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Myths

About the origins of Indian crafts by Gitanjli Chhibber and Prof. Ravi Poovaiah IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:

https://dsource.in/resource/myths

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Analysis
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Introduction

Myths are a very important form of storytelling and provide information through the plot, setting and characters. Anthropologists have referred to mythologies and legends of places and people they have been researching on and have found that myths reveal a great deal about the history, culture, people, religion, lifestyle and environment of a place. Infact what the myth is about and the way the myth is communicated (orally or through some physical medium) in itself is crucial information.

They tell us the difference between what is real and what is not and that it is upto decide. Mythical stories not only inform us about the power of our imagination but also show us how vivid, exciting and incredible that imagined reality can be. Myths sometimes may draw a blurry line between reality and imagination or a very clear one.

The main content of the myth is very crucial to understanding why the myth was created in the first place. This DES project is specifically about the origins of certain crafts in India and the reason why such myths exist is to explain how a practice, how an art form came to be. It is simply a product of wonder.

As M.C. Escher correctly describes that they who wonder discover that this in itself is a wonder. Thus myths are not only gateways to wonder, to imagine, to expand our understanding of a phenomenon but in themselves are wonders.

Our entire lives are spent making sense of the world around us and inside of us. And myths and legends project our trials of answering and making sense as to why certain things are the way they are. However they do not simply inform with bland logic, but with dramatic story arcs and characters both divine & demonic or just humane. They are certainly the result of curiosity, observation, deduction, gratitude and most importantly imagination.

Literature Review

Now myths are really not errors; they are certainly not like the errors in which science abounds: for they always contain reference to some objects and events which could not possibly exist and occur. This being so, there are no statements of observations which could test them scientifically. They are not errors, for their truth, for those who accept them, is preserved for eternity.

- THEORIES OF MYTH* PERCY S. COHEN London School of Economics and Political Science

A myth is a narrative of events and this narrative refers in a dramatic form to origins or transformations. The narrative has a sacred quality and the events/lessons in the narrative are communicated in symbolic form. Many parts of the myth are bound to not occur or exist in reality and that is a significant characteristic of a myth. The narrative quality of the myth sets it apart from a general idea.

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The narration of events and reference to objects unknown outside of the world of myth differentiates myth from history or pseudo-history. There are many theories of myths. Different theories explain different statements about the myth. Particular theories may, of course, explain several statements about myth and they, therefore, compete, partly or wholly with other theories.

"Classifying theories of myths is not easy. In offering a classification I do not presuppose that theories are pure in character, but only that they emphasize one or more components more than they do others; my real interest is in the components themselves."

Some Theories of Myths:

- 1. Myth as a form of explanation (a form which occurs at a certain stage in the development of human society and culture).
- 2. Myth is a form of symbolic statement which has the function of expression.
- 3. Myth as an expression of the unconscious.
- 4. Myth that helps create and maintain social solidarity, cohesion, etc and stresses its function in legitimating social institutions and social practices.
- 5. Myth as a form of symbolic statement about social structure, possibly linked with ritual.

Reference: Theories of myth (Percy S. Cohen, London school of economics and political science) Man New Series, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Sep., 1969), pp. 337-353 (17 pages)

The oral traditions and expressions domain encompasses an enormous variety of spoken forms including proverbs, riddles, tales, nursery rhymes, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants, songs, dramatic performances and more. Oral traditions and expressions are used to pass on knowledge, cultural and social values and collective memory. They play a crucial part in keeping cultures alive.

UNESCO, ICH

- "I would rather have a mind opened by wonder than one closed by belief."
- Gerry Spence

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On the one hand, a myth always relates to events alleged to have taken place in time: before the world was created or during its first stages - anyway, long ago. But what gives the myth an operative value is that the specific pattern described is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future.

UNESCO, ICH

The Role of the Author

Intentional Fallacy: It doesn't matter what the author intended. He/She/They are not the final authority of the text. The text itself is. Readers can interpret the text without concern for whether that interpretation was "intended".

Introduced by W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley in The Verbal Icon (1954), the approach was a reaction to the popular belief that to know what the author intended—what he had in mind at the time of writing— was to know the correct interpretation of the work.

Since the authors of these mythical tales cannot be traced, the analysis supports intentional fallacy.

The Role of the Performer

"In some societies for some forms of folklore, as has been clearly established, the narrator may be expected to modify a well-known tale by the substitution of new characters or incidents in an original way or the introduction of a novel twist to the plot, whereas in the fields of kinship, economics, law, or religion, the emphasis may be upon conformity. However, in this respect folklore does not differ from the graphic and plastic arts, music, or the dance, where creativity on the part of the performer may also be expected."

Folklore and Anthropology Author(s): William R. Bascom Source: The Journal of American Folklore, Oct. - Dec., 1953, Vol. 66, No. 262 (Oct. -Dec., 1953), pp. 283-290 Published by: American Folklore Society

As a student of communication design, I took the role of a storyteller and converted some myths into poems to add nuance and rhythm.

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Analysis

There are many methods and approaches to analyse literature and the best possible options to analyse mythical content are as follows, along with their respective pros and cons:

| APPROACH | PROS | CONS | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
| New Criticism | which no author is known or | (1) It is pointless (or even misleading) to do a close reading word-by-word if you are reading the text translated into another language (like English). You must read the original Greek or Latin. (2) Approach is strictly non-chronological, so no room to trace changes. | | |
| Archetypal Criticism | studies. | (1) Tends to lead to subjective and touchy-feely readings when done by Joseph Campbell-In the worst cases turning into mere Reader Response. (2) Tends to lead to reductive, homogenous "cookie-cutter" readings in which critics try to fit all symbols and characters to fit same dozen or archebynes. | | |

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Archetypal Criticism

In the western tradition, Jesus Christ (considered the son of god in that tradition) is sacrificed to save humankind. In the eastern tradition, Lord Shiva drank a lethal dose of poison that otherwise would have polluted the oceans of the world, thus saving the world. Both of these traditions center around a celebration of life and a deliverance from death.

Jungian Criticism: Jung theorized that all humans carry archetypes (universal images and patterns in our individual and collective unconscious). Archetypal criticism therefore seeks to identify and analyze the presence and variance of recognizable archetypes in works of literature. These archetypes are said to be identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as myths, dreams and even ritualized modes of social behaviour.

Common archetypes:

Hero/heroine

Sidekick/helper

Villain

Wise sage

Outcast

Oracle

Caring mother/earth mother

Mad scientist

Femme fatale

Don juan\

Star-crossed lovers

Witch/shrew

Stern father

Damsel in distress

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Archetypal situations:

The task/trial
The journey
The quest
The loss of innocence
The initiation
apocalypse/end of the world
Pursuit of revenge
Descent into the underworld/heavenly
ascent
Searching for father
Damsel in distress

Quest due to Jealousy/ Revenge
Quest due task/trial
The wise sage

The villian

Banishment of the prince

| MYTH | CULTURE | CHARACTERS | CONFLICT | QUEST | SETTING |
|------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|
| Clay on Fire | Madhya Pradesh, tribal folklore | Herd of elephants, group of primitive humans | Accidental discovery of the process of firing of clay | N.A. | Human world |
| A weaver's love | Sherdukpen tribal myth, Arunachal Pradesh | Weaver Girl, her lover who is a snake | No conflict. Only love. | To weave patterns similar to the snake's scales | Human world |
| The art of basketry | Tribal folktale | God, Kamar tribe, Daitya (demon) | Creation of basket weaving | Kama tribe' quest of finding work | God world + human world + demon world |
| The tools of Lohar | Tribal folktale of lohar community of madhya pradesh | Lohar community, God | Problem of the missing tool for metal crafts, process of observation, a kind of self discovery leads to creation of the | The Lohar community's quest to find the hidden tool | God world + human world |

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| MYTH | CULTURE | CHARACTERS | CONFLICT | QUEST | SETTING |
|--|--|--|--|--|----------------------|
| The sky girl and the earth boy | Singhpo (Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh) | - King of sky (Mathum- Matta) - King of earth (Lan- Ning-Nan), - Sky girl (Chikim- Kainang) - Earth boy (Kumsan- Lasipang) | Provide clothes to children of the kings of sky and earth. | Staring life on Earth from scratch. | Human world |
| Hambrumai- the first girl who wove | Kaman Mishmi tribe (Arunachal Pradesh) - Tribal religion | - Goddess Matai - Hambruma the girl - Hairum the porcupine | Hairum the porcupine tries to steal the woven cloth | Hairum's quest to steal the secret of weaving. | God + Human world |
| The Illumination | - Tribal of Madhya Pradesh - Hindu religion | - God Shiva - Crab from patal - Lord shiva's followers | Lord shiva loses himself in a trance and the world goes dark. | The world goes dark and has to lit up again. | God world |
| The First Potter's wheel | -Tribal myth of Madhya Pradesh -Hindu religion | - Brahma - Vishnu - Mahesh - Potter - Other gods | A ritual goes wrong thus leading to the invention of the potter's wheel as the solution | Help the gods who organised the Yajna, provide a sacred pot. | God world |
| Parvati's first Necklace | Hindu religious myth - Madhya Pradesh region | - Lord Shiv - Goddess Parvati, - Nag dev snake god | Accidental creation of ornaments. | To go down on earth to check everything | God world |

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Illustrations

The illustrations highlighted the main characters of the story. The characters are composed in such a way that they show either the main event/purpose of the myth or the chronology of events in the myth.

The first step was to ideate and sketch by hand in a grid book to have an organic yet structured feel since geometry is important in many handicrafts. Especially the myths about weaving had to be geometrical as the references were also very flat and geometrical.

The next step was tracing the rough sketches using Procreate. The colour palette is rich and full of contrast. White on dark backgrounds has been used in all the illustrations to highlight the characters and symbols.



Hand illustrated rough sketch.

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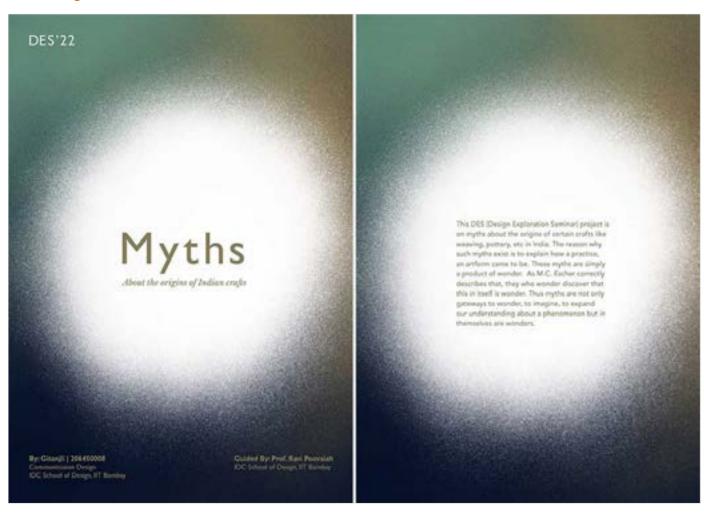
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Final Design

Final Design Download:

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The Sky girl and the Earth boy

When the sky and the earth came into being. A union year meant to come along between the sky girl and the earth buy Who created every craft, cop or life form.

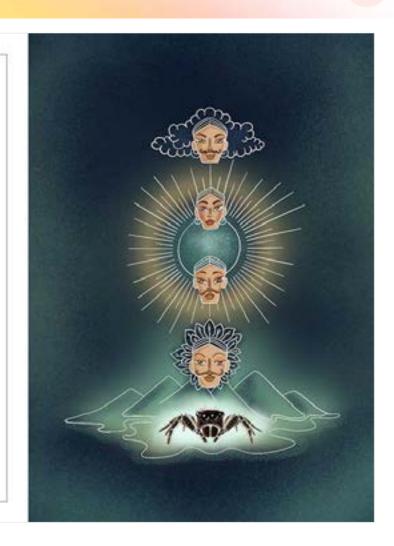
Raja of the Day, Lan-Ming-Man, and Raja of the Early, Mathem Marta decided to get thair childran married. The Day got, Chilon-Raimang and the Barth boy, Karman Lalapang. Benaised from than fathers, many gifts serial.

The bireased spape get everything, every genel Except for any station to every them. And those medium install station his need off. To other is to his daughter, in a box. He also added a pumplish said.

Said, "fastery you have, pay head?"
"Take the box home and open it there. A weaker will come out to weake cloth to wear?

"The used you must plant and grow into a tree, Which will been not hule, not three. And three hules will grow big, so break from open then, To election my blessings and livre entire." Chikam doctanied from the sky to earth. And opened the loos, at the very first. Much to her surprise a spiller jumpled-out. Who her payment gisth without any disults.

Watching the spider, the girl learnt to seese. And in her garden planted the pumpiles sees. Which gives to bear two very precious fruits. From one came all sorts of annuals, from the other same all the grains of food. This is how the sunt of meaning arrived And life on earth Fourished and thrived!



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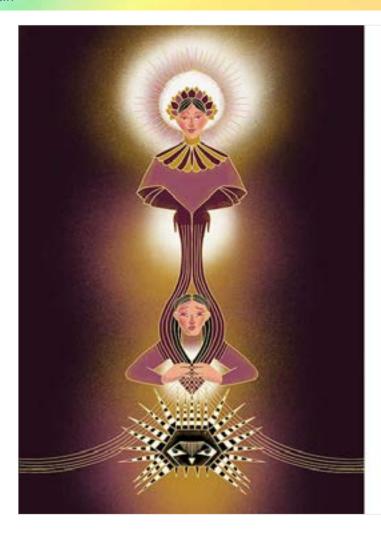
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Hambrumai, the First Girl who wove

The first gift to wrane was a gift named Hambournel, She had learned the art of sessing from God Matal. She would at the the riser and learn her designs fare the name that surbunded her, by watching the names and the rigules that oppound in the riser and by copying the branches of horse, plants and feasiers.

But one day, Hainum, the porougine saw her cloth. Tempted by a rithness hald rever soon before, he came to stead it have her care. The entrance was too arealf for him and as he slied to push his way in, Hamitrumal gost trushed with given seed rocks. Har loom broke into pieces and the river carried them to the plains where progin found it and fearer to where.

The designs turned into butterfiles and the potents she made can still be seen on their airgo.

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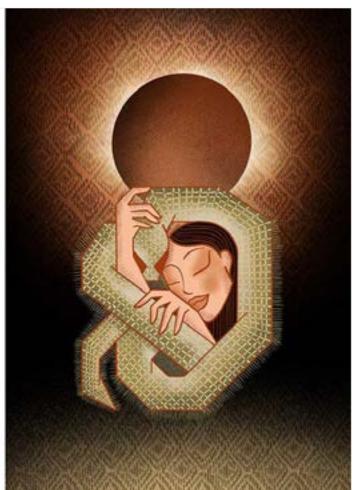
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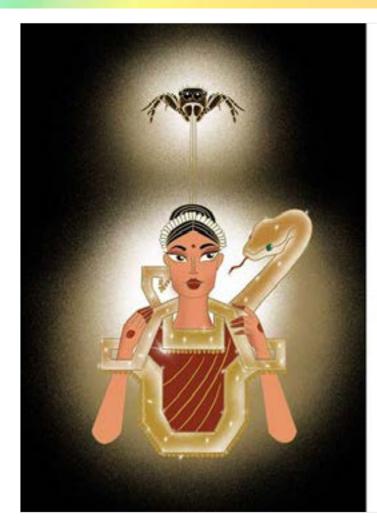
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Parvati's First Necklace

One day, long ago, Bhagnan sold to Mehader and Fansel, 'Go to the explit and size how I has been made and whether anything is legislary'. Mehader wheat "You see we to get there!" Bhagnan told a quicker. Those your thread down to the world and let them sold down for it.

The spidor throw its throad down to the world and Mahadan and Panati slaped down to the earth for bollow the surface. They went further, and saw hig Des the sinaise god, who coiled hinted anound Fanatic arm and reals.

Mahades said. This oresture shall be your emanuers, you shall wear it around on your head, your neck, your wrists and arms for beauty and adorresont." This is how econom began so west arranged.

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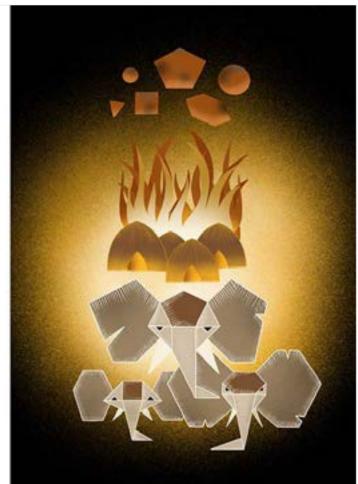
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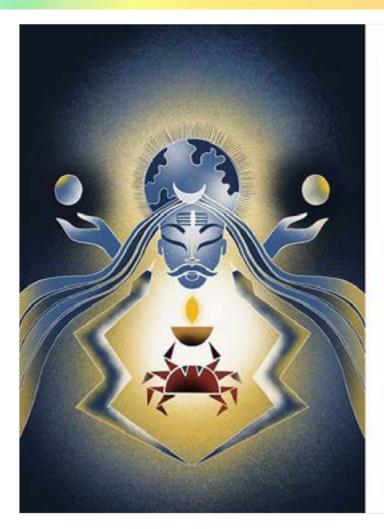
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The Ilumination

To give land above a lump of must, a crob from person last semanged. Shine stack it in his harand slid ress a stumber unalistabless.

A darkness came around after shine entered his trance. With every and fave, his followers began to dance

They bruly write up the god with the help of acceptions B history brakes. Then Shive created a glowing dijet, forever illuminating the dark void of souce.

Another (nunt, of the mud, he used to create this earth and floored it into the asset. Butto took the rest of the mud to earth, to create more langs in Lord Shiva's deviction.

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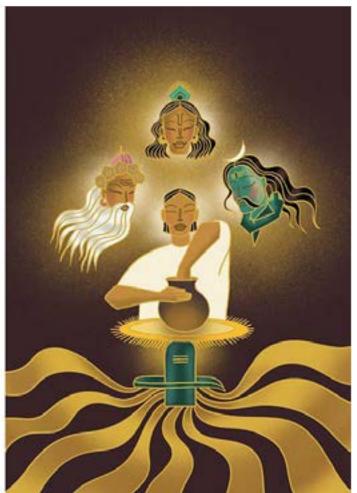
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Conclusion

Through this project I discovered so many myths about our heavily rich and richly varied culture of craftsmanship. It was very delightful to read all sorts of myths and then analyse them. As far as the illustrations are concerned, I really enjoyed exploring them digitally although it would make more sense to create them by hand given the time duration, the digital method seemed appropriate. Following is a much more detailed conclusion:



- 1. By encircling the common points in the above analysis, we can say tribal myths support the power of observation, the intervention of gods and combination of both to be the main reasons for a craft to take birth.
- 2. The presence of a creature magical or not shows the strong influence and appreciation of wildlife in the people's lives. The mention of the creatures suggests that these animals are present in the regions the myths belong to.
- 3. The North-Eastern tribal myths do not have the presence of common Hindu gods. However, the tribal myths of Madhya Pradesh mostly revolve around Lord Shiva, a common Hindu deity.
- 4. The element of gratitude is present in all the tales. None of the myths covered here, boastfully credit the Human mind and consciousness for the creation of the craft. It is indeed very humbling.

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- Folk and tribal designs of india by Enakshi Bhavani Tribal arts and crafts of Madhya Pradesh by Aashi Manohar and Shampa Shah.
- Five contemporary Folk and Tribal Artists of India Jyotindra Jain.
- Myths of North-East Frontier of India by Verrier Elwin.

Articles:

- Ikat Weaves of Indonesia and India: A Comparative Study by Judeith H. Livingston (Vol. 21, No. 1, Exploring India: Utkaldhvani (SPRING 1994), pp. 152-174 (23 pages) Published by: India International Centre.
- The Structural Study of Myth by Clause Levi- Strauss.

PDF Links:

- https://web.cn.edu/kwheeler/documents/Theory_Myth.pdf (for selecting the Literary analysis approach)
- https://www.jstor.org/stable/2798111?seq=1
- http://www.bhopalorbit.com/art-and-craft/terracotta/terracotta.html
- http://nationalcraftsmuseum.nic.in/?my-product_category=terracotta-and-glazed-pottery
- https://slideplayer.com/slide/9311628/
- https://www.britannica.com/topic/myth/Allegorical
- https://www.jstor.org/stable/536722?seq=3

Youtube:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFHPdrq6uv8n

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Contact Details

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