

Transit of Hindu Mythology: Role of Biographical Method in Multicultural Landscape

Maria Ryzhik (ORCID 0009-0008-0077-5312)
Odesa I. I. Mechnykov National University (Ukraine)

Inna Golubovych (ORCID 0000-0003-3459-3417)
Odesa I. I. Mechnykov National University (Ukraine)

ABSTRACT

The study offers a biographical examination of the “Ramayana,” an ancient Indian epic renowned not only for its cultural significance and literary eminence but also for its scrutiny within the framework of modern philosophical discourse that includes a biographical dimension. In the “Ramayana,” we trace how conventional cultural archetypes, such as devotion, justice, and love, are revealed through distinct biographical circumstances and narratives. In the epic, each character serves as a bearer of specific archetypal attributes and concepts, which reflect diverse facets of human nature and are also distinct symbols embodying virtues, devotion, love, morality, evil, etc. With the help of mythological plots through biographical practices, people identify themselves with the characters of myths. In recent decades, there has been a popularization of modern adaptations of the “Ramayana” across India. The emergence of “new Indian mythmaking” and the renewed perception of profound archetypes within Indian culture coincides with the growing expansion of biographical and pseudo-biographical content in mass media. The protagonists of epics serve as foundational elements for the biographical strategies embraced by modern audiences, playing an integral role in shaping the culture of modern India and determining specific options for constructing a life course. In this article, we have examined contemporary interpretations of the “Ramayana” by writers such as Kavita Kané, Amish Tripathi, and Devdutt Pattanaik. In the works of these authors, one observes a transformation in the biographies of characters, shifts in their conduct, and even depictions of their emotional states, all of which reflect modern socio-cultural realities. This philosophical turn, characterized by the fusion of ancient myths with modern realities, values, and reader expectations, leads to a rethinking of traditional images, as well as a cultural dialogue between the East and the West.

KEYWORDS

culture, historical memory, multiculturalism, values, system of values, philosophical turn, being, biography, biographical approach, identity, identification, mythology

Introduction

In recent decades, there has been a popularization of “new mythology,” evidenced in various forms of mass culture such as films, literature, video games, comics, etc. “New mythology” frequently includes elements of science fiction and other genres, facilitating the creation of fresh plots, characters, and fictional “universes.” The popularity of this phenomenon is closely linked to advancements in media and technology, as well as the spread of multiculturalism and globalization policies. New myths and heroes have become integral components of contemporary culture, sparking widespread discussions. This trend is especially noticeable in modern Indian society, where characters from ancient Indian epics such as the “Ramayana” and “Mahabharata” are reimagined by innovative writers and directors. These characters emerge in a fresh perspective, embodying a new philosophical turn within Hindu culture and religion.

Mythology consistently tells about the individual experience; through the prism of mythology, individuals gain insights into themselves. An individual can also achieve success in any business, focusing on the situations described in myths and the experiences of mythical heroes. Engaging

in the process of mythologizing one’s own or another’s life allows the reader to immerse into a world rich with symbols, plots, and images. Concurrent with the evolution of “new Indian mythmaking” (we refer to this term to denote modern literary endeavors inspired by ancient epics), and the fresh look at profound archetypal connections in India, there is an expansion of biographical and pseudo-biographical content in mass media and culture. The heroes of epics serve as reference points for the biographical strategies for modern audiences, thereby becoming indispensable components of modern Indian culture and offering specific pathways for constructing a life course.

Despite Rama being a literary character rather than a historical figure, his portrayal as the central character in the “Ramayana” has a great influence on Hindus and all individuals interested in Indian culture, particularly through the modernization and partial Westernization of the biographical plot. In this study, we will examine both the traditional “Ramayana” by Valmiki and contemporary works by Indian authors, such as “Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku” by Amish Tripathi, “Lanka’s Princess” and “Sita’s Sister” by Kavita Kané, and “Leader: 50 Insights from Mythology” by Devdutt Pat-



tanaik. These authors transform the biography of traditional characters, creating heroes of a new era, whom they believe modern readers will aspire to emulate.

The aim of this article is to conduct a biographical analysis of the mythological symbols within the “Ramayana” as they manifest in contemporary Indian culture within the framework of a philosophical turn.

To achieve this objective, we have outlined several tasks, which include: (a) assessing the significance of mythological symbols within the traditional “Ramayana;” (b) investigating the transformations undergone by the epic’s heroes and their biographical portrayals in modern adaptations of the “Ramayana;” (c) identifying the key factors evident in the depiction of heroes and mythological symbols in “new Indian mythmaking.”

Research methods

We have grounded our approach on the fundamental ideas and methodologies of theoretical biography. In Ukraine, this philosophical orientation is exemplified by scholars such as Oleksii Valevskyi, Vadym Menzhulin, Inna Golubovych, and Tetiana Popova (*Golybovych et al., 2021; Golubovych & Menzhulin, 2021; Golubovych, 2022*).

The structural-semiotic version of the biographical approach is relevant to this study. At the center of our investigation lies a diverse corpus of texts spanning various epochs, including religious, mythological, and literary works. This approach involves the consideration of culture as a text, intricately structured and fragmenting into a hierarchy of texts within the overarching narrative. This perspective facilitates a deep analysis and fruitful application of the “life as a text” model, presenting it as an amalgamation of “life events – text events.” Within this tradition, methodologies have been developed to appropriately correlate the existential and narrative dimensions of life-biography. In the semiotic model of culture, the concept of biography is interpreted in the context of the interplay between the individual-personal and the objective-super-individual domains, serving as an intersecting point that is “pulsating” and “shimmering.” An individual life-biography within a particular context can “represent” the essence of an entire epoch or a distinct cultural paradigm. It is in such a focus that biographical analysis will be the most heuristically fruitful for us.

The work draws upon conceptual and methodological frameworks elucidated in the works of contemporary Ukrainian philosophers. These include the exploration of cultural memory by Viktor Levchenko (2022), the analysis of cultural values and multiculturalism by Zoia Atamaniuk (2023) and Vitaliya Gotynyan-Zhuravlova (2022), the examination of spirituality by Zoia Atamaniuk (2023). Additionally, the approach of Yulia Brodetska (2022), focusing on methodological transformations in modern philosophy within the context of the “new ontology of being,” aided in refining concepts such as “sociocultural being” and “philosophical turn”.

In this article, the term “philosophical turn” is employed to denote the changes and transformations evident in contemporary interpretations of Hindu mythology, in particular in the conceptualization of the biography of heroes. In the works under discussion, the biographies of the heroes undergo a transition from mere illustration to the mode of an explanatory mechanism for delineating the value systems and interests of individuals in the 21st century. The philosophical turn in this context is evident in the modern authors’ approach to epics not solely as literary monuments or sources of deep thoughts, but also as philosophical and

worldview basis upon which new works can be constructed, with a focus on the modern values and interests.

Results and Discussion

The “Ramayana” is one of the two main Indian mythological epics, along with the “Mahabharata” (The Ramayana of Valmiki. Vol. 1, 1952; The Ramayana of Valmiki. Vol. 2, 1957; The Ramayana of Valmiki. Vol. 3, 1959). The authorship of the Ramayana is attributed to the sage Valmiki. The “Ramayana” serves as a focal point for numerous modern Indian authors and directors. Let us recall the fundamental plot of the epic as preserved in cultural memory and retellings.

Within the epic, Prince Rama emerges as the principal character, revered as the seventh of the ten avatars of the deity Vishnu. In Hindu tradition, Vishnu constitutes one of the three principal deities, alongside Shiva and Brahma. Vishnu is responsible for maintaining and preserving the Universe. Across his diverse avatars, Vishnu corrects the imbalance in the world and improves the living conditions on Earth.

While the epic may incorporate elements rooted in historical events or legends, the character of Rama is venerated as a divine incarnation, with the events of his life perceived through the lens of spiritual teachings. Rama epitomizes the ideal man, adorned with a myriad of virtuous attributes. He is often referred to as the “Lord of Restrictions” (*van der Veer, 1989: 466*), “Maryada Purushottam,” which can be translated as “the best of men” or “the supreme Purusa”, “Om Satyavache namaha” which means “the speaker of truth” and more (*108 Names of Lord Shri Ram with Meaning, 2023*).

Sita, the wife of Rama, embodies the virtues of devotion and femininity and serves as an example of an ideal wife. She is an avatar of the goddess Lakshmi, born from the earth. Despite facing numerous trials and tribulations, Sita remains by Rama’s side, showcasing her devotion and fortitude.

Rama was destined to ascend to the throne of Ayodhya. However, Queen Kaikeyi, the second wife of his father King Dasharatha, through intrigues, achieved Rama’s exile in the forest for fourteen years. Sita’s best qualities are highlighted when she voluntarily gives up her comfortable life in the palace and follows her husband into exile. Rama’s brother Prince Lakshmana decides to go with them.

A pivotal juncture in the “Ramayana” narrative is the abduction of Sita by a multi-headed rakshasa king Ravana. The search for Sita and the battle at Lanka emphasize the value of love and devotion and also demonstrate the triumph of righteousness over evil and the restoration of justice.

After her release, Sita undergoes a trial by fire to prove her fidelity to her husband. Rama and Sita return to Ayodhya. However, doubts regarding Sita’s purity arise among the people of Ayodhya due to her long stay in the demon’s palace. Despite being pregnant, Sita is banished to the forest by Rama, who prioritizes his duty as a ruler (*raja-dharma*) over his duty as a husband. Despite experiencing bitterness, Sita accepts this fate with dignity. She finds refuge under the protection of the sage Valmiki.

In Valmiki’s hermitage, Sita gives birth to two sons from Rama named Kusha and Lava. Valmiki assumes responsibility for their upbringing and imparts to them the epic poem detailing the deeds of Rama – the “Ramayana.” One day, the twins recite this poem in front of Rama. Upon hearing it, Rama realizes that they are his sons and requests to see Sita. When Sita arrives, Rama requires her to demonstrate her purity to the people. Sita asks the Earth to accept

her into her embrace if she is indeed pure before her husband. The Earth complies, opening up to receive Sita into its womb, where she disappears forever.

A mythological symbol, as a repository of profound archetypal knowledge, influences an individual's system of values. Within the realm of ontology, it shows its potency as a compelling symbolic image capable of shaping a person's worldview. As the "original," a mythological symbol serves as the foundational element for the development of both mythic narratives and life experiences. However, it should not be perceived as deterministic; rather, it sets the stage for potential plot developments without predetermining specific outcomes. The inexhaustible potential for varied interpretations of a symbol, characterized as a "meaning-generating reserve," serves as a wellspring of freedom within the idea of "life-in-myth."

The symbol is capable of entering into the most unexpected connections. When the original symbol is interwoven into a life-biography (such as that of Rama), it fulfills an additional function – it "inscribes" individual life into the broader cultural-historical continuum (represented by the plot of the "Ramayana"), thereby serving as a cultural mechanism of continuity. The symbol acts as a "messenger" from other cultural epochs, serving as a reminder of the timeless foundations of culture and preventing its fragmentation into isolated chronological layers. As we see, the "Ramayana," with its system of values and profound truths, despite its origins dating back many centuries (with the first mentions ranging from the 7th to 4th centuries BCE), remains relevant nowadays.

One of the most important objectives in studying the sociocultural underpinnings of the phenomenon of biography is to identify the individual and personal variability through which the invariants and universals of culture, including its original myths and symbols, find expression. The "Ramayana" serves as a reflection not only of the distinctive traits of its characters but also of the alignment of their actions with universal values. Each character in the epic, whether it be Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, or Hanuman, possesses unique attributes and qualities, although all of them are in their way an example of the ideal.

Myth possesses a personal and nominal quality and is intimately connected to a set of typical plot scenarios. The "Ramayana," as an epic, epitomizes such a myth. Viewed through the lens of mythological consciousness, the "Ramayana" unveils a realm wherein each event carries profound significance and shapes the destiny of its protagonists. Unlike abstract categories or meta-descriptions, the world depicted in the "Ramayana" is characterized by concrete images and events, rich in symbolism and meaning.

In the "Ramayana," we observe many mythological symbols with direct or hidden implications. Let us explore a few of them:

1. Rama emerges as a paradigmatic figure, exemplifying impeccable virtues across multiple facets of his character, including his roles as a devoted husband, filial son, loyal brother, and perfect ruler. He follows the highest standards of dharma (righteousness) and acts for the welfare of society. Rama has three brothers: Bharata, Shatrughna, and Lakshmana. Each sibling perceives Rama as the epitome of virtue, thereby symbolizing unwavering devotion and ethical rectitude. Rama also takes care of his wife Sita, who is a symbol of pure love and a perfect woman.

2. Rama instructs Sita not to leave their dwelling during his absence while he goes in search of the golden deer.

However, as Rama's absence prolongs, Sita, growing anxious, sends Lakshmana to look for him. In later versions of the epic, it is mentioned that before leaving the dwelling, Lakshmana delineates a protective boundary around it, famously known as the "Lakshmana Rekha." This boundary is intended to protect Sita. However, the demon Ravana tricked the woman and kidnapped her. The Lakshmana Rekha, as a mythological symbol, can be considered as a symbol of protection or, on the contrary, limitation of the actions of Sita.

3. Hanuman is not just a character in the Ramayana, but an image of a true devotee who is ready to do anything for the sake of his Lord. His boundless loyalty and indomitable courage manifest in various parts of the epic, including crossing the ocean to search for Sita, fighting demonic forces at Lanka, searching for the life-saving Sanjeevani herb from the Dronagiri mountain to cure Lakshmana, etc. Hanuman symbolizes the power of faith and selfless service. His image inspires people to emulate his unwavering dedication and selflessness in serving others, without any expectation of personal gain.

4. The construction of a bridge from the continent to Lanka can be interpreted as a symbol of love, strength, and devotion. Rama was able to overcome all obstacles to save the woman he loved. In addition, such a mythological symbol embodies the notion of unity, as the construction of the bridge signifies the collaborative efforts of Rama's subjects and allies, including an army of monkeys.

It is these narrative shifts and pivotal moments in the biographies of the heroes, in which a stable system of symbols is embodied, that are reflected and transformed in the "new mythmaking."

In his work "The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History", Mircea Eliade (1954) posits that myth serves as a repository not merely of abstract principles, but of concrete case-situations. He endeavors to illustrate those cultural invariants (or cultural archetypes), are fundamentally instantiated and preserved within culture, myth, and history through the exemplary biographical situations and actions of individuals, notably the heroes. This elucidates a dualistic aspect of culture as revealed in myth: invariants–archetypes–case–situation.

In the "Ramayana," we observe how common cultural archetypes such as devotion, justice, and love are manifested through specific biographical situations and scenarios. For instance, the story surrounding the abduction of Sita by Ravana and her rescue by Rama demonstrates a typical struggle between good and evil, as well as the themes of love and devotion. Rama emerges as the ideal hero, adhering to dharma and upholding the highest values throughout the epic. His exemplary conduct, reflected in his actions and decisions across various situations, serves as a guiding model for righteous behavior. Beyond its literary significance, the "Ramayana" is a repository of universal truths and exemplary biographical situations, offering profound insights into the meaning and significance of human existence.

The mythological component holds significant weight in the work of a biographer. Understanding the role of any figure in the collective consciousness entails a dual approach: historical and mythological. The historical approach is focused on establishing the "roots" and "origins." The mythological approach posits that an innovator or founder of traditions has no predecessors, and all his actions are the result of individual efforts and personal energy. Each of these approaches tends to negate the previ-

ous one. It is important to take into account two interpretations (both historical and mythological) since historical and cultural reality is revealed only in the light of the double perspective of historical and mythological interpretations.

In the context of epic, historical and mythological approaches offer divergent perspectives on the personalities of its heroes. Proponents of the historical approach engage in speculation regarding the potential historical events or individuals that may have inspired the creation of characters such as Rama and Sita. In contrast, the mythological approach interprets the characters of the "Ramayana" primarily as mythological symbols representing ideals and values rather than historical figures. It is worth noting that most historians doubt that Rama was a historical figure. Indeed, there is practically no direct evidence of the existence of the hero, besides the "Ramayana". However, the absence of concrete evidence does not necessarily negate the possibility of Rama's historical existence, as similar historical figures like Plato, Socrates, and Jesus are also primarily known through textual sources. Despite this, the historical community generally does not question the existence of these figures.

The "Ramayana" serves not only as a sacred text but also as a basis for shaping moral and cultural values for individuals irrespective of their religious beliefs. The mythological aspect inherent in the epic cannot be disregarded, as myths themselves represent a distinct historical-cultural and historical-psychological reality of a given era. The significance of mythological elements increases when they become integral to the prevailing cultural ethos, including the emphasis on "biographical legend" within the societal code of the time. The individual stories of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and others are an integral part of the cultural context and perception of the world. Adopting a dual framework for assessing the role of a character within the collective consciousness, one must avoid absolutizing the connection between "mythological innovation" and "historical continuity." Thus, the mechanisms of mythologization in biography can be considered on both the individual-personal level and within the broader cultural codes and mass consciousness of the era, generation, etc.

The use of mythological themes and characters in biographical practices allows individuals to establish a connection with the heroes of myths, often leading to identification with them. By identifying with mythological figures, individuals may draw inspiration from their virtues, strengths, and struggles. They may see reflections of their challenges and moral dilemmas mirrored in the biographies of the heroes. Through this identification, people may learn valuable lessons and use new knowledge in daily life. Furthermore, the use of mythological themes in biographical practices can contribute to the formation of collective identity. By retelling myths that are central to their cultural heritage, individuals reaffirm their connection to their shared traditions and values.

The mythologization of characters within the "Ramayana" also depends on the context of time and place, resulting in various interpretations across different historical epochs and sociocultural contexts. In modern society, the personality of Rama may be perceived diversely: as a historical figure symbolizing ideals and values, as an incarnation of Vishnu, or as a mythical hero personifying spiritual and ethical principles. It all depends on the reader's perception. Similarly, the character of Sita can be perceived in multifaceted ways: as the embodiment of divine feminine energy (shakti), the ideal wife and devoted adherent of

dharma, a symbol of the struggle for rights and freedoms, particularly in the context of sexism and violation of women's rights. From a feminist standpoint, Sita can be viewed as an example of a woman who faced the traditional expectations of society and, despite the difficulties, was able to demonstrate her strength and independence in difficult situations.

One of the key problems in the transdisciplinary research field of biographies is the problem of subject and author, author and hero. This problem is approached from various angles. Our focus will be on the general cultural dimension of the "author and hero" theme, corresponding to the specifics of humanitarian knowledge and socio-philosophical analysis.

Traditionally, the "Ramayana" is credited to Valmiki, who is believed to have been inspired by the life events of Rama and composed an epic detailing the prince's life and adventures. This version is supported by representatives of the Hindu tradition. However, an alternative perspective suggests that the "Ramayana" originated as part of an oral tradition, and is not the work of a specific author. The problem of authorship surrounding this epic is a subject of discussion and debate among researchers and literary scholars.

In any biography, the hero represents an unfolding and incomplete unity of life events fraught with action. Conversely, the author embodies a living embodiment of the completion of these life events, opposing the hero. Positioned distinctively from the hero in temporal, ethical, and semantic terms, the author – whether Valmiki or a collective of authors – arranges and interprets events, giving them meaning and integrity. Thus, the author serves as a counterpoint to the hero, providing an outside perspective on his actions and development. Memory, viewed through an aesthetic lens, is considered as a force that gathers and enriches the hero's life, it creates the possibility of an aesthetic victory over death. The life stories of the epic's heroes serve as poignant symbols of memory's struggle against death as well as reflections on being. Passed down through generations, memories of the heroes' exploits, trials, and triumphs culminate in a unique aesthetic image that overcomes time and space limitations.

The ontological position of the author's non-findability in humanitarian research demands careful methodological consideration. This issue, frequently framed as the problem of distance of the author of a biography in relation to his hero, is one of the most important for biographical discourse. Be it Valmiki, or a group of authors, someone has created an epic that transcends its existence.

The heroes are allocated a field of ethical action, while the author navigates a domain of aesthetic contemplation. In this synthesis of the ethical and spatial, the original essence of the ethical emerges, "ethos" in Greek denotes a place of residence or a human dwelling. The hero possesses an intrinsic self-awareness yet cannot see themselves from an external point. The author's purview encompasses emotional and volitional reactions. Within the framework of general architectonics, only the author possesses the capacity to translate from the "internal language" to the "language of external expression," thereby weaving the hero into a pictorial and plastic fabric of life as a person among other people, as a hero among other heroes.

In the context of the "Ramayana," we observe a distinctive ontology of biographical experience. Throughout the epic, we not only glimpse into Rama's personal story but also witness his interactions with other characters and society as a whole. By examining the interplay between the

author and the hero within the epic or any subsequent works derived from the Ramayana, we can observe how a unique understanding of biography is formed in culture in a particular period.

Today, the themes of the "Ramayana" and the biography of Rama are being explored and presented in various forms by writers and directors. Many of them embark on a new philosophical turn, offering fresh interpretations of the epic and the biographies of its heroes, based on the needs of a modern person, such as gender equality, business, and leadership. Conversely, some creators choose to shift the spotlight onto Rama's wife or minor characters (Ravana, Urmila, Shurpanakha, etc.). In such works, the "Ramayana" is often viewed through the perspectives of these alternative characters, and Rama is often given a secondary role in such works.

Amish Tripathi, born in 1974, stands out as one of India's most prominent fiction writers. His Shiva Trilogy has become the best-selling book series in India, and the Ram Chandra Series is the second best-selling book series in the country. Amish Tripathi's upcoming work is planned to be centered on "Mahabharata." The works of Amish Tripathi are an excellent example of the popularization of Indian mythology, both in India and abroad. Translated into over twenty languages, including French, Spanish, Polish, and Czech, his works reflect a fusion of Indian mythology with influences from Western literature and culture, due to which Amish Tripathi is called the "Indian Tolkien".

Amish Tripathi's first works, inspired by the "Ramayana," are dedicated to the individual biographies of the protagonists of the Ramayana. His first three books, titled "Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku," "Sita: Warrior of Mithila," and "Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta," delve into the lives of Rama, Sita, and Ravana respectively. In the fourth book, "War of Lanka," the narratives of these heroes intertwine, leading to the key events of the Ramayana.

The debut book inspired by the epic, "Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku," was accompanied by an extensive marketing campaign. It encompassed newspaper advertisements, promotional videos on YouTube (Author Amish, 2015), and the launch of a dedicated website for the book. Additionally, Kotak Mahindra Bank (KMB) collaborated with the author to release a special edition debit card featuring the book's cover (Sharma, 2015).

For those who prefer a traditional view of mythology and religion, "Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku" may come as a real culture shock (Tripathi, 2022). In this book, there is a departure from the traditional portrayal of Rama's birth as a blessing for the kingdom of Ayodhya and his father, King Dasharatha. Instead, Rama is depicted as an unloved prince, with his father holding him responsible for all the misfortunes. For instance, according to Amish Tripathi, it was on Rama's birthday that Dasharatha suffered defeat from Ravana.

In Amish Tripathi's book, Sita undergoes a significant transformation from a meek and obedient girl to a formidable leader who is the prime minister of Mithila. This reinterpretation of Sita's character emphasizes her evolution into a strong and capable leader, adept at wielding power, defending her convictions, and even proficient in combat. Amish Tripathi's portrayal of Sita and a change in her biography serves as support for the participation of women in the political life of the country, and the basis for building an individual "life course." Moreover, Sita's character in this book is an inspirational figure for modern women who are interested in the ideas of gender equality.

A similar character transformation can be observed in Frank Herbert's "Dune." In the original 1965 book and David Lynch's 1984 film, Chani is portrayed as an obedient woman who follows her man. Whereas in Denis Villeneuve's 2024 film "Dune: Part Two," Chani emerges as an independent woman, reflecting contemporary ideals of strength and autonomy. The world is changing, so authors and directors offer their own interpretations of characters to align with changing expectations and values.

Manthara, traditionally depicted as the evil maidservant of Queen Kaikeyi in the Ramayana, is reimagined as a prosperous businesswoman by Amish Tripathi. Additionally, she is portrayed as a mother to a daughter of noble birth. These changes contribute to a deeper analysis of the themes of power, wealth, and family ties in the context of the modern world.

In Amish Tripathi's view, Bharata, the brother of Rama, is also far from the traditional depiction. The writer presents him as a modern youth primarily focused on romantic relationships. This contrast between Bharata's carefree demeanor and Rama's seriousness serves to highlight the distinct qualities of each character and takes the reader away from the traditional version of the Ramayana, where all the brothers behave justly and righteously.

Amish Tripathi's revisions to the biographies of traditional characters aim to modernize ancient myths for contemporary readers, offering a fresh perspective on the epic and highlighting its continued relevance. His works serve as a prime example of the transformation and commercialization of Hindu mythology. In adapting these myths, Amish Tripathi creates products that are devoid of spirituality and filled with a fantastic component.

Kavita Kané, born in 1966, is known for books that focus on the female protagonists of Indian epics, where men often assume secondary roles. Her attention to heroines from the "Ramayana" is evident through characters like Shurpanakha (sister of Ravana), Urmila (sister of Sita), Ahalya (wife of the sage Gautama), and Tara (queen of the mythical land of monkeys). The writer has also created "biographies" of characters from the "Mahabharata" as well as other prominent women from Hindu mythology.

Since in this article, we analyze the "Ramayana," we will focus on the works "Lanka's Princess" (Kané, 2016) and "Sita's Sister" (Kané, 2014). These novels offer a female perspective by centering on female characters within the epic. However, these works contain more fantasy than attempts to preserve cultural and historical memory.

"Lanka's Princess" offers a fresh perspective on the events depicted in the "Ramayana" through the lens of Shurpanakha. In this retelling, the sister of the cruel demon emerges as a deeply nuanced character who has endured numerous trials and struggles, has suffered from the misunderstandings of her loved ones, and has faced inner conflicts alone. While traditional versions of the epic often show Shurpanakha in a negative light, modern interpretations, including the "Siya ke Ram" series, present her in a more empathetic and relatable manner for modern audiences. By delving into Shurpanakha's grievances and suffering, the writer provides insight into the complexity of human nature and the depth of individual characters.

In "Sita's Sister," Urmila emerges as a strong and independent woman who challenges patriarchal norms. While traditionally overlooked in Valmiki's "Ramayana," Urmila takes center stage in Kavita Kané's interpretation, fearlessly opposing even the actions of Rama. Presented as a knowledgeable advocate of Indian philosophy, Urmila ac-

tively takes part in philosophical debates and governmental affairs. In the absence of Rama and Sita, she assumes a leadership role within the family, trying to maintain harmony and positivity. Through her fight for women's rights, Urmila can be called a symbol of Indian feminism.

Devdutt Pattanaik, born in 1970, calls himself a mythologist and has a degree in Comparative Mythology from Mumbai University. While authors like Amish Tripathi and Kavita Kané primarily focus on creating pseudo-biographical content within the realm of mythology, Devdutt Pattanaik also connects mythological stories with contemporary real-life situations, particularly in the realms of business, management, and leadership. In addition, he delves into the analysis of Hindu philosophy, offering interpretations to modern readers who may not be familiar with ancient Sanskrit texts.

In his book "Leader: 50 Insights from Mythology," Devdutt Pattanaik (2017) explores leadership from the perspective of Hindu mythology (Pattanaik, 2017). The biographies of the epic characters are intertwined with the biographies of people who may exist in our world. For instance, in the chapter titled "The Auditor's Tragedy," Devdutt Pattanaik associates the Lakshmana rekha, mentioned earlier, with the symbol of the oppression of women (Pattanaik, 2017: Chapter 46). The mythologist manages to draw a figurative comparison between the story about the line and the story about the role of the controller in the behavior of the auditor, in which the rules of behavior in the organization are similar to the line drawn by Lakshman, protecting Sita from possible danger.

In the chapter "They Don't Have to Think Like You" from the same book, Devdutt Pattanaik presents Hanuman as an unquestioning subordinate who is afraid to take action without the approval of management (Pattanaik, 2017: Chapter 37). Traditionally Hanuman is shown as an unwavering and loyal servant of Rama, a perfect character. But the mythologist suggests looking at him from the other side. After "Hanuman's decision of burning Lanka displeased Rama", Hanuman is afraid to make decisions on his own, so he prefers to consult Rama first.

In a contemporary style, Devdutt Pattanaik illustrates the concept by narrating a scenario involving a boss named Sanjeev and his subordinate, Sebastian. Just as Hanuman turns to Rama for advice, people can turn to the gods for guidance and support in difficult situations. This dynamic symbolizes the idea that faith in divine entities can aid individuals in overcoming obstacles and fostering spiritual growth. However, sometimes you should take the initiative on your own and not be afraid of the consequences. As Sanjeev demands active participation from his team members, some individuals struggle to meet his expectations and ultimately choose to leave the organization. Similarly, Sebastian thinks about leaving it. As the mythologist states, "Only in trust does growth happen."

Conclusion

Thus, both the traditional "Ramayana" and in modern versions of the epic involve a biographical treatment of mythological characters. The balance of the mythological and biographical, which is organic for traditional myths, which we note based on the ideas of Mircea Eliade, is replaced in the "new mythmaking" by a significant "tilt" (preponderance) towards the actual biographical, almost devoid of sacred meaning. In Valmiki's "Ramayana," each character carries deep mythological and symbolic meaning, which serves not

only to reveal their characters and storylines but also to convey sacred ancient teachings, moral norms, and values of society. For instance, Rama symbolizes the ideal of a righteous ruler and a faithful husband, Sita is the image of virtue, devotion, and strength, Hanuman is the embodiment of devotion and selfless service, and Ravana is a symbol of evil, selfishness, and unrighteousness. Each character in the "Ramayana" appears as a bearer of certain archetypal qualities and concepts that reflect various aspects of human nature and life experience. This profound symbolism makes the "Ramayana" not only a literary work but also a symbol of ancient wisdom.

The philosophical turn observed in the aforementioned works includes fresh interpretations of the biographies of characters and events from mythological texts, catering to the interests and demands of contemporary society. Modern authors delve into mythology and the life stories of epic figures not solely for historical and cultural insights, but also as a resource to contemplate issues like feminism, gender equality, business, and management. They try to employ mythological concepts and symbols to analyze and explain modern phenomena. At the same time, the sacred and spiritual dimension, which is the source of the myth, finds itself on the margins of culture.

In the works of representatives of the "new Indian mythmaking," we witness a trend towards the reconfiguration of characters' biographies and a fresh interpretation of their behavior, aligning with contemporary audience expectations and values. This reinterpretation encompasses changes to their personalities, deeds, and motivations. Characters traditionally depicted in a negative light, such as Shurpanakha, may be portrayed more sympathetically, with their actions contextualized within personal traumas or grievances. The characterizations and roles of certain positive figures (Sita, Rama, Urmila) may transform to reflect the realities of modern society.

Among the key factors observed in the "new Indian mythmaking," one should highlight the rethinking of traditional images, identification of modern people with mythological heroes, psychological depth (observed in the description of the experiences and internal conflicts of the characters), intercultural dialogue, multiculturalism (transformation of Indian myths into books of the fantasy genre characteristic of Western culture), linking myths to modern sociocultural realities and values. "New Indian mythmaking" requires further study and analysis. Such endeavors will deepen our understanding of Indian mythology's dynamic nature and its enduring significance in the modern world, as well as fit it into the intercultural civilizational dialogue.

REFERENCES

- Atamaniuk, Z. (2023). Dukhovnist osobystosti yak proiav kulturnoho rozvytku [The Spirituality of the Individual as a Manifestation Cultural Development]. *Naukove piznannia: metodolohiia ta tekhnolohiia*, 1(51), 30–36. <https://doi.org/10.24195/sk1561-1264/2023-1-5> (In Ukrainian)
- Author Amish. (2015). *The "Scion of Ikshvaku" Trailer by Amish* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/k4xhu9Mel-zw?si=qudin7TfBjkE6OG>
- Brodetska, Yu. (2022). Metodolohichni metamorfozy suchasnoi filosofii: «nova ontolohiia» buttia [Methodological metamorphosis of Modern Philosophy: a «New Ontology» of Being]. *Filosofiiia ta politolohiia v konteksti suchasnoi kultury*, Vol. 14, 1(29), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.15421/352201> (In Ukrainian)

- Golubovych, I., Menzhulin, V. & Popova, T. (2021). Biohrafistyka [Biographistics]. In *Velyka ukrainska entsyklopediia*. <https://vue.gov.ua/Біографістика> (In Ukrainian)
- Golubovych, I. & Menzhulin, V. (2021). Biohrafichnyi metod [Biographical method]. In *Velyka ukrainska entsyklopediia*. https://vue.gov.ua/Біографічний_метод (In Ukrainian)
- Golubovych, I. (2022). Fenomen biohrafii v kulturi: intehratsiia doslidnytskykh stratehii [The phenomenon of biography in culture: integration of previous strategies]. In S. P. Shevtsov (Ed.) *Protsesy intehratsii i dyferentsiatsii v suchasnomu naukovomu ta filosofskomu znanni: kolekt. monohrafiia* (pp. 213–233). Odeskyi natsionalnyi universytet imeni I. I. Mechnykova. <https://dspace.onu.edu.ua/items/119f244f-90de-49a6-911f-2fe24eee34eb> (In Ukrainian)
- Gotynyan-Zhuravlova, V. (2022). Multykulturalizm yak kliuchovyi parametranalizu sotsialnykh i kulturnykh vyvshch i protsesiv [Multiculturalism as a Key Parameter of the Analysis of Social and Cultural Phenomena and Processes]. *Doksa*. 2(38). 76–84. [https://doi.org/10.18524/2410-2601.2022.2\(38\).283064](https://doi.org/10.18524/2410-2601.2022.2(38).283064) (In Ukrainian)
- Eliade, M. (1954). *Cosmos and History: The Myth of The Eternal Return*. Harper & Brothers.
- Kané, K. (2016) *Lanka's Princess*. Rupa Publications.
- Kané, K. (2014). *Sita's Sister*. Rupa Publications. Kotak Mahindra partners with author Amish Tripathi (2015). *Hans India*. <https://www.thehansindia.com/posts/index/Hans/2015-06-30/Kotak-Mahindra-partners-with-author-Amish-Tripa-thi/160564>
- Levchenko, V. (2022). Muzeinist u systemy pochuttiv kulturnoi pamiaty [Musealization in the System of Senses of Cultural Memory]. *Doksa*. 1(37). 138–142. [https://doi.org/10.18524/2410-2601.2022.1\(37\).281828](https://doi.org/10.18524/2410-2601.2022.1(37).281828) (In Ukrainian)
- Pattanaik, D. (2017) *Leader: 50 Insights from Mythology*. Harper Business.
- Sharma, M. (2023). 108 Names of Lord Shri Ram with Meaning. *The Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/religion/mantras-chants/108-names-of-lord-shri-ram-with-meaning/articleshow/106011858.cms>
- The Ramayana of Valmiki. Vol. 1 (1952). (Hari Prasad Shastri, Trans.). Burleigh Press.
- The Ramayana of Valmiki. Vol. 2 (1957). (Hari Prasad Shastri, Trans.). Burleigh Press.
- The Ramayana of Valmiki. Vol. 3 (1959). (Hari Prasad Shastri, Trans.). Burleigh Press.
- Tripathi, A. (2022). *Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku*. HarperCollins India.
- van der Veer, P. (1989). The Power of Detachment: Disciplines of Body and Mind in the Ramanandi Order. *American Ethnologist*, 16(3), 458–470. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/645268>

Транзит індуїстської міфології: роль біографічного методу в мультикультурному ландшафті

Марія Рижик (ORCID 0009-0008-0077-5312)

Одеський національний університет імені І. І. Мечникова (Україна)

Інна Голубович (ORCID 0000-0003-3459-3417)

Одеський національний університет імені І. І. Мечникова (Україна)

У дослідженні представлено біографічний аналіз «Рамаяни» – давньоіндійського епосу, який є не лише об'єктом культурної пам'яті та пам'ятником давньої літератури, а й досліджується у контексті сучасного філософського повороту, що включає біографічний аспект. У «Рамаяні» ми простежуємо, як загальноприйняті культурні архетипи, такі як відданість, справедливість та любов, розкриваються через конкретні біографічні ситуації та сценарії. Кожен персонаж в епосі виступає як носій певних архетипічних якостей та уявлень, що відображають різні аспекти людської природи, а також є своєрідними символами чесноти, відданості, кохання, моралі, зла тощо. За допомогою міфологічних сюжетів через біографічні практики люди ідентифікують себе з героями міфів. В останні десятиліття в Індії спостерігається популяризація сучасних адаптацій «Рамаяни». Розвиток «нової індійської міфотворчості» та оновлене сприйняття глибоких архетипів в Індії відбуваються в контексті зростаючої експансії біографічного та псевдобіографічного контенту у мас-культурі. Герої епосів стають основою для біографічних стратегій сучасної аудиторії, відіграючи невід'ємну роль у формуванні культури сучасної Індії та визначенні конкретних варіантів побудови life-course. У даній статті ми розглянули сучасні інтерпретації «Рамаяни» від таких письменників, як Кавіта Кане, Аміш Тріпаті і Девдатт Паттанаїк. У творах вказаних авторів спостерігається трансформація біографій персонажів, зміни в їх поведінці та навіть опис їх емоційного стану, що відображає сучасні соціокультурні реалії. Цей філософський поворот з прив'язкою старих міфів до сучасних реалій, цінностей та очікувань читача призводить до переосмислення традиційних образів, а також до культурного діалогу між Сходом та Заходом.

Ключові слова: культура, історична пам'ять, мультикультуралізм, цінності, система цінностей, філософський поворот, буття, біографія, біографічний підхід, ідентичність, ідентифікація, міфологія.

Received (Надійшла до редакції): 11.06.2024, Accepted (Прийнята до друку): 15.08.2024,
Available online (Опубліковано онлайн) 30.09.2024