



## MYTHS AND MYTHICAL NARRATIVES BASED ON INDIAN EPICS THE RAMAYANA AND THE MAHABHARATA: A STUDY THROUGH THE REVISIONIST TEXTS

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### ABSTRACT



Bharat (INDIA) is an elite country with its valuable epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. They are so scintillating that modern iconic writers are fascinated with the Indian myths and present their work with the usage of various hues of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These epics overflow with vibrant characters. They present the social, moral, political, cultural and spiritual society of our country. Our Indian literature is too vast to understand every aspect of Indian mythology.

This paper is an attempt to explore some of the mythical narratives of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* as reflected in select revisionist texts. The epic *Ramayana* represents the period of *Tretayug*, when the atmosphere and the people were not as much toxic as they were in the *Mahabharata* era. The *Mahabharata* is the epic of belligerent characters and stories from the concluding period of *Dwaparyug*. Mythical narratives are based on the traditional stories of our Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads and many ancient stories of Indian mythology. In this paper, the researchers will take the help of some revisionist texts to explore further on some myths and mythical narratives.

The selected revisionist texts which will be taken for study are – Devdutt Pattanaik's *Sita*, Vayu Naidu's *Sita's Ascent* and Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni*. It is said that Valmiki's *Ramayana* is totally a mythical narrative of the life of Ram and Sita. Similarly, in the epic *Mahabharata*, Ved Vyas has created an ocean of myths and mythical characters with all the aspects of human life. Rework on these two epics by revisionist writers display their significant features and values in our lives.

**Keywords:** *Myth, Revisionist, Iconic, Epic, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads.*

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Indian mythology is a huge universe of paramount Gods, mesmerizing Goddesses, breathtaking incidents, angelic and majestic stories, spectacular kings and suave queens, ravishing *Apsaras* and generous *Gandharvas*, heavenly deities and toxic devils, cunning Rakshasas, elite Sages and chaste Sages' wives, magical and melodious hymns and chants, holy Rivers, shaded and fruitful trees, dense and lush forests and appealing Nymphs, predator animals and herbivorous creatures, tolerant Mountains, secure Sky and forgiving Earth, blissful Sun, soothing Moon, soulful atmosphere, mellifluous breeze, ascetic water, authentic rituals and paradigm customs, eminent cultures and, endless and prosperous Nature (*Prakriti*). Myth and mythical narratives are still relevant to Hindu society, but modernity is digging the root of this culture and civilization and educating our children on the basis of 'nothingness'. Nothingness means no spirituality and somewhere no morality. According to Devdutt Pattanaik:

"The world has changed in the past fifty years, especially with postmodernism questioning the very basis of Western science and highlighting the strategic bias in the colonial discourse. In the era of political correctness, the erstwhile colonies demand equal status for the beliefs.... In his incarnation as Rama, Vishnu embodies all that is virtuous in Hinduism: discipline, detachment, obedience, selflessness, faithfulness, fairness, poise, and dignity. His story is told in the epic Ramayana. When the epic is treated as a quasi-historical document, Rama loses his mythic power as the symbol of perfection and becomes a mere king. When the epic is seen as literature, Rama becomes a figment of poetic imagination and loses his spiritual splendor. The tension between Rama the historical personality and Rama the sacred symbol has come to the fore in recent times, as Rama has become part of the nationalist Hindu political rhetoric." (Pattanaik 2003:13)

The world and our lives are temporary; this is a bitter truth. The great Indian epics – *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* as well as various mythological narratives abound in twists and turns in the fates of gods and goddesses, kings and queens, demons and '*apsaras*' – that change the course of their lives completely. These mythical narratives highlight that

the lives of gods and goddesses, deities and asuras, *gandharvas* and *apsaras* are also not consistent with pleasure and prosperity. Therefore, many maestro writers are replenishing their delectable works with mythical treasures. Revisionist writers are engaged in discovering new stories, imaginary characters, some delirious instances and many more to serve the people world-wide with their own perception of life. Umpteen instances of mythical narratives can be witnessed in Hindu mythology and epics. The *Puranas* are full of the stories of wars between the '*Asuras*' and '*Devas*' for various reasons including control of the *Indralok* – the abode of the king of gods. The *Asuras* indulged in intense worship, for many years, to make the higher gods happy and to receive boons to become very strong and immortal just like the *Devas*. Knowing their dubious and ruinous intentions, gods generally gave boons in the form of, or camouflaged in, a curse. The 'Curse by Manasputras' on Jaya and Vijaya and the reasons for Vishnu's avatars is the basis of *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. *Vaikuntha Dham* is the abode of Lord Vishnu. According to the *Bhagavata Purana*, Jaya and Vijaya were the gatekeepers of *Vaikuntha Dham*. One day they saw four princes – Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara – who had come to meet Lord Vishnu. Actually, they were mere children, they were *manasputras* of Lord Brahma. Jaya and Vijaya stopped them at the door. Enraged at this behavior, the princes cursed the two that they would have to leave *Vaikuntha Dham* and be born as mere mortals on earth. Jaya and Vijaya were disheartened and appealed to Vishnu to reverse the curse. Vishnu told that the curse of the *Kumaras* or princes could not be reversed. Instead, he gave Jaya and Vijaya two options: either they could take seven births on earth as devotees of Vishnu, or take three births on earth as his enemy. They became very queasy. Unable to be away from Vishnu for seven births, Jaya and Vijaya chose to be born as his enemy. So, they were born and had three lives as *Hiranyakashyap* and *Hiranyaksha*; *Ravana* and *Kumbhakarna*; and *Dantavakra* and *Shishupala*. Mythical narratives about Vishnu are myriad and HE is the most delectable, intelligent, powerful, and in short, *Sarvagun-Sampanna* (one who is perfect and



master in all activities from all sides and at all levels) God in Hindu mythology.

In Hindu mythology, the game or concept of curse and boon is very much interesting. It depends on the mood of the sage or God. Any God or super power-holder *Rishi* (Sage) can do this miracle. As reflected in popular mythological tales, curses signify an appeal to some supernatural power to inflict evil on some other person or some group. They are the most undesirable things or situations that one is bound to suffer mostly because of a mistake he or she made or a crime that he or she committed. Seen from this perspective, boon then is just the opposite of curse and it means something extremely useful, helpful, desirable or beneficial – that which is asked for or granted – a benefit, a favor, a gift, a benefaction, or a blessing. Life-changing boons are not simple things; they “...require enough power from the power house of one’s penance...Someone, mostly, sages or gods, become happy because of the penance or good deeds of their devotees and give the boons. When boons are given Gods don’t discriminate...” (Swaminathan 2010)The epic *Mahabharata* abounds with instances of curses and boons. Interestingly, sometimes, a boon is converted into a curse, and a curse becomes a boon or a blessing in disguise.

Devdutt Pattanaik is a bestselling writer of today’s time. His way of writing is full of wisdom and intellectual integrity. He describes Vishnu thus:

*Vyishnavas* believe Vishnu to be the embodiment of the supreme divine principle. His blue color represents the ether that pervades all space. The serpent he rests on represents time, coiling and uncoiling itself with unfailing regularity. His eagle is the sun itself. Thus, Vishnu is the master of space and time and the lord of light. With his trumpet, he blows the breath of life and warns wrong doers to return to the path of *dharmā*, or orderly conduct. With his mace, he strikes those who do not listen. The rest are given the bright, fragrant, and dew-drenched lotus of material joy. Vishnu’s discus-shaped boomerang, a lethal weapon that can decapitate demons, is euphemistically called *Sudarshana*, which means “pleasing vision.” It maintains the rhythm of the cosmos and destroys negativity in perception so that the glass of life

appears half full, not half empty. Vishnu not only sustains life; he makes life worth living.” (Pattanaik 2003:8)

Various studies have showcased that myths and mythical narratives are still affective in the world. All religions have their own myths and mythical narratives according to their religious faiths and their Supreme power (God). In Hindu mythology, we observe a vast work effort on myths regarding supernatural powers. Revisionists have not explained the incidents of supernatural powers in their works. They have extracted only important incidents that mention about supernatural powers. *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* describe two most important and powerful *Yugas* – *Tretayug* and *Dwaparyug*. *The Ramayana* is the story of *Tretayug* and *The Mahabharata* is about *Dwaparyug*. The birth of Sita and Draupadi is also a myth but full of supernatural connotations. Sita is born out of earth, whereas Draupadi is born through fire. Devdutt Pattanaik describes the birth of Sita thus:

“Suddenly the King stopped. The furrow revealed a golden hand: tiny fingers rising up like a grass, as if drawn by the sunshine. Janaka moved the dirt away, and found hidden within the soft, moist earth a baby girl, healthy and radiant, smiling joyfully, as if waiting to be found.”(Pattanaik 2013:9)

In the same supernatural way, Draupadi is gifted by Holy Fire. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni has explained the birth of Draupadi through *Dhai Ma* in *The Palace of Illusions*:

“Behold, we give you this girl, a gift beyond what you asked for. Take good care of her, for she will change the course of history.” (Divakaruni 2008:4-5)

In ‘*Yajnaseni*’, Draupadi tells about her birth:

“My birth? But my birth was an exception. I was born nubile. The sacrificial alter is my mother. Yajnasena is my father. So, I am Yajnaseni.” (Ray 1995:5)

According to Hindu mythology there are many characters and incidents in Hindu epics that are mythical and who have unequalled supernatural powers. In the *Ramayana*, Shri Rama, Sita, Hanuman, Guru Vashishtha, Rishi Vishvamitra, Bali, Ravana, Meghnad, Kumbhakaran, Surpnakha, Taadka, Mareech, Ahiravana, and many other characters



attain some kind of super powers. They displayed or used their super power anywhere and anytime. It is said that Rama is the avatar (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu, then definitely He possesses extreme power and Sita is the avatar of Goddess Lakshmi, so she also has superpower. We can see her power when she lifts up the *Shiv-Dhanush* effortlessly. Devdutt Pattanaik describes:

"The bow of Shiva was so heavy that even a dozen men could not pick it up. So, it was hauled on to a cart and taken to the armory of Mithila where it was kept, admired from a distance by all the warriors who passed through the land....

"That's too heavy", said one of the maids, "no man can pick it up."

"Still it needs to be cleaned", said Sita, effortlessly picking up the bow with one hand and vigorously wiping its under surface with the other.

News of this amazing feat reached the King and the Queen.

"She is too strong. Who will marry her now? Wondered her mother with a smile on her face but concern in her heart. (Pattanaik 2013:46-47)

ayu Naidu is also fascinated with Sita. In her book *Sita's Ascent*, she accepts that, "the character challenges the author, as well as the reader. To follow a narrative through the remembrances of the people with whom she lived in the time of the epic. But this story is not merely about the perspectives of other people on Sita. I attempt to create a new story, a fiction, by drawing upon an age-old familiarity with the different characters of the epic." (Naidu 2012:172)

The epic *Mahabharata* is full of myths and mythical characters. But, in the context of the *Mahabharata*, we can say that the characters are more human than the characters of the *Ramayana*. In the *Mahabharata*, Shri Krishna has supernatural powers and there are many incidents that show his extraordinary powers. Though the birth of *Pandavas* and *Kauravas* are not natural, they are not stronger than Shri Krishna. Divakaruni speaks through Draupadi in her revisionist work:

"There were other stories about Krishna. How he'd been born in a dungeon where his uncle Kamsa had imprisoned his parents with the intention of killing him at birth. How, in spite of many prison

guards, he had been miraculously spirited away to safety in Gokul....How, in infancy, he killed a demones who tried to poison him with her breast milk. How he lifted the Mount Govardhan to shelter his people from a deluge that would have drowned them....People loved to exaggerate, and there was nothing like dose of the supernatural to spice up the drudgery of facts." (Divakaruni 2008:10)

But the works of revisionist writers on Hindu mythologies show the fanfare of feminism, gender, sex and sexuality, etc. In her book *Yajnaseni*, Pratibha Ray openly describes the inner belligerent conversation of Draupadi. Ray has presented the notion of a female character in a very strong and exquisite manner. She writes about Draupadi in the very end of her book, in the Afterword: "Draupadi is a challenge of womanhood, the embodied form of action, knowledge, devotion and power. Such a woman – who has faced torment, insult, mental and emotional dilemma like Yajnaseni Draupadi – has not yet been born on this earth." (Ray 1995:400)

*The Mahabharata* is an astounding and exalted epic of India. It is full of swashbuckling characters and adventurous incidents. In the mentioned books considered for this paper, we are directly taken to a time period when the '*Dwaparyug*' is going to end, and Draupadi explicates the story of her own life as also indirectly the larger plot of *The Mahabharata*. The narratives start with King Drupad's receiving a boon from the fire-altar in the form of *Dhrishtadyumna* and *Draupadi*. King Drupad was very happy at the birth of Draupadi because at her birth there was a prophecy: "This woman has taken birth to avenge your insult. She has appeared to fulfill a vow. By her, *Dharma* will be preserved on this Earth, *Kshatriyas* will be destroyed. She will be the destroyer of the *Kauravas*." (Ray 1995:8) Though it is a boon for King Drupad, but for Draupadi, it is a curse indirectly. Her life is destined to be overshadowed by war and bloodshed and makes us wonder if she could ever be happy with such a prophecy. In Ray's text, Draupadi reveals her true feelings at being the instrument of destruction, "From even before birth, I was destined to avenge my father's insult! I was going to be the weapon for preserving *Dharma* on this Earth and destroying the wicked". (Ray 1995:8) Veerappa Moily also, in *The*



*Flaming Tresses of Draupadi* records Ved Vyasa's foretelling of Draupadi's married life in a punctilious way. She is not directly cursed by anyone but sadly endures a cursed life. Right from her birth to her death she continues to live with humiliations and insults. It is said that Lord Shiva had granted a boon to Draupadi that she would regain virginity as soon as she takes a bath in the morning. Thus, she was able to become the wife of five men at the same time. Other than being married to five men, Draupadi has to undergo several humiliations after her marriage. The 'vastraharan' episode marks a classic twist in the plot of the epic. Through the epic *Mahabharata*, we can see that the society was still affected by gender, sex and sexuality biases. Till the end of her life she struggles to convert the curses of her life into a boon. Ray's Draupadi expresses very touchingly her inner thoughts of misfortune – "... Affection, love, sacrifice and surrender! If man suffers the consequences of his own deeds, then offering myself at the feet of five husbands for the sake of preserving Yudhishtir's *dharma*, why did I have to bear the burden of the whole world's mockery, innuendos, abuse, scorn and slander?" (Ray 1995:3) These words portray the piteous and cursed life of Draupadi. The epic also records the life of many other characters who lead similar kind of pathetic life. Characters like Kunti, Karna, Pitamah Bhishma, Amba (who becomes Shikhandi to take revenge on Bhishma Pitamah), all have a tragic life.

Kunti's life also moves forward in a particular direction as a result of the boon that she receives from Sage Durvasa. Moily has given a serious tone to Kunti's voice as she shares the secret with her daughter-in-law, Draupadi, about her boon and the curse on Pandu:

"I waded the prince of Hastinavati, Pandu, but he, a prey to a Curse was not to be blessed with children, and what could I do?

..... and later through the blessings of a Sage, I became a mother. Receiving a boon from Durvasa, Dharmaraja and Bhima, of a wolf's waist, and Partha were Born to me; and Madri was blessed with the birth of twins, Nakula and Sahadeva."

(Moily 2017:63)

Kunti's life is beset with sadness because of the curse that her husband has to live with, and then his death. Even though she gives birth to the *Pandavas* as a result of the boon of Sage *Durvasa*, the same boon causes the birth of Karna as well which brings her immense grief.

Caste and social values were balanced in *Ram-Rajya*. Nishadraj, Kevat, Shabari and other persons of lower caste have been referred in the *Ramayana* in a decent manner, but in the *Mahabharata*, the caste issue became very serious. The most famous examples are Ekalavya and Karna. Being a lower caste was a kind of curse for lifetime. A curse is a destroyer of a life. To prove this point, we can take the classic example of Karna's life. Karna was a Kshatriya, a great donor, one of the greatest warriors, scholar, and a truly divine soul. However, all his life he had to face lots of insults, injustice, humiliations, deceits, and sorrow because of being subjected to many curses. He faces continuous humiliations only because he is Adhirath's son and born and brought up in a lower caste family. He suffers such humiliation in public places too. There are a lot of examples of his cursed life. Guru Dronachaarya did not accept him as a student because he belonged to a lower caste family. Parashurama was a great scholar but he was against the Kshatriya clan. Karna disguises his identity and goes to him to gain the knowledge of *astra* and *shastra* (weapons) in the guise of a Brahmin. One day, Parshurama gets to know the true identity of Karna and gives him an awful curse that in the time of war he will forget all knowledge he had received from his Guru and in the battle of Kurukshetra – this prophecy or curse became true, and Karna died at the hands of Arjuna. So, the boon for Kunti becomes a curse for Karna. When Kunti reveals the truth of his birth to him on his birthday, Karna was shocked and his eyes brimmed with tears. Veerappa Moily has expressed Karna's views in a very poignant manner in his book. Looking at Kunti, Karna said,

"Mother, today you have  
Made your son free of the curse under  
which he was born; I feel  
Happy and grateful; like Panchali and  
me, all of us are ill-fated and cursed. What



anyone can do? The wheels of this tragic age are on the move and cannot be stopped.”

(Moily 2017:210-211)

According to mythical narratives the birth of *Kauravas* was not natural. Gandhari and Dhritarashtra were not blessed with children for a long time. Vyasa blessed Gandhari to be a mother of hundred sons – these sons were born from a lump of mass which Gandhari gave birth to after pregnancy of two years! Ved Vyasa cut them into pieces and put them into jars. With time they came out as sons of Gandhari thus making the boon come true. We know that Sri Krishna has divine powers and people treat him as God. On the last, the eighteenth day of the Kurukshetra battle, everywhere innumerable pyres flamed up and all the *Kauravas* were dead. Pratibha Ray describes the inner pain of Gandhari for her deceased sons:

“Overcome by grief for her sons, ma Gandhari is standing near the funeral pyres of her sons. Gandhari said in anger, O Krishna! However much you may justify yourself, it is you who are the cause of everything. If I have the slightest power of meritorious acts, then I curse you – as today the Bharat dynasty has been destroyed, similarly some day in the same way your clan will be destroyed.” (Ray 1995:385)

Woman as a mother will never change. Her womanhood, motherhood and nature are God-gifted blessings. Gandhari knew that her sons were on wrong path, still she cursed *Bhagavan* (God) Shri Krishna. Even though Gandhari's curse is baseless because the death of her sons is caused mainly due to their vices, yet her curse on Lord Krishna has its due effect. Highlighting on the immense power of curses, Mahesh C.R. says,

“The nullification of curse was almost never managed head on. It always had to be deflected, a workaround had to be sought. This required the knowledge of someone who exceeded the spiritual stature of the curser. If it was someone who had acquired some spiritual merit then a *Rishi* could figure out the workaround. If it was a *Rishi* who cursed then you had to head to a Godhead to redeem yourself. But the key aspect was this – an incarnate Godhead never cursed, never ever cursed. In fact, he took on any curse with equanimity, it was

the price he would pay...even with his life if need be in sticking to the laws of time.” (Mahesh 2009)

This idea regarding curses holds good in the case of Gandhari's curse to Lord Krishna, who being a god himself and knowing that it is an unjust curse, takes it with equanimity. The ego is the natural instinct of human beings. Yes, in the modern age it is said that a man has this power more than a woman. But according to Hindu mythology this instinct was natural for any living being. In *The Flaming Tresses of Draupadi*, Veerappa Moily has expressed the feelings of Amba and her curse to Bhishma, when Bhishma forcibly took the three daughters of Kishiraj, including Amba, to get them married to Vichitravirya, the son of Shantanu. Later, realizing that she was in love with Salvaraj, he freed Amba. But Salvaraj refused to accept her. Sage Parshurama then asked Bhishma to marry Amba since he abducted her. But Bhishma, bound by his vow, refused and therefore, Amba, devastated by the agony and pain, performed rigorous worship in order to get the power to become a man (born as Shikhandi), and later the ego of Amba became the cause of death of Great Bhishma Pitamah.

Our great epics, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* abound in stories and incidents of various wonders and miracles. Valmiki's epic represents certain classic examples of the conflicting notions of boons and curses. Blessings to Hanuman – one was given to him by Lord Brahma that no weapon could harm him. Another was given to him by Lord Surya that he would be able to attain the smallest or the biggest form. Dasharatha granted couple of boons to *Kaikeyi* during *Dev-Asur Sangram* (the war of gods and demons) when *Kaikeyi* had nursed the badly and deeply wounded Dasharatha. Out of gratitude, Dasharatha granted two boons to *Kaikeyi*, but she said that she would claim the same at an appropriate time. This resulted in Lord Rama's exile (*vanvaas*). The boon of Bali – Bali was famous for the boon from lord Shiva, according to which anyone who came before him lost half his strength to Bali, thereby, making Bali invulnerable to any enemy. Once, Ravana called Bali for a fight when Bali was doing his regular evening prayer. (*Sandhyavandanam*). He took Ravana by his tail and took him around the world.



Supernatural powers, curses and boons, blessings, deceits and scourge, chastity and purity, morality and spirituality, devotion and dedication, *Sadhana* and *Tapasya* (meditation for years), faith and trust, calm and peace, war and fight for *Dharma* establishment, incarnations of Gods and Goddesses in different forms to save the devotees and set the truth of this mortal human body and immortal soul as well as inventions and discoveries are an eminent and integral part of Hindu mythology. It is mentioned in the *Puranas* and epics that there are four *yugas* – *Satyug*, *Tretayug*, *Dwaparyug* and *Kaliyug*. The evidence of immortal souls and their soulful activities were very much logical and virtuous in the *Tretayug* and *Dwaparyug*, because of the chaste and truthful persons or *Rishis* (Sages) who lived for more than thousand years, and with their accumulated spiritual and mental powers were capable of giving blessings or curses. *Rishis* like Valmiki, Durvasa, Vishwamitra, Parshurama etc. are examples of some of the many sages that come in this category. It is a fact that in *The Mahabharata* the characters are more human because *Dwaparyug* was about to end. It is said that, now we are living in the *Kaliyug* and the prophecy was, that in *Kaliyug*, humans will become more and more characterless, selfish, undisciplined, immoral, materialistic. They would not be able to achieve the divine capabilities, and therefore, giving a boon/blessing or a curse has now got limited to mere words with no impact or effect.

We are talking about the Nuclear age in which we are living in the present time. There are so many countries that have such dangerous and life-threatening weapons that the world is on the risk of its end. But, according to mythical narratives the Hindu mythological epics of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are replete with numerous instances of the use of special and powerful weapons of mass destruction in the epic battles - weapons that are loaded with unimaginable destructive powers on a global scale, and even celestial scale. These weapons are invoked and controlled by the supernatural powers of the particular warrior by chanting of special *mantras*. Using the supernatural powers attained by *mantras*, these weapons can be launched by the mind, from the eyes, by words, or by a bow and arrow. The *mantras* transformed and controlled

the normal or simple arrows into the most powerful weapons. The *Sudarshan Chakra*, used by Lord Krishna is a boomerang type of special lethal weapon that returns back after incurring the damage to the desired target. The *Brahmastra* is one of the most powerful weapons that is comparable to the nuclear weapons of modern times. The *Pashupatastra* is incredibly destructive and capable of destroying the entire creation. The *Agneyastra* or *Agnibaan* (arrow) is capable of generating huge fires, the *Nagastra* (arrow of snakes) is capable of inflicting heavy damage. Even a single arrow transforms into cluster of multiple or numerous arrows that can kill many persons at the same time. There are various other weapons with specific capabilities and destructive mechanisms. All these are acquired or attained with the help of supernatural powers, that in turn are learnt or attained by rigorous *tapasya* and deep meditation. In order to attain and retain as well as wield these *astras* or supernatural powers, there are also specific conditions that need to be fulfilled. A warrior must have the capability and knowledge required to arm, control and disarm the supernatural weapons. This knowledge or power comes in the form of *mantras* and/or meditation. Some of these weapons are acquired directly from its presiding deity. Certain *astras* or weapons are given by the gods or deities but also require knowledge of *mantras* in order to use them properly and effectively. We also see that *Bible* and *Quran* are also full of such supernatural characters and powers. All religions of the world believe that a human has power to change oneself into supernatural power. It is totally dependent on the person how they can achieve it.

Hindu mythology is replete with instances of myths and mythical narratives. Various instances of boons, curses, miracles, wars, misunderstanding and so many other issues in these narratives showcase the change in the courses of actions of the characters as well as the plots of the stories. Our great epics, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, feature innumerable delicate, delectable and devastating mythical characters resulting in total transitions in the lives of the other characters. A close study of these epics reveals that in many cases the intended effect of a myth and imagination gets interchanged,



leading to drastic changes. Several instances are seen where the 'asuras' become powerful as a result of their *Tapasya* and that they have received unlimited and super powers from various gods. Similarly, there are many cases where the mythical powers given to someone did not yield in a positive result. Devdutt Pattanaik's hold on Indian mythology is very remarkable. In one of his remarkable books, in the introduction, he explains about myth thus:

"Everybody lives in myth. This idea disturbs most people. For conventionally myth means falsehood. Nobody likes to live in falsehood. Everybody believes they live in truth.

But there are many types of truth. Some objective, some subjective. Some logical, some intuitive. Some cultural, some universal. Some are based on evidence; others depend on faith. Myth is truth which is subjective, intuitive, cultural and grounded in faith." (Pattanaik 2006:xv)

He further says, "If myth is an idea, mythology is the vehicle of that idea. Mythology constitutes stories, symbols and rituals that make a myth tangible. Stories, symbols and rituals are essentially languages – languages that are heard, seen and performed. Together they construct the truths of a culture. The story of the Resurrection, the symbol of the crucifix and the ritual of baptism establish the idea that is Christianity. The story of independence, the symbol of the national flag and the ritual of the national anthem reinforce the idea of a nation state." (Pattanaik 2006:xvi-xvii)

## CONCLUSION

This paper is an attempt to give a close gaze at some of the instances to explore the impact of such myths in the longer run on the characters as well as on the plot of the narrative.

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