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Revival of Magic and Myth in Literature

Abstract

Literature has transformed significantly today. Stories are conveyed through single liners, and emotions are depicted through sets of punctuation marks. Novels are divided into chunks of daily episodes for TV. The widening canvas of literature has not only seen newer formats; it is also witnessing newer themes and trends.

One of these trends is revival of magic and myth. Magic and fantasy have the capability of enhancing the horizon of our thoughts. It tickles the mind of the reader and brings to him chill and thrill.

This paper looks into the reason for the development of using magic and supernatural in the world of logic, and deliberates on its future. The paper is based on information culled out of internet and by having discussions with intellects. The paper is intended to give some perspective towards this approach. It leaves scope for further research.

Key words: Magic, Mythology, Literature, Modern Trends

Introduction

The sphere of literature has widened significantly. It is not only the genres but also the medium that has changed. The theme, the plot, the setting, the characterization, the dialogues and the denouement have all changed. The black and the white of the yesteryears are replaced by the grey of today.

The wider sphere of literature incorporates the electronic and web media, where the written word is spread in a visual medium that requires magnificence to catch maximum eyeballs. An average household does not appeal to the eye as much as a royal background; magic world gives more opportunities to provide fantastic settings. This is one of the reasons for the revival of magic and mythology in literature.

Magic and Myth in Novels

In the absence of any predator, man is devoid of the thrill of being alert for survival. After the development of logic and penetration of science, man thought of himself as invincible. When he got stuck with a problem that had no scientific solution, he worked on it relentlessly and assumed that he had found the nearest possible answer. During this period some logical minds went back to believe in the supernatural. During the mid-twentieth century writers started pouring in magic and myth into their art. Readers appreciated the effort as they could rest their problems on the belief that there was someone who knew it all and who could take care of them. Magic and myth came back as a belief in the unknown and also as a theme in different forms of literature.

The Lord of the Rings Trilogyⁱ by J. R. R. Tolkien from England, published during mid-twentieth century; was a great success. It has been translated into 38 languages and has been rendered as a set of movies.

During the end of the twentieth century a British author J. K. Rowling came up with a series of 7 books that are better known as Harry Potterⁱⁱ series. Not only did she start a new trend of bringing magic and fantasy into novels, she also made reading popular amongst the tweens. The 7 books were adapted into 8 part movies better known as Harry Potter Seriesⁱⁱⁱ by Warner Brothers. These movies made record sales and started up a new trend in business called movie merchandise, where wands and capes and cups and cages were sold to eager fans of Harry Potter- the protagonist of the series.

In 2005, Stephenie Meyer, an American writer and film producer, came up with a vampire love story, better known as the *Twilight Series*^{iv} which became a rage all over the world. The book was also adapted into a series of movies-*Twilight Saga*^v that were well received by the audience all over the world. Magic and superstition ruled.

India was not far behind. We had our own Devdutt Pattanaik working upon our Vedic literature, calling himself the Chief Belief Officer of the Future Group; who made mythology popular in Indian literature. Devdutt brought in a trend of presenting lesser known stories from Indian mythology through the web during the fagging years of the twentieth century. His books include *Myth = Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology*^{vi}, *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata*^{vii}, *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana*^{viii}, *Business Sutra: An Indian Approach to Management*^{ix}, etc. Devdutt used the web, the print and the electronic media to voice his stories, as did many others of his peer group.

Amish Tripathi came with a unique idea of popularizing his *Shiva Trilogy*^x through web based promos^{xi} that were articulated in the best possible manner. The books sold as hot-cakes. The Indian market was craving for more.

We had Anandan Neelkantan with books like *Asura- Tale of the Vanquished*^{xiii}, *Ajaya- Roll of the dice*^{xiii}, *Ajaya- Rise of the Kali*^{xiv} and others; all capturing the stories from Indian mythology and serving them with a modern flavor.

Pratibha Ray's *Yagnaseni*^{xv}: *the Story of Draupadi*, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*^{xvi}, Utkarsh Patel's debut novel *Shakuntala: The Woman Wronged*^{xvii}, Saiswaroopaa Iyer's novel *Abhaya*^{xviii}, Kané's *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* are other books that have borrowed heavily from mythology and are trending well in the market.

Magic and Myth in Movies

Magic and mythology offers great opportunity to the visual medium. *Juman ji*, *Harry Potter series*, *Twilight series* and *The Lord of the Rings series* have already been covered. We also witnessed *Avatara*, the super hero movies, *The Life of Pi* and other movies that did extremely well.

Indian cinema has always leaned on myth and fantasy for content. *Sampoorna Ramayan*, *Jai Santoshi Maa*, , *Bajrangbali*, *Jajantram Mamantram* to name a few have grossed well in the box office.

Ghatotkatch, *Dashavtar*, *Arjun*, *Bal Ganesh*, *Hanuman*, *Krishna aur Kans* etc. are modern movies that depend on animation and are high on demand.

Magic and Myth in TV Shows And Web

The world of magic has the potential to attract young and old alike. Young get free sanction to watch this content on TV, tablet or internet. In India many TV shows and many channels are feeding on just magic and myth. Shows like *Jai Hanuman*, *Siya ke Ram*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Paramavtar Srikrishna*, *Devon ke Dev- Mahadev*, *Naagin* etc. are thriving.

The Games of Thrones, The vampire Diaries etc. are game shows that depend on magic and are extremely popular on the web.

Reasons For Revival:

Man is the only animal alive that has no predators. It is this feeling of security that snatches the thrill of being alive, the thrill of being alert for survival. Magic that is beyond logic and mythology that is capable of creating fantasy and fear is one way of bringing back the joy of being alive amidst fearsome factors.

The eerie sensations created out of audio-visual medium are powerful. They make an impact on the viewer. The world of imagination is replete with the best of imaginable scenic pleasures. Magic and myth give ample space to experiment in this regard. Thus the freedom to showcase one's wildest dreams on screen is also a reason for the revival of magic and myth in literature.

In the age of information explosion it is easy to conjure up a story that is based on facts and figures, but often it gets too drab. It is fantasy that initiates elaborate thinking, analysis, visualization and creativity. The whole brain is at work when we write, read, create or view magic or myth.

Future of This Trend

This trend is here to stay as it has a very useful purpose. It not only provides food to imagination it also opens the reader to a whole new world of fantasy. Sometimes this fiction works as a cathartic experience where the reader sympathizes with the characters and finds a release from his own problems.

Mythological literature is replete with eternal values, doesn't preach and is a powerhouse of success stories. It stands as limitless resource for management lessons and motivational speeches. It has all the ingredients required to keep the modern reader engrossed. Violence and sexual advances have been dealt in these stories in a restrained manner which reduces stress and gives a feeling of well-being.

Conclusion

In the absence of larger families and bigger social circle, people today are confined to their own rooms and sometimes only to their couches. In such a world where information is provided at the touch of a button, where logic is free flowing and available; magic and myth become a means to relief from daily stress. Elaborate scenes can be written and pictured that gives the audio-visual and print medium a new meaning.

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