

Reimagining the fabric of Identity: Myth, Memory and Magic Realism in Chokshi's Novels

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to portray how culture acts as an important factor because of its alternative belief system. Mythology has played a significant role in the cultural traditions of societies because it encompasses a wide range of belief, stories and rituals. This research paper is on Roshani Chokshi's novel series of Pandava quintet which is based on amalgamation of magic realism, womanhood and memory based tale and intermingle of literature and mythology which shows how our gender identity and magic realism play crucial role in our past or present. There is something similar or recurring images or symbols which present repeatedly no matter it is Indian culture or British or something else. This Paper will be divided in three parts each with a few sections based on selected themes and explanations of works. This work based on novels of Roshani Chokshi, a contemporary author known for her richly woven tales, draws upon her cultural heritage and the genre of magic realism to create narratives that are both enchanting and profound. Chokshi's narratives reimagine the portrayal of womanhood, crafting multi-layered depictions of female characters who transcend simplistic binaries and use technique of magic realism, a literary genre that blends fantasy with reality which depicts the real world as having an undercurrent of magic or fantasy. Roshani Chokshi's works offer a layered portrayal of womanhood, where the reader's agencies interact in fascinating ways with concepts from myth, memory and magic. Her female characters frequently shun traditional roles within tale novels, instead taking charge of their own fates. Now the interweaving: Chokshi's female characters frequently overturn traditional modes of being both in myth and fantasy. These ladies are not damsels in distress or living puppets... they strive after their own fate. They have the authority to make significant decisions with a full sense of responsibility, and can remake their story again and again until it becomes new once more. They display a diversity of strengths--for example having a sharp mind--cunning physical personality and magical ability. This works show how women are empowering more, moving beyond stereotypical roles. Myth, memory and magic realism shaping Narrative and Identity in Roshani Chokshi's Novels.

Roshani Chokshi uses the story of Mahabharata for her novel Pandava Quintet in which she shows how she tries to reconcile a number of cultural myths which based on her memory that connect her South Asian ancestry and American Identity. This blending of cultural elements allows her to construct narratives that are accessible to a global audience while honoring the deep

cultural roots of Indian mythology. The aim of this paper is to bring together different but compatible perspectives which explore the paradoxical and contradictions in the contemporary cultural dynamics that are shaping our reality in turn taking form in new overlapping narrative cultural identities. For this purpose it becomes essential to comprehend the centrality of values in the determination of identities. Individuals construct their identities by relating their personal experiences to the larger cultural framework.

The reshaping of these narratives is common, particularly in diasporic or post-colonial contexts, where there is a need to renegotiate identity in changing environments. In this sense we can say that if we read any work of any writer which is governed by his cultural psychology framework that focuses on the relationship of identity, recognize the significance of an evolutionary approach .

Cultural narratives are powerful stories passed down through generations. The clash between ancient narratives and contemporary values often leads to tension in identity formation, as individuals reconcile inherited values with current social realities.

Globalization and digital media have expanded the ways in which cultural narratives are shared and transformed, leading to hybridized identities. A collective identity that is frequently associated with ethnicity, nationality, religion, or geography is formed by cultural narratives. By connecting their individual experiences to the broader cultural context, people create their identities.

Keywords: Cultural Narratives, Identity Formation, National Myths, Magic Realism, Culture And Traditions

Introduction-

This paper investigates an American author who is living in America but her roots belong to two cultures one is Indian from the father side and philippine from mother side whose portrayal of myth and tradition reflects and redefines the concept of national identity in a multicultural and globalized context. Roshani Chokshi is an American author, skillful combined use of magic realism with mythology and contemporary themes, and she has expertly woven folklore, mythology, and culture traditions into the narrative which play a crucial role in creating cultural tradition and national identity, which shows how these effects work in framing any national identity of a society. Cultural narratives and traditions are inevitable in shaping a nation's identity, serving as both a reflection of its past and a guide for its future. Roshani Chokshi employs various literary techniques and devices in her works which shows not only her own cultural background but also engages with broader themes of identity and community within mixed cultures. She portrays myth, mystery, and magic with the help of her childhood memory while drawing on a rich tapestry of allusion, dialogism and hybrid forms which articulates cultural identity and redefines the concept of national and tradition in multicultural and globalized context.

The complexity of identity may sometimes lead to oversimplification, where the richness of individual experience is overshadowed by broader cultural narratives. Why do we need to analyze this because it reveals how diasporic authors reinterpret Indian traditions, making them relevant across cultures while addressing universal themes of belongingness and resilience which are important to create national identities by using cultural narratives frameworks somewhere based on memory. It is about crafting National Identity through cultural narratives, traditions and using myths. In contemporary era

we can see most of the writers like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Devdutt Pattanaik, Sudha murthy, Amish Tripathi and Roshani Chokshi reinterpret the mythology and making their own narratives frameworks because it can be expressed in many ways like oral traditions based on memory, legends, folklore and historical cultural narratives which shapes a person's identity and community connections. This paper is all about how to create cultural national identity by using cultural narratives, traditions, memory and myths.

Cultural memory and reviving Hindu Mythology

Cultural memory serves as a collective repository of historical, mythological, and spiritual narratives that shape a nation's identity. Cultural identity is made by using culture which represents beliefs, customs and values shared among groups of peoples individually within a specific timeframe. The concept of memory serves as a lens through which explore various themes such as nostalgia, personal experience and the impact of historical events. Cultural memory is a framework which illuminates why, how and with what results certain pieces of information are remembered and explores the relationship between the past and the present. Hindu mythology is often perceived as a cultural unifier, transcending regional, linguistic, and caste boundaries.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel *Anandamath* is a seminal example of mythology inspiring national identity. The novel blends mythological motifs with the visions of an independent nation, reinforcing cultural memory and patriotism.

Roshani Chokshi revives Hindu mythology for a global audience, reinterpreting the *Mahabharata* an epic of India, in spite of being born and brought up in America. She reinterprets the Mahabharata through her modern fantasy series. Chokshi bridges the ancient and the modern by reimagining the Pandavas' legacy with the contemporary time period. Her work reinforces cultural identity by using these stories in a new form or in other words narrates the story according to her imagination.

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* narrates India's freedom struggle through a village lens, deeply infused with Hindu mythological references. Gandhi is portrayed as a modern avatar of Krishna, and the villagers' fight against colonialism mirrors the mythical battles between good and evil. This allegorical use of mythology invokes shared cultural memory and reflects the complexities of Indian society.

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* reimagines the Hindu god Shiva as a human hero and presents him as a mortal with extraordinary powers and adventures. Amish reinvent cultural memory for modern readers, emphasizing universal values like duty, love and courage.

Revive national identity through cultural memory, myth and narrative formation-

National identity is the sense of belonging of a person to a nation or state, and this notion is constructed by the common national and historical experience of a nation, which is expressed through that nation's culture, language, tradition, colours, symbols, music and history. Symbols, language and conventions are crucial elements in creating any culture and artifacts are fundamental units in shaping it into reality. This process frequently relies on cultural memory, myth and narrative formation as tools to reconnect individuals with their shared heritage. Through the reinterpretation and retelling of these memories, societies reconstruct their national identity. The discussion of national identity refers to several ways including collective memories, cultural rituals, selective myth remembering, culture industry and historical narratives. In detail these defined as cultural rituals can help people feel a sense of cultural identity and shared emotions, pass through generations. Shared recollections of a nation's

past can help determine what it means to be part of that and give the sense of continuity. Cultural memory, as Jan Assmann theorizes in *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, maintains a tether between what came before and now. It embodies rituals, texts, myths and symbols that buttress a community's sense of self. Cultural memory becomes a key resource for reviving national identity.

For illustration, post-colonial India reclaimed its identity by revisiting ancient texts like the *Vedas* and *Ramayana* or epics such as the *Mahabharata*. And leaders of independence including Subhash Chandra Bose, Mahatma Gandhi, emphasized symbols like the charkha to connect modern Indians with their pre-colonial heritage. This revival of cultural memory served not only as a tool of counteraction but also as a foundation for the modern Indian identity.

Traditions as Pillars of a National Identity

Traditions are material manifestations of culture, the string between then and now. Traditions transmit values and collective memory through rituals, festivals and practices across generations. Eric Hobsbawm in *The Invention of Tradition* (1983) argues that many traditions are invented and designed to fortify unity and nationality. Such constructed traditions find themselves within history, and use the cultural symbols available to them to legitimize their place within the national consciousness.

Some examples are the cherry blossom festival (hanami) given great attention in Japan. Though it has its roots in cultural history, the celebration took on nationalistic sentiments when introduced during the Meiji era, representing the transience of life and the unity of the Japanese people. Likewise, Bastille Day festivities in France not only celebrate the French Revolution but also enshrine the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity as integral to French identity. Cultural customs and festivals

Celebrating festivals and following traditions and customs by particular communities or particular religions which help in defining a collective identity by representing and celebrating a shared past. Festivals use cultural symbols which can express different types of meaning to communicate community identities to bring people together, develop a sense of unity and belonging.

For example the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are Indian epics which act as moral, ethical and ideals and play an important role in shaping national identity. These Indian epics serve as inspiration for cultural performances such as Ram Lila, which has been designated an intangible cultural treasure by UNESCO. Diwali is the biggest festival of India and celebrated all over India which represents themes of light victory over darkness and good triumphing over evil, spanning linguistic and regional barriers. By encouraging unity in variety, it fortifies national identity. Another example is Roshani Chokshi's *Pandava quintet* shows how the past intermingles with present to represent mixed identity. She used *Mahabharata* stories which shows how reinterpreted legends continue to appeal to young Indian audiences by fusing history with contemporary storytelling. She used a mixed cultural narrative to represent the mixed national identity for the contemporary generations.

Identity formation through Myths, Magic realism and Cultural Narratives

Myths and Narratives serves as a crucial tool for understanding cultural or national identity by providing narratives that individuals can relate to and incorporate into their personal stories. Narrative and myths are important to any nation which gives a collective memory. For example the Indian independence

movement gives us figures like Mahatma Gandhi create a unifying narrative of non-violence and self-determination. Identity formation is an important development task to establish self-government which plays a crucial role in defining and asserting control over their political, cultural, and social lives or exploring the process of options and choices, a sense of autonomy and belonging. In contemporary era writers used diasporic perspectives and hybrid identities for examples Roshani Chokshi as an author of mixed heritage, her narratives explore how cultural narratives and myths are adapted and reimagined in diaspora communities, forging new interpretations of national identity. For example, her portrayal of the Pandavas in a modern setting recontextualizes ancient myths for younger, multicultural audiences, emphasizing adaptability and resilience as key components of identity.

Traditions and myths share common stories that encourage a feeling of community, a sense of belongingness and shared identity by sharing tales of shared heritage, experiences, and victories or setbacks. These narratives are a mix of reality and fiction, and are often used to affirm national values and serve as symbols. Folklore can help establish national identity. In Roshani Chokshi's *Pandava Quintet*, magic realism operates as a style to mix mythical and magical images with the ordinary experiences of everyday life; imbued with cultural traditions and archetypes, yet preserving emotions. Emotionally authentic through her use of Indian mythology in contemporary or semi-modern settings, Chokshi fits very much the fundamentals of magical realism as seen in the works of writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Isabel Allende, and Salman Rushdie. Fairy tales in this sense are not just simple, superstitious concepts; but rather constitute an entire literary tradition built up from numerous strands of other literature below. Writing this series is something I do not believe that anyone else has dared to do. It is clearly a fantasy with myth, mystery and magic. The magic is made real: A crossbreeding of myth and history Hybridity in cultural identity political and existential implications. The use of Magic Realism in *The Pandava Quintet* by Roshani Chokshi blending myth with contemporary reality which brings Hindu myth into current events means she uses Hindu mythology in present-day society. The use of magic realism in Chokshi's works blends these two forms of literature and coalesces them. Protagonist Aru Shah lives in Atlanta, where she goes to middle school with dust bins overflowing onto the streets of Kathmandu; yet somehow realizes that she is a reborn (a secretly female) Pandava brother. This fusion of gods, like Indra, and creatures such as the rakshasa found its origin in movies or monk-splottation novels. Inside malls and museums these scenes approach classic magic realism where extraordinary stuff is taken for everyday matter.

Conclusion

These modern authors often reinterpret myths that show the cultural allurements and also reflect broader cultural shifts which show how national identity changes with time and place. For example we have an American author Roshani Chokshi, she is of mixed heritage, with an Indian Father and a Filipino Mother, which greatly influenced and inspired her writings. She used mythology and folklore which inspired and influenced dual culture blending elements. Her bicultural upbringing exposed her to a rich tapestry of stories, traditions and myths from both Indian and Filipino cultures; this perspective often features in her novels, blending elements of mythology, folklore, and magic realism. Her work *The Pandava Quintet*, draws heavily from Indian mythology; she redesigned stories from *Mahabharata* Hindu mythology with her imagination one of India's national epics, which forms a cornerstone of Indian culture and nation identity. She presents figures like the Pandavas in a modern, accessible way and emphasizes the adaptability of myths in preserving national and cultural heritage.

Above description distinctly shows that cultural narrative and traditions, whether they are based in oral storytelling, mythology or historical narrative, play a crucial role in forming identities of any nation. This paper explores that cultural narrative and traditions are linked in many ways, including through storytelling, epics and customs which continue to influence our societies and are linked to understanding oneself. In other words we can say that both are inseparable from each other. This paper explores and investigates the role of magic realism, mythical story or creatures and mystery functions in the series with traditional epic storytelling structures like Mahabharata. Chokshi reinterprets dharma (duty) and karma (consequences) in Aru Shah's journey which shows the balance of traditional moral lessons from Hindu mythology with modern ethical dilemmas. This paper builds a bridge between ancient Hindu mythology with modern storytelling and makes a foundation for defining a uniquely Indian or diasporic model of magic realism which contributes to a new form of South Asian magic realism. Chokshi's works reflect how myth, memory and magic reshaped identities through narratives. This work is a rich site for mythic reinterpretation and cultural commentary.

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