

Between Reverence and Resistance: Mythological Women, Cultural Memory and Feminist Reinterpretation

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Abstract: Mythological women are a paradoxical and a lasting presence in the cultural imagination of India. They are held in respect as expressions of moral rectitude, religion, sacrifice and manliness - and also as examples of deeply gendered conflicts and ideologies that created and maintained the stories that shaped them. The characters like Sita, Draupadi, Kunti, Gandhari and Mandodari have left the epic world and become strong part of the Indian cultural memory as a result of many centuries of its transmission through epics, rituals and collective memories. But their meanings are not carved in stone and not agreed to by all.

This paper reflects on how mythological women and cultural memory are in relationship to one another, how they can be re-interpreted in a feminist way and how they are not a passive repository of inherited traditions, but an active space of negotiation, contestation and renewal. Cultural memory is the ability of a society to preserve and transmit together, in texts, traditions and symbolisms, its collective accounts, values and identities thus keeping the past alive in the present. The research draws on feminist criticism, cultural memory studies and mythological hermeneutics to examine the manner in which contemporary reinterpretations is revisiting the canonized representations of epic women so as to bring the voices of the marginalized to the fore, to resist the patriarchal assumptions, and foreground an alternative form of agency for women.

This study investigates the question, "How does the reinterpretation of mythological women, from a feminist perspective, recalibrate cultural memory and question cultural mythological assumptions based on the gender? The paper employs both textual and interpretive analysis of primary female characters from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata to explore how women have been deconstructed in literature, culture, and scholarship as idealized archetypes and reconstructed as layered, intricate experiences that raise issues of identity, autonomy, justice, and power.

The paper also holds that the significance of mythological women is their extraordinary potential to provide new meanings in different historical and cultural context. The feminist re-readings of the text do not to reject tradition or simply celebrate it, but rather open extent to historic and critical conversation touching the inherited myths, turning them into the space of reflection, criticism, resistance. Through the shifting roles of these feminine in the evolution of sacred tales, the researcher has attempted to show how mythology helps to mold and themselves be molded by the changing conceptions of gender.

Overall, the paper suggests that mythological women occupy a space of fertility between reverence and resistance, memory and reinterpretation, in which to reimagine the woman subject imaginary in a traditional and modern context. The results add to the broader discussion of gender, cultural identity and narrative authority, and also underscore the ongoing relevance in the contemporary day of day discourse about the myth..

Keywords: Mythological Women; Cultural Memory; Feminist Reinterpretation; Gender Studies; Indian Epics; Sita; Draupadi; Kunti; Gandhari; Mandodari; Feminist Criticism; Cultural Identity; Narrative Resistance; Mythological Hermeneutics.

Introduction

Myths play a significant role in the development of cultural identities, communal narrative and social norms in all civilizations. The old tales that pass through the epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata have been of great significance in the Indian context for centuries in building moral consciousness, religious sentiments and social norms. These stories continue not only to shape our current notions about right and good, family and gender, but they are also an active, on-going, cultural structure. One of these enduring figures are mythological women able to take on such a narrative function that their story transcends the context from which it emanates, and, therefore, they can become strong symbols in the cultural memory of the society [15].

Cultural memory

Cultural Heritage is the joint process of conserving and communicating societies' common stories, ethics and identities, or symbols, using texts, traditions and symbols, and bringing the past into the present.

From ancient time's characters like Sita, Draupadi, Kunti, Gandhari, Mandodari and such have been revered as the epitome of an ideal woman. They have been documented in the oral tradition, religious ceremonies, literary works, and plays, educational programs, and popular media. In the course of this transmission, these women have now become part of cultural memory – ideals of devotion and sacrifice, of patience, loyalty, motherhood and moral strength. Their stories remain as guides to ethical frameworks which generations interpret when they consider their social responsibilities and their interpretation of the gender.

There are, however, many contradictions to this belief of these figures. Their stories are often celebrated because of their goodness, but they also often highlight situations and circumstances excluded, suffer and are marginalized, and agency that is curtailed in Patriarchal social structures. While these are generally remembered for their fidelity and self-giving, there are times they resisted, were ambivalent, clever, and even independent in thought, feeling and attitude. Consequently, the role of the "mythological woman" serves a *sil Hrvatska* (European Union) in a remedial role by reinforcing gendered expectations and aspirations, while at the same time providing them with beauty and a platform of admiration. This *aporia* provokes several questions about cultural memory, especially around the mechanisms of memory reinforcing a certain meaning and excluding others [7].

With the growing influence of feminist scholarship, there has been recent interest in rethinking "mythology" through a critical lens once more. In the eyes of feminist theorists, mythologies are not merely a presentation of cultural values but, are the place of the construction of power relations, the organization of social hierarchies and the re-production of gender ideology. Interrogating canonical representations, feminist reinterpretations aim to make visible silenced voices and question dominant readings and assumptions, often forgotten in feminist contexts. However, and increasingly, contemporary researchers and authors studied mythological females as inescapable persons that deal with power, identity and resistance.

Furthermore, advances in the field of cultural memory studies have caused the study and perception of social engagement with the past to change. Concurrently, the field of cultural memory studies has matured and rethought what it means to study and understand a society's engagement with the past. Cultural memory is the collective process of preserving and transmitting a society's common stories, cultural values, beliefs and identities, both expressed and embodied in texts, rituals, symbols, and their social practices. Cultural memory differs from historical memory, which tends to be more

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factually oriented, in that it does not only revolve around the reconstruction of the past, but also around the ongoing re-interpretation of the past from the present. Armed with this outward view, the interpretation of mythological women is not simply a matter of extracting static historical information from the narratives; these female figures are moving cultural icons, whose sense shifts during different historical and cultural eras.

Finally, the relationship of cultural memory and feminist reinterpretation is important to understand how the remaining significance of mythic women in today's world is understood. In recent years, reinterpretations, reimagining in literature, critical analyses and scholarly research on epic women consistently confronts topics concerning gender equality, independence, justice and representation. Such re-interpretations are not at any point in opposition to traditional narratives, but in conversation or dialogue with the inherited narratives, ask questions about the traditional; thereby questioning conventional premises and while endorsing continuity in culture. In this way, mythology is transformed into a place for memory and critique to exist side by side that can facilitate new conceptions of female subjectivity and social identity [6].

The need for this study comes from the realization that in spite of the numerous changes made in society today, the mythological stories keep influencing the attitudes of today towards gender. Technological societies have seen great demographic improvements in women's status in political life, education, ideology and social rights, but there are traditional mythological expectations that still shape the cultures of the feminine. Therefore, the study of memory and reinterpretation of the mythological women is imperative in the context of the relationship between the cultural narrative and gender construction. The connection to broader debates relates to representation, identity and social change, as explored in the feminist views presented here that offer alternate readings to the conventional ones.

The first goal of this research is an attempt to explore the re-construction of the cultural memory and the displacement of gendered assumptions in India's epic narratives in the context of feminist interpretations of mythological women. The aim of the study is specifically to first analyse the traditional representations of Sita, Draupadi, Kunti, Gandhari and Mandodari, second to discuss their role in the cultural memory, and in the third analysis the new readings by the feminists changing their meanings. This investigation will illustrate that cultural memory does not simply "preserve," it also "reinterprets" and "negotiates."

How feminist readings of "mythic" women and hidden processes of India's epic traditions transform the cultural memory and problematize the gendered assumptions and stereotypes? The question of the other side requires an interdisciplinary answer where the elements of feminist criticism, theory of cultural memory, and the hermeneutics of mythology must be combined [5]. This research method facilitates an understanding of how the operation of a narrative works as a cultural tool that contributes to the creation and re-creation of the socio-cognitive concept of gender, power and identity.

That in sum, this paper suggests there exists a fecund space between veneration and revolt for mythological women. Their importance cannot just be historical and cultural but is also dynamic with the ability to create new meanings in a changing context of society. The study sheds light on the ongoing relevance of epic women in modern discourses on gender justice, cultural identity and narrative authority by drawing on how the interplay between mythology, memory, and feminist reinterpretation continue to shape the narratives of women in this Afghan family showcasing the functionality of the epic female tradition. Through exploring the interaction between mythology, memory, and feminist re-interpretation, the study illuminates the ongoing relevance of epic women in contemporary discussion on gender justice, cultural identity, and narrative authority, highlighting the functional nature of the epic female tradition in this Afghan family [14].

Novelty and Contribution

This research paper is a unique contribution to the literature because, in one work, it integrates three interrelated, but frequently distinct concepts: mythological women, cultural memory and feminist interpretation. Though many studies have been made of the female characters of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the literary characterization, the religious symbolism, and the feminist critique were hitherto studied separately. This research suggests a framework for the discussion of how the feminist reinterpretations actively reinforce the construction of cultural memory and are changing the meaning of the mythological women in contemporizing culture.

What is new about this work is not so much the idea of cultural memory itself, but the concept of cultural memory as something active, in a process, rather than a repository for inherited traditions. The focus is not on the maintenance and continuity of myths as social forms but on the shifting nature and construction of collective memory in relation to constantly evolving social, political and intellectual contexts. The research positions feminist 're-readings' in the context of cultural memory, indicating mechanisms and means by which alternative readings contribute to the public understanding of gender, identity and power.

Further, important contribution is made in contrasting depictions of several women of mythology namely, Sita, Draupadi, Kunti, Gandhari and Mandodari. Instead of focusing on a specific character, the study shows earlier repeated ways of worship, marginalizing, resisting and reinterpreting through various epic stories. This comparative perspective provides a deeper understanding into the construction and contestation of the subjectivity of women in Indian traditions and culture.

By supporting feminist reinterpretation, the study also advances feminist scholarship by clarifying that it is not simply the act of attacking or challenging a narrative of patriarchy. Rather, it is a positively oriented interaction with tradition that gives new freedom of interpretation to the mythological texts. The study supports the use of feminist readings to retain the cultural importance of epic women but also criticizes the restraining "Codes" for women and recuperates lost aspects of female agency.

The work also falls under the category cultural studies as it highlights the relevance of mythology in today's society. It documents the undeniable fact that mythological women continue to be pertinent in the cultural realm, whether religious contexts, literary or not, or in the educational sector, popular culture, media and public debates about equality of the sexes. The formation of an idea of mythology through this lens puts it on the agenda of contemporary debates on identity and social justice.

The following are the main outcomes of this research:

It starts to create an interdisciplinary approach that integrates concepts of feminist criticism, cultural memory theory, and mythological hermeneutics.

It critically analyses the ways in which popular memory has maintained and refracted images of mythological women through history and today.

It illustrates the ways in which traditional epic stories contain implicitly coded gender presumptions which are challenged by feminist reinterpretations of the stories.

It compares the role of Sita, Draupadi, Kunti, Gandhari, and Mandodari to find out the various types of agency and resistance of women.

It makes the claim that the mythological female is a dynamic cultural form that undergoes dynamic development and will undergo new definition in relation to new social situations.

It renders an important contribution to the current debate of gender and literature and culture studies, as a result of pointing the relationship between the authority of the narration, collective memory and female subjectivity.

As part of these contributions, the study contributes to the ongoing research on mythology and gender and provides some new insights toward a processual understanding of the negotiation and contestation of cultural memory and its regeneration. Overall, the research shows that the position of mythological women in the field of the study is a kind of niche, in which the meeting place of tradition and transformation can be studied, whereby the presence of mythological women is central as a key figure in understanding and studying the discourse of gender in the current era.

Related Works

The study of mythological women has become an important field now in the context of literary studies, cultural studies, gender studies and religious studies. Traditional myths have been used over the years to carry on the values and moral principles of a community and as important points of reference for culture articulation across generations. Epic traditions in India hold great significance for their existence as women symbol represent the ideals of goodness, sacrifice, devotion, motherhood and moral power. Their worldview, their narratives have been passed down in sacred texts, oral history, art, education and popular culture; they are alive! As a consequence, women that are mythological have actually been actually a cultural cliché, where their significance surpasses their story beginnings.

In 2024, W. I. Orbih et.al. [12] proposed the typical account of mythological stories mainly focused on the exemplary female characters of the epics. Often, females were seen as role models of ideal womanhood to whom the role models of society and morals were supposed to adhere. Connotations emphasized loyalty, patience, obedience, compassion, endurance and self-sacrifice. These images played a role in the development of cultural expectations of gender roles and social responsibilities. Others subsequently repeated the myths and carried them forward through culture, thereby linking mythological women with norms surrounding gendered perception—be it in the domestic sphere as in the arena—and bringing them into the world. Others then repeated the myths again and carried them on through culture into the world and associated them with norms surrounding feminine perception, whether in the domestic sphere or in the arena.

In this classic schema, female characters were widely seen and interpreted in terms of relationships with men. Rather than describing themselves as independent people who had their own aspirations, interests or views, their identities were usually established as wives, mothers, daughters or queens. These depictions upheld the value of women in terms of their moral importance, but they often ignored issues of autonomy, agency and choice. As a result, a conventional understanding emerged, and this deepened the prevailing disciplinary and cultural norms of women's place in society. Consequently, conventional interpretations tended to perpetuate theoretical frameworks of the proper role of women in social structures.

In 2024, K. Killian et.al. [8] suggested the popularity of gender-based scholarship (which was new) brought new approaches to the study of myths because it challenged the old ones, and took a new look at the ideological bases that support epic portrayals. The focus of these approaches was that mythological text resonated with and reveals a social and cultural context in which it was created and shared. Such a view would deem narratives about women not just a descriptive representation of a single event, but also a cultural representation that convey specific assumptions about gender, authority and power. The result of such analyses was a rethinking of the passive imagery that female characters were as recipients of time and place.

Feminist criticism brought about a big change in the field of the study of mythological women. The attempt to gloss over female pain and sacrifice, and the emphasis on what was female, was called into question by feminist stances. The primary concerns of these perspectives were the use of recovering marginalized voices, recognizing gaps or silences in the body of texts and discussing the effects of the patriarchal framework on how women were represented. Feminist readings did not rely upon a authoritative or definitive interpretation of the text, but rather looked to see the possibility of other interpretations and overlooked aspects of female experience.

As seen in feminist analysis, the interpretation of mythological women began to shift to a character who is multidimensional, can negotiate, resist and has self-determination [11]. Their actions were reinterpreted in a "social, structural framework of constraints and power". Previously meaningful actions that involved obedience were rethought as multifaceted reactions to challenging situations. Likewise, expressions of grief, anger, of silence and of endurance were considered as important types of agency that allowed us to understand the emotional and political aspects of women's experiences. The representations reinterpreted these to create new possibilities of female subjectivity within the context of mythological traditions.

A growing interest in the connection mythology and collective memory is part of a series of parallels that developed inside cultural studies. Cultural memory is the mechanisms by which societies have been, are being and will be able to memorize, transmit, and reinterpret shared narratives, values and identities over generations. This view highlights how memory is not just a repository of memory or a relic of past events, but is constantly being selected, adapted and reconstructed. Myths are stories that hold a special place in the cultural memory as they offer symbolic frameworks for understanding themselves and their histories.

According to research in the area of cultural memory studies, mythological personae are continuously changing their meanings according to the varying social contexts and conditions. Traditional stories can be reimagined and retold to reflect evolving cultural attitudes and circumstances [10]. Old stories can be retold and reinterpreted in light of new cultural attitudes and concerns. This process continues in an ongoing, dynamic way, allowing mythological women to have an ongoing relevance in culturally changing values and practices of gender relation. Thus cultural memory isn't an archival system, it's a system of making meaning that evolves.

With the rise in popularity of 'modern' reworkings, the meaning and role of the mythic female character has also changed. Epic stories are told in a myriad of different ways in contemporary literary works, theatrical productions such as plays, movies, and television adaptations. The retellings can reimagine the story, usually with a female main character(s) expressing thoughts, feelings and motivations that are largely missing from traditional versions of the tale. These can question the dominance of men in the narration of stories and provide chances to include in new ways the voices of women.

One major aspect of modernist scholarship is to look at the mythological women not just as to symbols of good character, but also as resistance for the part they play in the community. This focus is on their ability to challenge convention, stand up to injustice and negotiate oppressive social environments. Overt acts of rebellion are not the only ways people show resistance, however—sometimes resistance is shown subtly, in ways that involve negotiating, resilience, making ethical choices, and having personal conviction. These interpretations unveil the complexities of woman's experience, and question the easy times reading of submission versus empowerment.

The overlaps between also mythology and identity and social transformation have been investigated recently. But mythological women still carry sway today when it comes to discussions on

gender equality, women's rights and cultural portrayal. These stories are often called upon when talking about leadership, family expectations, social justice and independence. This has led to the reinterpretation of female myths being closely related to other concerns supporting inherited cultural norms and offering more inclusive meanings of gender [9].

While there has been significant research on the internet and online teaching and learning, there are significant gaps in the existing research. Various research works deal mainly with either with literary analysis or with feminist critique, but not with culture memory as a sort of scapegoat, as an integral part of the process that shapes and transforms interpretations. Likewise, there are some approaches that analyses each character on their own; they do not investigate patterns between several characters from a myth. Therefore, further studies that combine the study of mythology, memory and feminist reinterpretation into an integrated analysis to explain changes over time in collective understandings of gender are needed.

In 2025 J. Choza et.al. [1] introduced the present research aims to explore the co-dependency of the mythological female role and cultural memory and feminist re-interpretations. The study examines selected figures of women from the epic tradition in India, and how modern times reinterpretations challenge traditional aspects of representation and reconstruct collective memory. The paper aims to illustrate that rather than being 'passively received' as cultural symbols, mythological women are rhetorical points of meaning (production) whereby societies negotiate identities, power and gender. Their continued proliferation attests to cultural memory's ability to travel and change for the better, yet at the same time holding onto tradition, making a place where reverence coexists with resistance amid different notions of female subjectivity.

PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on qualitative interpretive approach which is a study that can be done by taking help from feminist criticism, cultural memory theory and mythological hermeneutics to examine how feminist reinterpretation of mythological women influences and gives a new shape to cultural memory and how it brings the challenge of gendered assumptions in Indian epic tradition. The method was developed in order to study how mythological stories have been changed from previous representations to the current feminist discourse. The framework is built around Sita, Draupadi, Kunti, Gandhari and Mandodari, each of whom are mythological characters who have specific narratives that can be explored at a particular site for the understanding of the linkages between memory, identity and gender [2].

The methodological process starts with collection and analysis of primary mythological texts of Ramayana and Mahabharata. To explore dominant discourses of womanhood, themes of sacrifice, obedience, devotion, motherhood, loyalty and endurance are explored in these narratives. This research then examines the ways in which these representations have been memorialised in cultural practices and media, such as through the use of language, rites, schools and work, and popular culture.

To systematically evaluate narrative transformation, a symbolic interpretation index is developed. The relationship between traditional representation and feminist reinterpretation is expressed as:

$$M_1 = T + C \quad (1)$$

where M_1 represents cultural memory formation, T denotes traditional narrative representation, and C represents collective transmission.

The persistence of mythological narratives across generations is represented as:

$$P = \frac{N_t}{N_0} \quad (2)$$

where P is preservation strength, N_t is narrative continuity over time, and N_0 is the original narrative structure.

The study further evaluates the influence of feminist reinterpretation on inherited narratives through:

$$F = M + A \quad (3)$$

where F denotes feminist reinterpretation, M represents memory reconstruction, and A denotes female agency.

The interaction between cultural memory and reinterpretation is modeled as:

$$R = C \times F \quad (4)$$

where R represents narrative renewal, C is cultural memory, and F is feminist reinterpretation.

The methodology emphasizes the identification of marginalized voices within epic narratives. Textual segments associated with silence, exclusion, resistance, and autonomy are categorized and analyzed. This process allows the study to recover perspectives that are often overshadowed by dominant patriarchal interpretations.

To measure interpretive expansion within contemporary discourse, the following relationship is used:

$$E = \frac{V_r}{V_t} \quad (5)$$

where E represents interpretive expansion, V_r is recovered voice representation, and V_t is traditional voice representation.

The framework further investigates how cultural meanings evolve through continuous reinterpretation:

$$C_m = T_m + F_r \quad (6)$$

where C_m denotes contemporary memory, T_m is traditional memory, and F_r represents feminist revision.

Narrative agency among mythological women is analyzed using:

$$A_g = D + R_n \quad (7)$$

where A_g represents agency growth, D denotes decision-making capacity, and R_s represents resistance strength.

The study evaluates the relationship between gender representation and cultural influence using:

$$G_i = \frac{A_g + E}{2} \quad (8)$$

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where G_i is gender influence and A_g and E correspond to agency growth and interpretive expansion respectively.

The transformation of collective understanding is represented through:

$$T_r = C_m - T_m \quad (9)$$

where T_r denotes transformational reinterpretation.

The cumulative impact of feminist readings on cultural memory is calculated as:

$$I = \sum_{i=1}^n (F_i \times M_i) \quad (10)$$

where I is interpretive impact, F_i represents feminist interventions, and M_i denotes memory components. Finally, the overall narrative reconstruction model is expressed as:

$$N_r = T + C + F + A \quad (11)$$

where N_r denotes reconstructed narrative understanding.

The suggested approach uses the thematic coding and interpretive categorization. The devotion, sacrifice, loyalty, resistance, autonomy, justice, motherhood, and identity related themes for the selected narratives are mined from those stories. These themes are then correlated with feminist interpretations of the contemporary to gain an understanding of changes in meaning and representation. The methodology uses a comparative approach to exposure and illustrates how cultural memory is a dynamic process and does not merely contain inherited values.

The study also taps into the hermeneutic interpretation from which the symbolic aspects of mythological texts will be understood. Every female character is broken down in terms of a socio-cultural context, and within each context is reconfigured and read through the lens of contemporary considerations of gender and identity. This approach helps to show the dynamics of reverence and resistance in the presentation of mythological women.

Moreover, this methodology examines the role of contemporary adaptation of literary works, school versus academic writing and public discourse in reconstructing collective memory. The study tracks the evolution of the role-of-the-woman figure in myth and magic and in modern feminist literature, highlighting the interplay between tradition and transformation. In this, one can understand the extent to which the myth is still absorbed within the context of our present perceptions of gender, as well as the extent to which it continually reworks itself into a critical re-interpretation.



FIGURE 1: PROPOSED METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR FEMINIST REINTERPRETATION OF MYTHOLOGICAL WOMEN

A methodological framework for this research is proposed as shown in figure 1. It starts from the selection of mythological women from the Indian epics. The Extraction of a textual and symbolic content is then used to establish relevance narrative elements. Gender, power, agency and resistance will be systematically interrogated in the Analysis phase, through a feminist approach and cultural memory lens. The themes identified are then connected to process of Memory, in which cultural meanings are collectively upheld and carried forward on to future generations. These stagnated meanings are retrieved through the process of Reinterpretation immersed in current feminist discourse, allowing re-activated voices and alternative viewpoints. Lastly, the Evaluation stage focuses on how such reinterpretations reimagine the cultural memory and defy the gendered biases in traditional narratives. This model helps to examine the relationship between myth and memory and feminist thinking.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

The results show that Indian mythological women are complex figures that inhabit two planes; on one hand, they are institutions of India's cultural memory and on the other, they are at once the objects of the present day's reinterpretation. The case of the Sita, Draupadi, Kunti, Gandhari and Mandodari leaves no doubt that traditional tales have maintained these women primarily in terms of ideals of sacrifice and loyalty, devotion and moral endurance. The conceptualizations have, however, been generally broadened by feminist interpellations to focus on agency, autonomy, resistance, and the individual subject. The results suggest cultural memory is not some kind of legacy, which is passed down from one generation to the next, but a negotiation process with ongoing reconstruction of meaning. This shift is seen in literary criticism/histories, scholarly research, and popular culture today, where mythological women are more apt to be protagonists than the characters of traditional stories [3].

There were significant differences in the traditional and feminist mythological women readings that were uncovered in the thematic analysis. patriarchal narratives often assign women a role of keeping families and social structures in harmony, and stress the importance of obedience and responsibility. In some modern interpretations, however, these characters' psychological depth and ethical complexity are brought into focus. The results demonstrate that feminist readings do not eliminate the cultural importance of these women but they complement current knowledge by recovers the marginalized voices of these women. Although the questionnaire not strictly speaking a comparative study, the distribution of the traditional and feminist interpretive themes is displayed in Figure 2. The figure illustrates the recognition of agency and resistance in the current readings, with an emphasis on new aspects of female empowerment that were not considered in previous scholarly

interpretations and/or in cultural works.

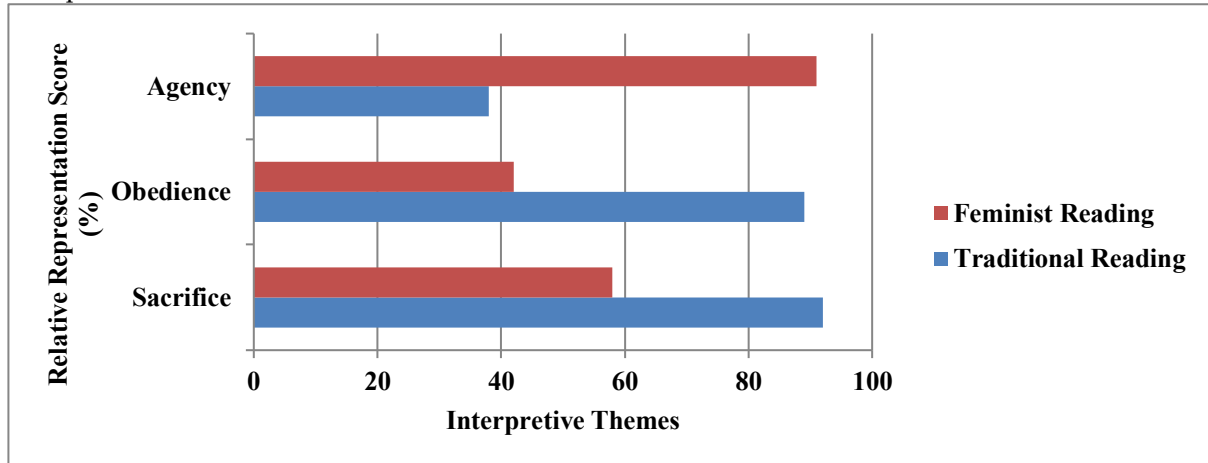


Figure 2: Distribution Of Dominant Interpretive Themes In Mythological Women

The results also showed that cultural memory is also an important Mediating link in the Conservation and Reconstruction of Mythological Women images. Selections are made as to what to remember within a cultural memory and reinterpretation can occur according to shifting social contexts. The virtue of wife which is associated to Sita in her persona is now more interpreted in terms of resilience and moral independence. If conflict and vengeance used to dominate the image of Draupadi, justice and defiance of patriarchy are now more commonplace. Likewise, Gandhari's silence and self-blinding has more serious interpretations than just acts of devotion; it can be read as a result of a structure of power and a social expectancy. The changing readings indicate that culturally the past is malleable and open to the issues of the present of gender equality and autonomy.

A significant change in the emphasis of the narratives is evident when comparing the two in Table 1. The table shows that the traditional readings focus on the importance of social responsibility and social identity whilst feminist readings center on a focus on self-identity, autonomy and critique of the patriarchal structure. The change is part of a larger trend of cultural attitudes and norms that affect other aspects of societies' interactions with previous stories and icons.

Table 1: Traditional Representation Versus Feminist Reinterpretation Of Mythological Women

Character	Traditional Representation	Feminist Reinterpretation
Sita	Ideal wife and sacrifice	Resilient and autonomous individual
Draupadi	Symbol of honor and conflict	Voice of justice and resistance
Gandhari	Devoted queen and mother	Complex negotiator of power and silence

The study also shows the contribution of feminist reinterpret to the extent of narrative agency given to the female characters of the myths. Agency is found in questioning authority, dissent and autonomous decision making and in negotiating and challenging restrictive social expectations. Agency engages not only in active opposition but also in the practice of resilience, ethical judgement and strategic adaption, as revealed in the analysis. Different interpretations toward female agency have appeared over the years, as shown in Figure 3, highlighting the difference in the visibility of female

agency in conventional and modern perspective. The number represents the fact today that studies in mythology include various expressions of agency in these narratives, making women the rich subject of passively received social obligations.

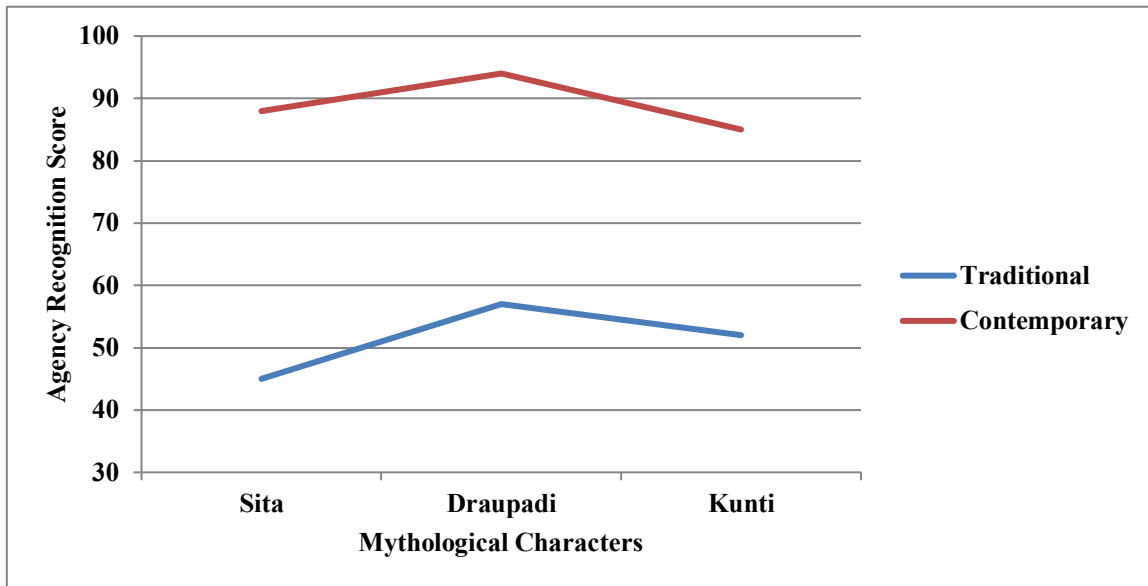


Figure 3: Agency Recognition Across Mythological Narratives

Another major conclusion is an aspect of the reinterpretation as a mechanism for inclusive forms of collective memory. Modern stories are frequently used to see "mythological women" through, to give them voice, to represent experiences lacking in traditional literary sources. These women are described through literary retellings and critical discourse as individuals who are grappling with social pressure and personal experiences of emotional tough choices and ethical dilemmas. These depictions invite the reader not only to understand this mythological account as a lesson in moral behaviour, but to exploit the text as a site of discussion and reflection. This process expands the interpretive context in cultural memory, and paves the way for new and more complex perspectives on gender and identity [4].

Collective perception about the mythological women has been transformed in the comparative evaluation as shown in Table 2. The results suggest a consistent movement from ideals of (architectural) subjects to human, and complex, human subjects. It is a transition that corresponds to the broader current research approaches in the field that romanticized the interpretation of thematic unity and prescriptive approach and gives more weight to complexity, diversity and context.

Table 2: Impact Of Feminist Reinterpretation On Cultural Memory

Dimension	Traditional Memory	Reinterpreted Memory
Identity	Relational and dependent	Individual and autonomous
Power	Limited influence	Negotiated agency
Voice	Marginalized	Centralized and visible

This study also captures for the reader the fact that mythological women are relevant in the culture because they are flexible about the new social dynamics. Their stories are highly flexible and open to the interpretation of different generations, who can find new meanings within the same story. This ability to rejuvenate is what makes Sita, Draupadi, Kunti, Gandhari and Mandodari still relevant today in today's discourses about gender, leadership, ethics and social justice. These characters are not just defined by tradition, but engage in contemporary arguments about identity and equality and take

an active role.

Together, the effects of a feminist reading of cultural memory are captured in Figure 4. The figure shows the evolution of memory reconstruction, concept of narratives and understanding of genders brought by contemporary reflection on mythological stories. The tendency indicates both that reinterpretation can be literary practice and a way to make a cultural shift or reflection on society.

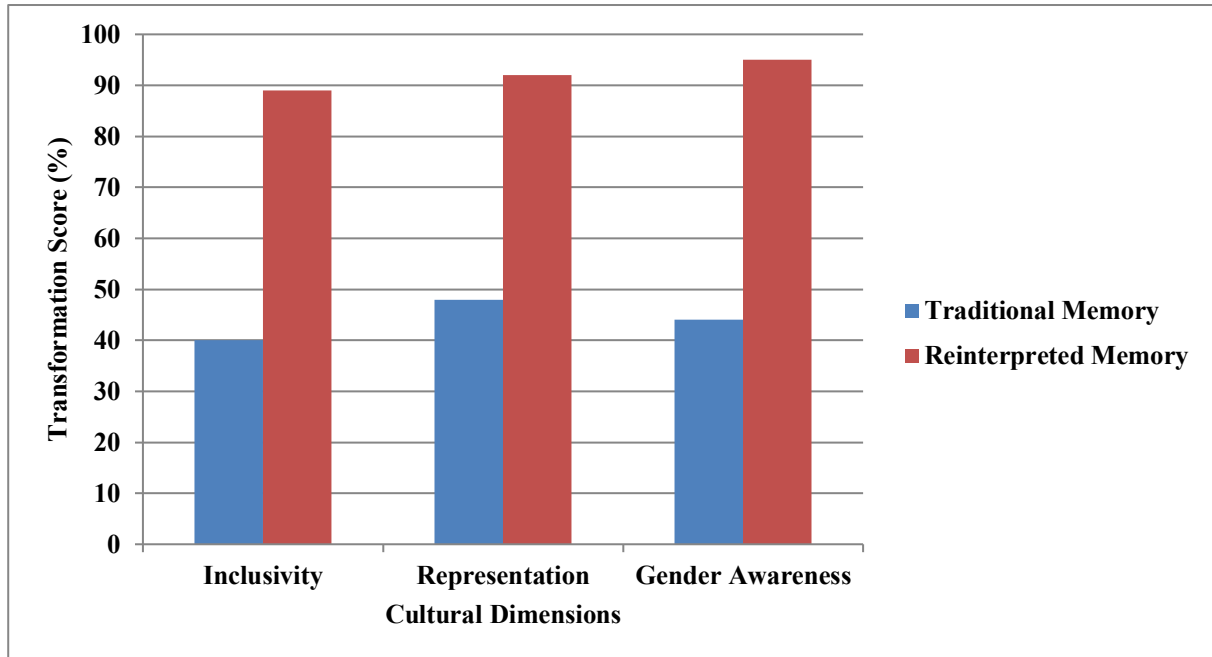


Figure 4: Cultural Memory Transformation Through Feminist Reinterpretation

Overall, the results indicate that feminist reinterpretations do significantly alter cultural memory, calling into question and overturning traditional gender perspectives and problematizing the degree to which one can simply interpret a mythological story. The results show that cultural memory is a dynamic process, which can receive new ideas and accept links with tradition. In this process mythological women take up a productive gap between revere and resist, which allows the continuous discussion between historic and modern conceptions of gender. Thus, the study shows that feminist reinterpretation redefines the perception of the characters of individual books and not only partakes in cultural discourse but also in larger one on identity, power, representation, and social change.

CONCLUSION

The correlation of the mythological women, cultural memory and feminist re-interpretation has been explored in this paper by using the study of the characters of Sita, Draupadi, Kunti, Gandhari and Mandodari. The results highlight the mixed nature of such numbers, and their exemplification and critique as cultural ideals and places.

The study reveals that cultural memory is more of a dynamic process, something that isn't static and passively preserves the past, but is an iterative process of reinterpretation of inherited narratives undertaken by societies. Feminist approaches to epics de-center the gender-based notions that are implicit in conventional epic forms, reclaim female roles, and show how patriarchal institutions have influenced the memory of those that largely ignored or distorted females. Consequently, mythological women do not appear only as devotional and sacrificial figures but their actions and attitudes pose questions of identity, autonomy, justice, and power.

Additionally, the study finds that feminism cannot be separated from upholding tradition in the

study of mythology. Rather, it instigates a critical conversation about the past and present, wherein previous narratives continue to have value in different social situations. It would be through this dialogue, this value, that mythology would become a useful arena in which to rethink gender relations and put gender experiences in the spotlight.

Practical Implications

The research results are of practical value for literary lesson, gender teaching and curriculum construction. Feminist work can be used to promote more accepting interpretations of mythic stories – such as the opportunities to engage in a critical examination of cultural stories and to learn that there are many different ways to think about gender and identity. The research that has been carried out also addresses the wider themes of representation, social injustice and the function of narrative in the construction of collective consciousness.

Limitations

There are a number of caveats to note. The study concentrates mainly on selected women from the Ramayana and Mahabharata which may result in the lack of coverage of the wider range of women that exist in Indian myths. Second, it uses textual and interpretative methods which means that its findings are subject to the interpretations of the scholars and theory that have been applied. Third, the indirect “retelling” of regional literature, oral heritage and modern media renditions are relatively under-developed and could be explored more.

Future Directions

This study could be expanded to include other lesser-known female creatures, as well as study the variations in cultural memory found across different regions. An intercultural comparison of mythologies could give a better understanding of the link between collective memory and gender. Students can also conduct research on the role played by digital media, cinema, TV, graphic novels, and social media in continuing to reinterpret myths. Moreover, a study that combines the skills of literary analysis with sociology, anthropology, and media studies could help to achieve a more complete picture of the impact feminist reinterpretations have on future cultural identity in the present day.

To sum up, as we are in an Indian culture, the mythological women still hold an important position in the cultural imaginations because the stories are open for reinterpretation. They sit at the interplay of reverence and resistance and show the resilience of cultural memory to shift, change, and create new meanings that respond to contemporary issues of power, gender and human agency..

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