

Goddesses of the Mind: Reimagining Indian Feminine Archetypes through Contemporary Psychological Theory

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ABSTRACT

Psychology has historically drawn upon mythology to illuminate the architecture of the human mind. Sigmund Freud borrowed the Oedipus myth; Carl Jung articulated the collective unconscious through universal archetypes. Yet despite India possessing one of the world's most elaborate mythological traditions, its feminine figures remain peripheral in mainstream psychological theorising. This paper proposes a novel framework, the Indian Feminine Archetype Model (IFAM), which reconceptualises mythological women of the Indian tradition not merely as literary or religious characters, but as culturally embedded psychological archetypes that encode enduring patterns of resilience, agency, wisdom, transformation, relational functioning, and growth through adversity. Drawing on Jungian analytical psychology, narrative identity theory, self-efficacy theory, and feminist psychology, fifteen archetypal figures, including Sita, Draupadi, Kali, Saraswati, Radha, and Ahalya, are systematically mapped onto contemporary psychological constructs. The paper presents five domain specific archetype clusters and a five-stage process model of internalisation. Implications for counselling psychology, gender psychology, and cross cultural research are discussed.

Keywords: Indian Archetypes, Jungian Psychology, Cultural Psychology, Narrative Identity, Feminist Psychology

1. INTRODUCTION

Psychology has long recognised that culture and myth are not peripheral to human psychology, it is argued that they are constitutive of it. Sigmund Freud's formulation of the Oedipus complex borrowed its evocative power from Greek mythology. Carl Jung went further, proposing that myths are expressions of archetypes, primordial patterns inscribed in the collective unconscious, that shape personality, behaviour, and the individuation process across cultures and centuries (Jung, 1959). Modern narrative psychology continues this tradition, establishing that human beings construct identity through the stories they inhabit, and that culturally available narrative templates powerfully shape the self-concept.

Despite this rich theoretical tradition, a striking lacuna persists: Indian mythology, arguably one of the world's most capacious, symbolically layered, and psychologically rich traditions, has remained largely absent from mainstream psychological theorising. Figures such as Sita, Draupadi, Durga, Kali, Saraswati, Savitri, Radha, and Ahalya are among the most deeply embedded symbolic presences in the psychic life of hundreds of millions of people across South Asia. They are encountered in childhood stories, religious

rituals, festivals, art, cinema, and everyday moral discourse. Yet psychology has treated them as literary or theological objects, not as psychological ones.

This paper aims to address that omission. It is proposed that these mythological women are not merely characters from sacred narrative; rather, they are symbolic psychological models that continue to influence identity formation, resilience, leadership, moral reasoning, and emotional functioning within contemporary Indian society. Specifically, it is argued that each figure constitutes a culturally embedded psychological archetype in the Jungian sense, and that systematic psychological analysis of these archetypes can yield both theoretical insights and applied benefits, from theoretical modelling to culturally grounded counselling interventions.

The central question that animates this paper is therefore not 'Who was Sita?' but 'What psychological process does Sita represent?' Not 'Why is Kali worshipped?' but 'What dimensions of human psychological experience does Kali symbolise?' This reorientation, from mythological description to psychological theorisation, is the paper's primary contribution.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This paper is deliberately interdisciplinary, integrating six theoretical traditions that together provide a robust scaffold for an indigenous psychology of the Indian feminine archetype.

2.1 Jungian Analytical Psychology

Carl Jung's theory of archetypes serves as the theoretical foundation for understanding universal symbolic patterns in the human psyche. He described archetypes as innate, inherited structures of psychological experience that are expressed through myths, dreams, fairy tales, and religious traditions across cultures (Jung, 1959). The word *archetype* originates from the ancient Greek term meaning "original pattern." Jung identified several fundamental archetypes, including the Self, the Shadow, the Anima, the Animus, the Great Mother, and the Wise Old Man, noting that these symbolic patterns consistently appear across diverse and unrelated cultural contexts. According to Jung, these archetypes reside within the collective unconscious and are shared by all individuals, although their expression differs from person to person (Jung, 1959).

Among these archetypes, the Persona reflects the social identity individuals present during everyday interactions, whereas the Shadow encompasses repressed aspects of the psyche, including instinctual drives, sexuality, and other qualities that are often concealed or denied. The Anima and Animus represent the internalised feminine and masculine dimensions of the psyche, respectively: the Anima refers to the feminine image within the male psyche, while the Animus denotes the masculine image within the female psyche. The Self is considered the central archetype, symbolising psychological wholeness achieved through the integration of conscious and unconscious aspects of the mind.

Indian feminine archetypal figures closely correspond to these Jungian constructs while also extending them through their distinct cultural and psychological dimensions. For example, Durga embodies the empowered Anima, Kali personifies the transformative energies of the Shadow, and Saraswati reflects the Wise Old Woman archetype, representing the feminine expression of the Logos principle.

2.2 Narrative Theory

According to McAdams, personal identity is fundamentally narrative in nature, as individuals make sense of their lives by constructing an internalised and continually evolving life story that connects their past experiences, present circumstances, and future aspirations into a coherent whole (McAdams, 1993). Rather than viewing identity as a fixed set of personality traits or characteristics, McAdams proposes that

people develop what he terms a *personal myth*, a dynamic narrative that provides their lives with meaning, continuity, and purpose. This personal myth is continuously revised in response to new experiences, relationships, and life transitions, allowing individuals to maintain a sense of coherence despite changing circumstances. Consequently, narrative identity serves as the psychological foundation through which individuals interpret their experiences, understand themselves, and communicate who they are to others (McAdams, 1993).

Importantly, these personal narratives do not emerge in isolation but are shaped by the broader cultural environment in which individuals are embedded. Societies transmit shared myths, legends, religious narratives, and cultural symbols that function as culturally sanctioned story templates or canonical scripts. These collective narratives provide individuals with symbolic models of virtues, struggles, aspirations, and moral ideals that influence how they interpret their own lives. Through repeated exposure to these narratives, individuals selectively internalise themes, characters, and values that resonate with their lived experiences and incorporate them into their evolving self concepts.

Building upon this narrative perspective, the present study proposes that Indian women's engagement with and identification with mythological narratives represent a culturally scaffolded process of narrative identity construction. Mythological figures and stories are not merely religious or literary traditions but also serve as symbolic resources through which women negotiate questions of identity, resilience, morality, agency, and social roles. The central focus of this study is that greater exposure to and identification with these mythological narratives contribute to the development of narrative identity in ways that have measurable psychological consequences, influencing women's self concept, meaning-making processes, and overall psychological functioning.

2.3 Positive Psychology

Martin Seligman's PERMA model of well-being comprising Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (Seligman, 2011) along with the character strengths framework developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004), provides a useful lens for identifying the positive psychological qualities represented by mythological archetypes, rather than interpreting them in terms of deficits or psychopathology. From this perspective, Sita exemplifies resilience and meaning-making, Savitri reflects hope and perseverance, Saraswati symbolizes curiosity, wisdom, and creativity, while Lakshmi represents gratitude and flourishing. Adopting this strengths based perspective is a conscious methodological decision, emphasizing the adaptive and empowering dimensions of mythological narratives instead of viewing them through a pathology oriented framework.

2.4 Self-Efficacy Theory and Empowerment

Bandura's social cognitive theory conceptualizes self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute the actions required to attain specific goals, identifying it as a fundamental determinant of motivation, perseverance, and behavioural performance (Bandura, 1977). Interpreted through this theoretical framework, the archetype of Durga symbolizes an exceptional degree of self-efficacy, representing confidence, resilience, and the ability to confront and overcome adversity. From a social cognitive perspective, identification with such archetypal figures may strengthen individuals' own efficacy beliefs through vicarious learning, whereby observing or psychologically identifying with competent models enhances perceptions of personal capability. Bandura (1977) identified vicarious experiences as one of the principal sources through which self-efficacy beliefs are developed and reinforced.

2.5 Cultural Psychology

Cultural psychology posits that human psychological processes cannot be fully understood in isolation from the cultural contexts in which they are embedded. Rather than being universal and context-independent, cognition, emotion, identity, and behaviour are shaped by the symbolic systems, social practices, historical traditions, and institutional structures that characterize a particular culture. From this perspective, cultural narratives, myths, and shared symbols function as important psychological resources that influence how individuals interpret their experiences, construct meaning, and negotiate their identities. Guided by this theoretical perspective, the present study adopts a culturally embedded approach to the analysis of Indian feminine archetypes. It does not assume that these archetypes represent universal psychological constructs applicable across all cultures. Instead, they are conceptualized as culturally situated symbolic resources that derive their psychological significance from the historical, religious, and socio-cultural milieu of the Indian context. Figures such as Sita, Durga, Saraswati, Lakshmi, Savitri, and Radha have been transmitted through generations of literature, ritual, and collective memory, making them deeply embedded within the cultural imagination. Their influence on identity formation, values, aspirations, and behavioural norms emerges not despite their cultural specificity, but because of it. Consequently, this study examines these archetypes as culturally grounded psychological frameworks through which individuals within the Indian cultural sphere may interpret their experiences, construct personal meaning, and develop aspects of their narrative identity.

2.6 Feminist Psychology

Feminist psychology contributes a critical corrective to simplistic readings of Indian feminine mythology. The goal is not to reproduce a binary between the 'obedient woman' (Sita) and the 'rebellious woman' (Draupadi), a binary that is both psychologically reductive and historically inaccurate. Instead, following the feminist psychological tradition, different archetypes are treated here as representing different adaptive psychological strategies available to women across different situations, each with its own psychological strengths and costs.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper follows a qualitative, interpretive conceptual analysis design rather than a quantitative empirical one. The aim was not to test a hypothesis on a sample of participants, but to construct a theoretically grounded taxonomy of archetypes through systematic reading, thematic mapping, and criterion-based selection. The procedure is described below so that the basis for the fifteen-archetype taxonomy in Section 4 is transparent and reproducible in outline, even though the analysis itself is interpretive rather than statistical.

3.1 Sources

The reading corpus on which the taxonomy is based combined classical Indian textual traditions with contemporary feminist psychological retellings. Classical sources comprised the two Sanskrit epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and the principal Puranas in which feminine deities and mortal women feature centrally. These were read alongside two influential contemporary works that reinterpret these same figures through an explicitly psychological and feminist lens: Devdutt Pattanaik's *Sati Savitri: And Other Feminist Stories They Don't Tell You*, which reframes canonical Vedic, Puranic, and epic women in terms of agency, choice, and interiority rather than obedience or self-sacrifice; and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*, a first-person retelling of the Mahabharata narrated by Draupadi that foregrounds psychological motivation, ambition, and inner conflict not always made explicit in classical

renderings. Reading the same figures across both classical and reinterpreted sources allowed each archetype's psychological content to be triangulated rather than drawn from a single textual voice.

3.2 Procedure

The taxonomy was developed in four stages.

1. Extensive reading and candidate list generation. Across the sources described above, every prominent mythological woman encountered, whether goddess, queen, sage, or mortal, was noted. This produced an initial candidate list of approximately forty figures, including, in addition to the fifteen retained in the final taxonomy, figures such as Shakuntala, Damayanti, Rukmini, Satyabhama, Anasuya, Sabari, Urvashi, Menaka, Hidimba, Amba, Mandodari, Kaikeyi, Yashoda, and Ganga.
2. Interpretive mapping. Each candidate's central narrative arc was read against Jung's archetype categories (the Self, the Shadow, the Anima, the Animus, the Great Mother, the Wise Old Woman) and against established positive-psychology and social-cognitive constructs (resilience, self-efficacy, hope, wisdom, attachment) to assess whether a coherent, specific psychological process could be attributed to her, rather than a general narrative role such as 'wife' or 'mother'.
3. Criterion-based narrowing. The candidate list was reduced to fifteen figures using four criteria applied consistently across the list: (a) narrative centrality, whether the figure is a primary actor in her own story rather than a peripheral mention; (b) cross-textual and cross-regional recognition, whether she is known across multiple texts, regions, or media rather than a single localised passage; (c) clarity and richness of psychological mapping, whether her arc encodes a distinguishable psychological process rather than a diffuse or purely devotional role; and (d) non-redundancy, whether she contributes a domain or valence not already represented by a retained figure.
4. Domain organisation. The retained figures were then organised into the six psychological domains already established in the theoretical foundations (Resilience, Agency, Wisdom, Transformation, Relationships, Shadow and Growth), with two to three figures assigned to each domain to ensure balanced coverage. This produced the taxonomy presented in Table 1 and the domain framework presented in Table 2.

3.3 Reflexivity and Limitations of the Method

Several limitations of this method are acknowledged directly. First, the reading, mapping, and screening were conducted by a single researcher, without an independent second coder; no inter-rater agreement statistic is therefore reported, and the taxonomy reflects one reader's interpretive judgement rather than a consensus procedure. Second, although the reading corpus was broad, it was not exhaustive and privileged the Hindu Puranic and epic tradition together with two specific contemporary retellings; Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Dalit, and tribal mythological traditions were not systematically surveyed. Third, the method is qualitative and generative by design: its purpose is to produce a defensible taxonomy and theoretical model for subsequent empirical testing, set out in the research agenda in Section 6, and not to establish the validity or reliability of the taxonomy itself. Future work following this paper's research agenda, particularly expert panel review and independent qualitative coding, would address these limitations directly.

4. The Indian Feminine Archetype Taxonomy

Fifteen primary archetypes drawn from across the Indian mythological corpus, Vedic, Puranic, and Epic, are identified and mapped onto (a) the mythological core, (b) the Jungian symbolic register, (c) the contemporary psychological constructs encoded. Table 1 presents the full taxonomy.

Table 1. Indian Feminine Archetype Taxonomy: Mythological Figures Mapped onto Psychological Constructs

Archetype	Domain	Core Myth	Psychological Constructs	Jungian Symbol
Sita	Resilience	Exile and return in the Ramayana	Meaning-making, Post-Traumatic Growth, psychological flexibility	Anima, suffering and endurance
Savitri	Resilience	Wrestles Yama for her husband's life	Hope, grit, optimistic persistence	Anima, unconditional will
Kunti	Resilience	Single motherhood of the Pandava warriors	Maternal identity, sacrifice, adaptive coping	Magna Mater, bearer of heroes
Draupadi	Agency	Demands justice in the Kuru assembly	Assertiveness, moral courage, justice sensitivity	Shadow, righteous rage
Durga	Agency	Slays Mahishasura, protects cosmic order	Self-efficacy, leadership, protective aggression	Anima, empowered defender
Tara	Agency	Counsel to Vali and Brihaspati	Strategic intelligence, boundary-setting, autonomy	Wise old woman
Saraswati	Wisdom	Goddess of speech, learning and arts	Metacognition, curiosity, creativity, flow	Wise old woman, Logos principle
Gargi	Wisdom	Debates Yajnavalkya in the Upanishadic court	Intellectual courage, epistemic humility	Animus, Logos
Maitreyi	Wisdom	Renounces wealth for philosophical wisdom	Intrinsic motivation, purpose over material gain	Self, seeker of truth
Kali	Transformation	Destroys ego in the battlefield of Shumbha	Shadow integration, emotional authenticity, catharsis	Shadow, dark feminine
Parvati	Transformation	Tapas and marriage to Shiva	Identity reconstruction, ego transcendence, devotion	Anima, relational growth
Radha	Relationships	Bhakti union with Krishna	Attachment theory, intimacy, transcendent love	Anima, devotional love
Lakshmi	Relationships	Goddess of abundance and cosmic harmony	Gratitude, flourishing, abundance mindset	Anima, bountiful nurturer
Ahalya	Shadow and Growth	Cursed and redeemed in the Ramayana	Shame, forgiveness, post-traumatic growth	Shadow, ostracism and return
Gandhari	Shadow and Growth	Blindfolded queen, curse on the Kauravas	Moral commitment, anticipatory grief, cognitive dissonance	Shadow, self-denial

These fifteen archetypes are not exhaustive, as the Indian mythological tradition is vast, but they constitute a representative and theoretically tractable starting set. Several observations are immediately apparent. First, the archetypes span the full range of psychological valence: most are primarily positive, several are complex (encoding both strength and cost), and two are explicitly redemptive, figures whose power lies in surviving shadow experience. Second, the Jungian symbolic register is richly varied, suggesting that Indian mythology provides representations of the collective unconscious that are in no way impoverished

relative to the classical Western corpus on which Jung himself drew. Third, the psychological constructs mapped onto these figures are empirically tractable: resilience, self-efficacy, grit, hope, shame, forgiveness, and affect regulation all have established measurement instruments, enabling empirical hypothesis testing.

5. The Six-Domain Archetype Framework

Rather than organising the analysis character-by-character, which would produce mythology with psychological annotations, the analysis is organised domain-by-domain, grouping archetypes by the primary psychological territory they inhabit. This produces a psychological architecture rather than a mythological catalogue, and generates domain-specific research questions. Table 2 presents the framework.

Table 2. Six-Domain Indian Feminine Archetype Framework With Theoretical Bases and Research Questions

Domain	Figures	Psychological Theories	Key Strengths	Research Question
I. Resilience	Sita, Savitri, Kunti	Post-traumatic growth, meaning-making, acceptance, psychological flexibility	Endurance, coping, hope	Do these archetypes buffer against depression?
II. Agency	Draupadi, Durga, Tara	Self-efficacy, assertiveness, empowerment theory	Moral courage, leadership, autonomy	Do they predict leadership emergence?
III. Wisdom	Saraswati, Gargi, Maitreyi	Metacognition, epistemic humility, curiosity, creativity	Insight, openness, growth mindset	Can archetype identification predict intellectual curiosity?
IV. Transformation	Kali, Parvati	Jungian shadow integration, ego death, identity reconstruction	Emotional authenticity, reinvention	Does Kali identification relate to affect regulation?
V. Relationships	Radha, Lakshmi	Adult attachment theory (Bowlby and Ainsworth), positive psychology	Love, gratitude, flourishing	Does Radha identification mediate relationship satisfaction?
VI. Shadow and Post-Traumatic Growth	Ahalya, Gandhari	Shame resilience, forgiveness theory, moral disengagement	Redemption, moral growth	Is Ahalya identification linked to shame recovery in survivors?

The domain structure reveals the breadth of psychological terrain the Indian feminine tradition covers. It encompasses virtually the full spectrum of positive psychology's concerns (resilience, wisdom, flourishing, meaning), Jungian psychology's concerns (shadow, transformation, individuation), and feminist psychology's concerns (agency, autonomy, justice). This comprehensiveness reflects the extraordinary sophistication with which Indian mythology approached the phenomenology of female psychological experience.

6. The Indian Feminine Archetype Model (IFAM)

Drawing together the theoretical foundations and the archetype taxonomy, the Indian Feminine Archetype Model (IFAM) is proposed, a process model describing the psychological mechanism through which mythological exposure translates into measurable psychological outcomes. The model unfolds across five stages, as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. The Indian Feminine Archetype Model (IFAM): A Five-Stage Process Model

Stage	Process	Mediating Variable	Outcome
1. Exposure	Contact with mythological narratives via stories, rituals, media	Cultural embeddedness	Familiarity with archetype
2. Identification	Affective and cognitive resonance with an archetype	Self-archetype congruence	Archetype internalisation
3. Internalisation	Integration of archetype into self-concept and narrative identity	Identity narrative elaboration	Stable self-schema linked to archetype
4. Activation	Archetype activated during stress, challenge or role transition	Situational cues and cultural salience	Archetype-guided appraisal and coping
5. Outcome	Measurable psychological functioning	Mediators: self-efficacy, hope, identity	Well-being, resilience, leadership, empowerment

6.1 Key Propositions of IFAM

The IFAM generates several testable propositions.

1. Identification Effect. The degree to which an individual identifies with a specific archetype will positively predict the psychological outcomes associated with that archetype (for example, Sita identification predicting greater resilience and meaning-making under adversity).
2. Domain Specificity. Archetype effects will be domain-specific rather than general: Saraswati identification will predict intellectual curiosity and epistemic humility more strongly than it predicts resilience; Sita identification will show the reverse pattern.
3. Mediation. The relationship between archetype identification and psychological outcomes will be mediated by the relevant psychological mechanisms, including self-efficacy, hope, identity narrative elaboration, or emotional acceptance, depending on the archetype.
4. Cultural Moderation. Archetype effects will be moderated by cultural salience and embeddedness: individuals with stronger cultural identification with the Indian mythological tradition will show stronger archetype identification effects.
5. Intervention Leverage. Narrative interventions that deliberately prime specific archetypes will produce measurable shifts in the associated psychological outcomes in experimental settings.

7. Research Agenda

The framework articulated here opens a systematic programme of empirical research. Table 4 presents the proposed research agenda across four phases.

Table 4. Proposed Research Agenda for the Indian Feminine Archetype Framework

Phase	Objective	Method	Expected Contribution
Phase 1	Conceptual validation of archetypes	Expert review, focus groups, thematic analysis	Refined archetype definitions and qualitative profiles
Phase 2	Survey study: archetype identification and psychological outcomes	Cross-sectional survey, N is greater than or equal to 500, structural equation modelling	Evidence of archetype-well-being and resilience links
Phase 3	Experimental and longitudinal study	Archetype narrative intervention, pre-post and follow-up	Causal evidence; intervention design for counselling
Phase 4	Cross-cultural comparison	Comparative survey across India, diaspora and non-Indian samples	Universality versus cultural specificity of archetypes

8. DISCUSSION

8.1 Novelty and Contribution

The contribution of this paper is twofold. Theoretically, it proposes the systematic mapping of Indian feminine mythological figures onto contemporary psychological constructs, producing a taxonomy that is both culturally grounded and empirically tractable. Clinically, it proposes archetype specific narrative counselling techniques that extend culturally sensitive therapy practice.

The paper also makes a deeper epistemological argument: that Western-derived psychological theory, however valuable, is insufficient as a universal psychology, and that richly elaborated non Western symbolic traditions represent an underutilised resource for psychological theory building. India's mythological tradition is not merely a cultural artefact to be explained by psychology; it is a source from which psychology can itself learn.

8.2 Clinical and Counselling Applications

Beyond its theoretical contributions, the IFAM has direct clinical relevance. Culturally grounded narrative therapy, the use of a client's own cultural stories to scaffold therapeutic change, is an established and evidence-supported approach. The Indian feminine archetypes represent a largely unexploited resource for culturally sensitive counselling with Indian women. Table 5 illustrates how specific archetypes might anchor specific therapeutic applications.

Table 5. Counselling Applications of Indian Feminine Archetypes: Archetype-Specific Narrative Techniques

Archetype	Clinical Issue	Narrative Technique	Therapeutic Goal	Empirical Basis
Sita	Grief, trauma, displacement	Narrative reframing; exile as journey, return as mastery	Meaning-making; resilience activation	PTG theory [10]
Draupadi	Assertion deficits, injustice	Role-play of assembly scene; assertiveness scripting	Voice activation; moral courage	Social learning [1]

Kali	Suppressed anger, shadow	Expressive art and journaling; shadow dialogue exercises	Emotional authenticity; affect regulation	Jungian shadow work [4]
Savitri	Hopelessness, depression	Hope-story construction; grit narrative exercises	Future-orientation; volitional hope	Hope theory [9]
Ahalya	Shame, self-blame, stigma	Forgiveness letter; redemption arc journaling	Shame resilience; self-compassion	Shame resilience [2]
Parvati	Identity crisis, transitions	Life chapter mapping; identity evolution story	Integration of changing self-concept	Narrative identity [6]

The case for culturally grounded interventions is strong. Research consistently shows that therapeutic efficacy is enhanced when the therapeutic narrative is culturally resonant for the client. An Indian woman who has grown up immersed in the story of Ahalya may find a forgiveness intervention anchored in Ahalya's narrative arc more personally meaningful, and therefore more therapeutically potent, than an equivalent intervention drawn from Western literary or psychological traditions.

8.3 Limitations and Cautions

Several important cautions accompany this framework. First, the archetypes identified here reflect a primarily Hindu Brahminic mythological corpus, which does not exhaust India's extraordinary cultural diversity. Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Dalit, and tribal traditions contain their own rich feminine mythological resources that deserve parallel analysis. Second, mythology can be interpreted in multiple ways: Sita can be read as an archetype of resilience, but also as a figure whose mythological fate has been invoked to justify patriarchal control of women's bodies and movement. The paper's positive psychological reading is deliberate and theoretically justified, but it must not be used to aestheticise women's suffering. Third, all empirical propositions advanced here remain to be tested: the IFAM is a theoretical model, not an established empirical finding.

8.4 Future Directions

Future work should extend this framework in several directions.

- to masculine archetypes within Indian mythology, developing a parallel framework for Indian feminine engagement with masculine mythological figures;
- to comparative mythology, examining how Indian archetypes relate to Jungian and other cross-cultural archetype systems;
- to digital and media dimensions, examining how contemporary Bollywood, OTT media, and digital culture are transforming archetype representations; and
- to intergenerational transmission, examining how archetype stories are transmitted from mothers to daughters and what psychological consequences this produces.

9. CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed that women of Indian mythology are not relics of a pre-modern symbolic world, but psychologically alive presences, archetypes that continue to shape identity, resilience, moral reasoning, leadership, and emotional life in contemporary Indian society. The Indian Feminine Archetype Model provides a theoretical framework for understanding this influence, and the counselling applications provide a pathway for harnessing it in the service of psychological well-being.

This paper aspires to go further, asking whether Indian mythological women can be reconceptualised as culturally embedded psychological archetypes whose internalisation measurably influences identity, coping, and well-being in contemporary Indian society. The answer this framework advances is yes, and the time to test that answer empirically is now.

"The divine feminine is not a relic of the ancient past. She is a living psychological resource, waiting to be reclaimed."

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