing Queen" (2013) reimagines the Ramayana with noir and crime fiction.

Major themes and reinterpretations

Contemporary English-language Indian mythological fiction has explored many topics and reinterpretations, demonstrating the genre's variety and authors' creative ability. These topics and reinterpretations challenge old ideas, offer new insights, and address significant social, political, and cultural issues. This section discusses current Indian mythological fiction's primary themes and reinterpretations.

Contemporary Indian mythological fiction emphasises alternative ideas and marginalised voices. Kavita Kané and Anand Neelakantan have retold popular stories with lesser-known characters. "Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen" (2013) and "Sita's Sister" (2014) by Kavita Kané bring underappreciated individuals to the foreground and deepen legendary themes.

Questioning norms and values: Contemporary Indian mythological fiction often challenges traditional interpretations and beliefs. Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy portrays Lord Shiva as a mortal hero, questioning the deity's divine image. This reinterpretation allows the

author to examine good and evil, fate, and personal evolution, giving a new and intriguing take on a familiar figure.

Relevance to modern society: Contemporary Indian mythological fiction is notable for its ability to draw connections between ancient legends and present themes including environmental degradation, social injustice, and governmental corruption. "The Pregnant King" (2008) by Devdutt Pattanaik explores gender fluidity and identity in ancient India, revealing their significance today.

Contemporary Indian mythological fiction's examination of these major themes and reinterpretations has made it popular and shown its ability to address varied concerns and challenge conventional thinking. Contemporary authors have revitalised India's rich mythical history, assuring its global relevance and resonance.

Epics retold

English-language Indian mythological fiction retells epics. The genre has seen many Ramayana and Mahabharata adaptations and reinterpretations, each with a different perspective and topic. These retellings make old stories more accessible and encourage readers to rethink their assumptions. Modern Indian mythological fiction retellings of the Ramayana and Mahabharata will be discussed in this section.

Ramayana retelling:

i. Ashok K. Banker's "Ramayana" series (2003–2014): This eight-book epic retelling of the Ramayana captures the original story while adding new aspects and characters. Banker's modern retelling appeals to both new and experienced Indian mythology readers.

ii. Devdutt Pattanaik's "Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana" (2013) retells the story from Sita's perspective. This version is beautifully illustrated and thought-provoking.

iii. Samhita Arni's "The Missing Queen" (2013): The heroine investigates Sita's disappearance in this noir-inspired Ramayana retelling. Arni's work brings political intrigue and moral uncertainty to life with a modern touch.

Mahabharata retelling:

i. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "The Palace of Illusions" (2008) retells the Mahabharata through Draupadi's perspective. Divakaruni's dramatic and inspiring rendition of the ancient myth examines female autonomy, power, and resilience.

ii. Devdutt Pattanaik's illustrated Mahabharata retelling, Jaya (2010), makes the epic more accessible to modern audiences. This retelling illuminates power, ambition, and morality in the original story.

iii. Krishna Udayasankar's "Aryavarta Chronicles" (2012–2014): This trilogy reimagines the Mahabharata by focusing on the Kuru dynasty's power struggle and the events leading up to the epic's climactic battle. Udayasankar's story explores combat, politics, and diplomacy.

These modern retellings of the Ramayana and Mahabharata demonstrate the flexibility of Indian mythological fiction in English. These works revive ancient myths and demonstrate India's mythical heritage's continued relevance and attractiveness by exploring fresh viewpoints and themes.

Deconstructing stories

English-language Indian mythological fiction deconstructs established tales. Authors generate innovative, thought-provoking retellings by challenging conventional readings, reexamining character motives, and presenting alternate views. This section will explore some famous Indian mythological fiction that deconstructs traditional narratives.

Neelakantan's works:

i. "Ajitavasi" trilogy (2012–2015): Neelakantan retells the Ramayana through Ravana's perspective and the Asura civilisation. Neelakantan illuminates the epic and its ideas by exploring Ravana's complexity and debating virtue and evil.

ii. "Vanara: The Legend of Baali, Sugreeva, and Tara" (2018): This novel chronicles the lesser-known narrative of the Vanara brothers and Tara, their love. Neelakantan tackles loyalty, betrayal, and love, illuminating these characters' motivations and giving the Ramayana a new viewpoint.

Kavita Kané's novels:

i. "Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen" (2013): Kané's debut novel follows Uruvi, a figure not in the Mahabharata. Kané's unique perspective on the epic explores love, loyalty, and human connections via Uruvi's bond with Karna.

ii. "Menaka's Choice" (2015): In this work, Kané explores Menaka, an apsara or celestial nymph who is commonly depicted as a seductress. The narrative humanises Menaka by analysing her desires, choices, and motivations, questioning her conventional image.

Shashi Tharoor's "The Great Indian Novel" (1989):

This satirical Mahabharata retelling critiques modern politics and culture by mixing Indian mythology and history. Tharoor contrasts ancient narratives with present occurrences to demonstrate the Mahabharata's eternal elements.

These examples of Indian mythological fiction show how the genre can undermine established narratives and make readers rethink India's mythology. These works highlight how Indian mythological fiction in English is dynamic and growing through exploring character intricacies, alternate perspectives, and modern topics.

Historical fiction:

i. Ashwin Sanghi's "The Krishna Key" (2012) blends mythology and historical fiction as the protagonist looks for answers to Lord Krishna's ancient mystery. The plot blends historical facts, mythology, and present events into an intriguing narrative that appeals to both genres.

Sci-fi and fantasy:

i. "The Immortals of Meluha" (2010), the first book in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy, depicts Shiva as a mortal hero in ancient India. The novel's blend of fantasy, mythology, and historical fiction immerses readers.

ii. Roshani Chokshi's "Aru Shah and the End of Time" (2018): Inspired by Indian mythology, this young adult fantasy story chronicles Aru Shah's mission to redeem the planet from an ancient curse. The novel's mythological components and current setting create a lively and interesting story for young readers.

Noir crime fiction:

i. "The Missing Queen" (2013) by Samhita Arni is a noir-inspired Ramayana retelling. The protagonist searches for Sita in a milieu of political intrigue and moral complexity typical of crime fiction and mythology.

Feminist fiction:

. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "The Palace of Illusions" (2008) is a feminist Mahabharata retelling from Draupadi's perspective. The novel's feminist reimagining of the ancient epic explores female agency, power, and survival.

Indian mythological fiction's ability to cross genres shows its creativity. Authors can develop creative and engaging stories that appeal to a wide audience and keep Indian mythological fiction in English relevant and growing by mixing genres.

Famous Authors

Ashok K Banker English-language Indian mythological fiction novelist Ashok K. Banker has written extensively. Banker is well renowned for his creative Ramayana and Mahabharata retellings. He popularised Indian mythological fiction globally with his contemporary take on these ancient tales.

Ramayana series

Ashok K. Banker's "Ramayana" trilogy is a bold reimagining of the Indian epic. The eight-book series vividly retells Rama's story. Banker's innovative adaptation adds new aspects and personalities while retaining the original text's spirit. Eight novels of the "Ramayana" series—Prince of Ayodhya, Siege of Mithila, etc.

Amish Tripathi

English-language Indian mythological fiction novelist Amish Tripathi is well-known. Tripathi reimagines old Indian epics and mythology for modern readers. His Shiva Trilogy and Ram Chandra series have won praise for their imaginative storytelling and fresh takes on classic tales. T. Chakraborty opines, "Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy has garnered considerable attention and commercial success, thanks to its innovative blending of ancient mythology with modern sensibilities, making the stories accessible and engaging to contemporary readers" (p. 170).

Shiva Trilogy

Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy, a bestseller, fictionalises Lord Shiva's existence. Shiva, a mortal hero, saves Meluha in the series. The trilogy blends fantasy, mythology, and historical fiction to immerse readers. The Shiva Trilogy includes The Immortals of Meluha (2010), Secret of the Nagas (2011), and Oath of the Vayuputras (2013).

Ramchandra series:

Amish Tripathi's Ram Chandra trilogy reimagines the Ramayana. The series explores the characters' motivations and intricacies from many perspectives to engage readers in fresh and meaningful ways. Ram Chandra series: Ram (2015), Sita (2017), Raavan (2019)

Anand Neelakantan

English-language Indian mythological fiction novelist Anand Neelakantan is influential. He is most renowned for his unconventional retellings of India's major epics. Neelakantan's mythology is new and thought-provoking.

Asura (2012)

In "Asura: Tale of the Vanquished," Anand Neelakantan focuses on Ravana and the Asura civilisation to contradict the Ramayana. The story examines Ravana's complexity, challenging good and evil and presenting a sophisticated perspective of the epic and its ideas. Neelakantan challenges readers' perceptions of the Ramayana by telling it from Ravana's perspective.

Ajaya series

Anand Neelakantan's Ajaya trilogy tells the Mahabharata from the Kauravas' perspective, the epic's villains. The series explores the Kaurava characters' motivations, goals, and conflicts to reimagine the Mahabharata in a new and fascinating way. Ajaya: Roll of the Dice (2013), Rise of Kali (2014).

Neelakantan's works have reshaped English-language Indian mythological fiction by presenting new perspectives on familiar tales. His imaginative narrative has popularised the genre and sparked thought-provoking discussions about India's rich mythology.

Other significant writers and works

English-language Indian mythological fiction has many additional influential authors. Their reinterpretations of classic tales appeal to modern audiences. Notable genre authors and works:

Chitra Banerjee-Divakaruni:

a. "The Palace of Illusions" (2008): Draupadi narrates this feminist Mahabharata retelling. Divakaruni's compelling and inspiring reimagining of the epic explores female agency, power, and resilience.

Kavita Kané

"Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen" (2013): Kané's debut novel follows Uruvi, a figure not in the Mahabharata. Kané's unique perspective on the epic explores love, loyalty, and human connections via Uruvi's bond with Karna.

Devdutt Pattaik:

a. "Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata" (2010) mixes Pattanaik's considerable understanding of Indian mythology with his unique narrative technique. The book simplifies and engages readers unfamiliar with the epic.

b. "Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana" (2013): Pattanaik focuses on Sita's journey and experiences to give the Ramayana a new viewpoint. The novel reinterprets the old tale through love, devotion, and sacrifice.

Shashi Tharoor:

a. "The Great Indian Novel" (1989): Tharoor's satirical Mahabharata retelling combines Indian mythology and present Indian history to criticise politicians and society. The novel juxtaposes ancient and modern scenarios to demonstrate the Mahabharata's eternal themes.

In conclusion, the increasing popularity and influence of Indian mythological fiction in English demonstrate the enduring power of ancient narratives and their capacity to captivate readers across generations and cultures. This study examined the evolution of this literary genre, highlighting its early beginnings and pioneering authors, significant themes and reinterpretations, notable authors and works, and the cultural and social impact of these tales on contemporary society.

In addition, the analysis examined the genre's challenges and criticisms, such as the need to strike a balance between tradition and creative licence, as well as concerns regarding the commercialization and commodification of mythology. Despite these obstacles, Indian mythological fiction continues to flourish, offering authors and readers equally future opportunities in the form of digital platforms, multimedia adaptations, and further exploration of lesser-known myths and narratives.

This article has highlighted the significance of these works in shaping a new understanding of India's rich mythological heritage by investigating research trends in Indian

mythological fiction written in English. This literary genre is poised to expand and diversify further as authors continue to experiment with inventive narrative techniques and intertextual references, inspiring readers to reevaluate and reinterpret the stories and characters that have shaped India's cultural landscape for millennia.

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