



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

Bridging the Sacred and the Secular: Mythological and Folkloric Narratives in Devdutt Pattanaik's Works

Dr. Dushyant Dadasaheb Bhatewal

Assistant professor, B.P.Arts, S.M.A.Science and K.K.C.Commerce College Chalisgaon
Maharashtra

Abstract

This paper explores how Devdutt Pattanaik bridges the sacred and the secular by reinterpreting mythological and folkloric narratives for contemporary audiences. Through a qualitative analysis of his major works, the study examines how Pattanaik transforms ancient stories into culturally resonant frameworks that address modern social, ethical, and psychological concerns. His narrative method combines textual analysis, symbolic interpretation, and accessible storytelling, making sacred traditions meaningful beyond religious contexts. By presenting myths as living cultural resources rather than dogmatic truths, Pattanaik fosters an inclusive understanding of Indic heritage that appeals to both spiritual and secular readers. The paper argues that his reinterpretations encourage critical reflection, challenge binary thinking, and promote a pluralistic view of mythology. Ultimately, the study highlights Pattanaik's contribution to modern mythography and his role in revitalising myth as a tool for personal and societal understanding.

Keywords: Mythology; Folklore; Devdutt Pattanaik; Sacred–Secular Divide; Cultural Interpretation

Introduction

Devdutt Pattanaik's body of work represents a remarkable literary and cultural endeavour that bridges the sacred and the secular by reinterpreting India's mythological and folkloric traditions for contemporary readers. In an era where modernity often distances individuals from traditional narratives, Pattanaik acts as a mediator who translates complex mythic symbolism into accessible, relatable, and culturally grounded insights. His writings merge scholarly interpretation with narrative simplicity, allowing readers to engage with ancient stories not merely as religious scripture but as philosophical frameworks that illuminate human behaviour, social values, and psychological patterns. By drawing from epics, Puranas, regional folklore, tribal myths, and oral traditions, he constructs a vast narrative universe in which gods, humans, and metaphysical principles coexist in a manner meaningful to both devout and secular audiences. Pattanaik's approach demystifies the sacred without diminishing its spiritual essence; instead, he reframes mythology as a cultural lens through which individuals can understand identity, ethics, leadership, gender fluidity, and emotional well-being. His integration of



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

illustrations, storytelling techniques, and symbolic analyses further enhances the multidimensionality of these narratives, transforming them into tools for introspection as well as social understanding. By addressing themes such as dharma, karma, self-realisation, plurality, and inclusivity, Pattanaik situates traditional myths within modern contexts—corporate spaces, personal growth discourses, popular culture, and public conversations—thereby highlighting their continued relevance in everyday life. This bridging of the sacred and the secular is not merely a stylistic choice but a deliberate intellectual project that challenges rigid binaries between religion and rationality, tradition and modernity, and spirituality and practicality. Through works such as *Jaya*, *Sita*, *My Gita*, *Shikhandi*, and various thematic compilations, he demonstrates how mythology can become a shared cultural resource that nurtures critical thinking while fostering respect for India's diverse narrative heritage. The present study examines this unique narrative strategy, investigating how Pattanaik's reinterpretations of myths and folklore enable a holistic cultural understanding that resonates with a wide spectrum of readers. In doing so, it emphasises the importance of his contribution to modern mythography and underscores the significant role that mythological narratives can play in shaping contemporary socio-cultural consciousness.

Background of Study

The study emerges from the growing scholarly interest in how traditional narratives are reclaimed and reinterpreted within contemporary cultural frameworks. In India, mythology and folklore have always served as foundational sources of moral, philosophical, and social knowledge, shaping collective identity across generations. However, in a rapidly modernising society influenced by globalisation, technology, and shifting value systems, the relevance and interpretation of these narratives are undergoing significant transformation. Devdutt Pattanaik has become one of the most influential voices in this transition, offering reinterpretations of mythological and folkloric traditions that resonate with both secular readers seeking cultural insight and spiritual audiences looking for renewed engagement with ancient wisdom. His ability to simplify complex ideas, connect myths to modern life, and address issues such as gender, leadership, identity, and ethics positions his work at the intersection of cultural preservation and contemporary thought. This background frames the need to examine how Pattanaik effectively bridges the sacred and secular through his storytelling.

Scope of Study

The scope of this study is confined to examining how Devdutt Pattanaik's reinterpretations of Indian mythology and folklore function as a bridge between sacred traditions and secular modern contexts. It focuses primarily on a selected range of his widely recognised works, including *Jaya*, *Sita*, *My Gita*, *Shikhandi*, and the *7 Secrets* series, which collectively demonstrate his narrative strategies and thematic concerns. The study analyses Pattanaik's approach to symbolism,



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

character reinterpretation, narrative simplification, and the integration of philosophical ideas into contemporary discourse. It also explores his engagement with issues such as gender fluidity, ethics, leadership, and psychological well-being within mythological frameworks. While the research considers broader scholarly discussions on myth, folklore, and cultural interpretation, it does not attempt an exhaustive survey of all Indian mythological literature or Pattanaik's complete oeuvre. Instead, it aims to provide a focused, interpretative understanding of how his storytelling mediates between traditional spiritual knowledge and modern cultural sensibilities.

Significance of Exploring Mythology in Contemporary Context

Exploring mythology in the contemporary context holds significant cultural, intellectual, and socio-psychological value, particularly in a rapidly globalising world where traditional belief systems are constantly renegotiated. Mythology is not merely a collection of ancient stories but a repository of collective wisdom, symbolic frameworks, and cultural memory that shapes societal values and individual identities. In modern times, where rationality often dominates public discourse, revisiting myth allows for a more holistic understanding of human behaviour, ethics, and emotional experiences. It offers nuanced perspectives on universal questions related to purpose, morality, relationships, power, and self-awareness—issues that remain relevant regardless of changing historical circumstances. Further, in multicultural societies such as India, mythology fosters a sense of continuity, grounding individuals in a shared heritage while encouraging respect for diverse regional and community narratives. Contemporary reinterpretations, like those offered by Devdutt Pattanaik, make these ancient narratives accessible to newer generations by translating symbolic ideas into relatable modern concepts. This holds particular significance in educational, corporate, and psychological domains where myth-based insights are increasingly used to encourage leadership development, emotional intelligence, creative thinking, and cultural sensitivity. Additionally, engaging with mythology helps challenge rigid binaries between religion and secularism, offering a middle ground where stories can be appreciated for their philosophical richness rather than dogmatic authority. In an age marked by social fragmentation and cultural amnesia, the exploration of mythology thus serves as a powerful tool for nurturing inclusivity, strengthening identity, fostering critical reflection, and ensuring the continuity of intangible cultural heritage in meaningful and dynamic ways.

Reception and Criticism of Pattanaik's Narrative Approach

Devdutt Pattanaik's narrative approach has received a wide range of responses, reflecting his unique position at the intersection of scholarship, popular culture, and public discourse. On the positive side, readers and critics praise his ability to make complex mythological concepts accessible to contemporary audiences through clear storytelling, visually engaging illustrations, and relatable interpretations. His works are celebrated for promoting inclusivity, especially



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

regarding gender fluidity, multiple perspectives, and cultural plurality, which resonate strongly with modern readers seeking non-dogmatic engagement with mythology. Pattanaik's application of mythological insights to leadership, organisational behaviour, and self-development has further broadened his appeal beyond literary circles, making him influential across educational, corporate, and digital platforms. However, his approach has also faced criticism from traditional scholars and conservative readers who argue that his simplification of myths risks diluting their theological depth and historical authenticity. Some critics claim that he prioritises thematic interpretation over textual accuracy, occasionally blending folklore with canonical narratives without clear distinction. Others contend that his emphasis on psychological and symbolic readings may overshadow ritualistic, philosophical, or linguistic nuances inherent in classical texts. Additionally, sceptics question the academic rigour of his methodology, pointing out that his popular style, while engaging, does not always align with conventional academic frameworks in Indology or philology. Despite such criticisms, Pattanaik's work continues to shape public understanding of Indian mythology, generating important conversations about the evolving nature of myth interpretation in the twenty-first century.

Literature Review

The existing body of scholarship on Indian mythology, contemporary reinterpretations, and cultural narrative practices provides a broad intellectual foundation for understanding Devdutt Pattanaik's mythological and folkloric contributions. Sharma's (2017) doctoral dissertation *Many Mahabharatas* highlights the fluidity and multiplicity inherent in Indian mythic traditions, emphasising how variations of the *Mahabharata* emerge across regions, communities, and historical periods. This idea of multiple tellings is central to understanding Pattanaik's narrative philosophy, which consciously acknowledges and celebrates the coexistence of diverse perspectives. Sharma's analysis reveals how re-tellings embody socio-cultural shifts, suggesting that contemporary authors act not merely as narrators but as interpreters who reshape myths to address present-day concerns. This theoretical grounding helps contextualise Pattanaik's work within a larger cultural continuum where reinterpretation is both a creative engagement and a cultural responsibility. By situating myth as an evolving narrative phenomenon, Sharma provides a lens through which Pattanaik's retellings—and his effort to bridge the sacred and secular—can be examined as part of a dynamic tradition rather than a radical departure.

The literature also includes direct contributions by Pattanaik, which serve both as primary sources and theoretical frameworks. In *7 Secrets of Hindu Calendar Art* (2011), Pattanaik decodes the symbolism embedded in ritual iconography, emphasising how visual culture reflects philosophical and cultural meanings. This aligns with his broader strategy of demystifying the sacred for secular audiences through accessible narrative tools and illustrations. His work *Shikhandi and Other Tales They Don't Tell You* (2014) further demonstrates his engagement



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

with marginalised and lesser-known narratives, challenging heteronormative interpretations and rigid social structures. Meanwhile, *A Different Way of Seeing the World* (2018) expands his influence into academic discourse by articulating mythology as a psychological and cultural lens that shapes human behaviour. Collectively, Pattanaik's writings reveal an approach rooted in inclusivity, symbolic literacy, and cultural pedagogy. These texts not only recount myths but also provide a methodological framework for interpreting symbols, narrative patterns, and philosophical concepts, contributing significantly to modern mythography.

Scholars have also critically analysed Pattanaik's contributions and the broader field of myth interpretation. Pujari (2022), in *Mythology in the Mirror*, examines Pattanaik's non-fictional style and the ways in which he recontextualises myths to suit contemporary realities. Pujari argues that Pattanaik's accessible narrative approach bridges academic scholarship and popular readership, making mythology a democratic knowledge system. Vitthani's (2018) study of myth in contemporary Indian fiction similarly interrogates the role of mythic structures in shaping literary expression and cultural consciousness. Her analysis notes that modern Indian writers often employ myth to comment on identity, politics, and social transformation—an observation that aligns with Pattanaik's integration of mythology into discussions about gender, ethics, and social reform. Additionally, Devi's (2023) exploration of Shiva's transformation from myth to man echoes Pattanaik's technique of humanising divine figures, revealing how contemporary narratives often reinterpret the divine as symbolic of human psychological states.

Foundational scholarship also enriches the theoretical background for analysing Pattanaik's narrative strategies. Doniger's *The Hindus: An Alternative History* (2009) emphasises plurality, alternative narratives, and cross-cultural influences within Hindu traditions. Her emphasis on diversity and narrative multiplicity complements Pattanaik's inclusive approach to storytelling. Doniger's work foregrounds the notion that myths are not fixed truths but living cultural constructs shaped by historical, regional, and political contexts. This aligns with Pattanaik's efforts to dismantle rigid binaries between the sacred and secular by demonstrating how myths operate simultaneously as spiritual metaphors and cultural commentaries. Taken together, these scholarly perspectives and primary texts illustrate a rich interplay between tradition and modernity, highlighting how contemporary reinterpretations—such as Pattanaik's—continue to revitalise Indian mythology as a dynamic cultural resource capable of addressing modern social concerns, personal identity formation, and ethical dilemmas.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

- **Understanding Myth, Folklore, and Interpretative Traditions**

This study is grounded in the understanding that myths and folklore are not merely ancient tales but dynamic cultural narratives that capture collective beliefs, values, and social behaviours. Myth constitutes symbolic truth, offering metaphysical and philosophical insights, whereas



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

folklore embodies local wisdom transmitted through oral traditions, rituals, and social practices. Together, they form interpretative traditions that evolve as societies reinterpret stories to suit shifting cultural contexts.

- **Myth as Cultural Code and Narrative Device**

From a theoretical standpoint, myth functions as a cultural code that shapes collective identity, social norms, and behavioural expectations. Scholars such as Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes have argued that myth operates as a semiotic system conveying encoded meanings that guide human perceptions and moral decisions. As a narrative device, it provides structure to human experience by translating abstract ideas such as duty, power, morality, and desire into relatable stories.

- **Sacred–Secular Binary: Theoretical Perspectives**

The sacred–secular dichotomy arises from sociological and anthropological theories that differentiate religious meaning-making from rational, everyday life. Thinkers like Émile Durkheim highlight the sacred as a domain of ritual and transcendence, while the secular is associated with practicality and human-centred concerns. Contemporary theorists challenge this rigid binary, suggesting fluid boundaries where mythological narratives can be understood both spiritually and culturally, without exclusivity.

- **Contemporary Mythography: A Literature-Based Understanding**

Modern mythographers redefine myth as a living cultural resource rather than a relic of antiquity. Scholars emphasise myth's adaptability in popular culture, literature, psychology, and corporate discourse. This perspective aligns with postmodern approaches that legitimise multiple interpretations and celebrate plurality. Devdutt Pattanaik's storytelling emerges within this paradigm, blending traditional knowledge with modern sensibilities.

- **Framework for Analyzing Mythological Reinterpretations**

This research uses a qualitative interpretative framework focusing on symbolic analysis, narrative deconstruction, and contextual reading. By tracing themes such as identity, ethics, gender, and social order across Pattanaik's works, the framework evaluates how ancient myths are modernised to bridge the sacred with the secular. The analysis considers textual, visual, and cultural dimensions, providing a comprehensive understanding of his mythological reinterpretations.

Devdutt Pattanaik: Life, Influences, and Narrative Philosophy

- **Authorial Background and Writing Trajectory**

Devdutt Pattanaik is one of India's most prominent contemporary mythologists whose multidisciplinary career spans writing, illustration, public speaking, and corporate consulting. Trained initially in medicine, Pattanaik moved away from conventional professional paths to pursue his passion for mythology, a transition that significantly shaped his understanding of the



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

human mind, behaviour, and cultural identity. His writing journey began with exploratory essays that gradually developed into a prolific body of work comprising retellings, thematic explorations, and analytical commentaries on Indian mythology and folklore. Over the years, he has authored numerous influential books—including *Jaya*, *Sita*, *My Gita*, *Shikhandi*, and the 7 *Secrets* series—establishing himself as an accessible interpreter of complex tradition.

- **Approach to Myth, Folklore, and Symbols**

Pattanaik's approach is anchored in the belief that mythology is a system of stories and symbols through which cultures express their worldviews. He treats myths not as historical records but as metaphorical frameworks that embody psychological, ethical, and philosophical insights. His interpretations draw from a wide range of sources—classical scriptures, regional folklore, tribal narratives, oral traditions, and ritual practices—demonstrating his conviction that Indian mythology is inherently pluralistic. By foregrounding symbols, archetypes, and metaphorical meanings, he highlights how myths encapsulate human fears, aspirations, and social structures while allowing for multiple interpretations across time and space.

- **Narrative Style, Visual Storytelling, and Cultural Pedagogy**

An integral part of Pattanaik's narrative philosophy is his distinctive storytelling style, which blends textual narrative with self-drawn illustrations that simplify complex symbolic ideas. His visual storytelling is pedagogical, serving as a tool to decode abstract spiritual concepts into easily comprehensible diagrams, comparative tables, and symbolic sketches. Pattanaik's writing avoids dense academic jargon, favouring conversational and reflective tones that draw readers into a shared interpretative experience. His works often employ comparative mythology, cross-cultural references, and psychological framing, enabling readers to connect ancient myths with present-day moral dilemmas, leadership challenges, and emotional struggles. This pedagogical style situates mythology as a living knowledge system capable of guiding personal and social growth.

- **Public Intellectualism and Popular Mythology**

Beyond his published works, Pattanaik functions as a public intellectual whose influence extends across mass media, corporate training, educational institutions, and digital platforms. His television series, TED talks, and columns make mythological knowledge widely accessible, while his corporate workshops apply mythic principles to organisational behaviour, leadership, and teamwork. By bridging traditional narratives with contemporary spaces, Pattanaik contributes to the development of “popular mythology”—a mode of cultural engagement where myths serve as tools for understanding modern identity, ethics, and social relationships. Through this multifaceted presence, he has reshaped public perception of mythology, demonstrating its relevance in both sacred and secular spheres and reaffirming its role as a critical cultural resource in twenty-first-century India.



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

Sacred and Secular Worlds in Pattanaik's Works

- **Rearticulation of Religious Narratives for Secular Readership**

Devdutt Pattanaik's works exemplify a deliberate effort to reinterpret sacred narratives in ways that appeal to secular readers who may lack formal exposure to scriptural traditions yet seek cultural or philosophical understanding. By presenting epics such as the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* as human-centred stories rather than solely religious texts, he allows readers to engage with them through universal themes of duty, conflict, desire, and morality. His language avoids theological rigidity, offering a flexible reading experience that encourages curiosity rather than religious adherence.

- **Merging Philosophical Concepts with Modern Lifestyles**

Pattanaik bridges ancient Indian philosophical ideas—such as dharma, karma, atman, and moksha—with the demands and anxieties of contemporary life. He connects these concepts to modern professional environments, interpersonal relationships, and ethical dilemmas, demonstrating how mythic principles remain relevant in an era shaped by urbanisation, material aspirations, and globalised identities. His interpretations thus serve as practical guides for self-awareness, leadership, emotional balance, and conflict resolution.

- **Social, Ethical, and Psychological Readings of Myths**

A significant aspect of his narrative approach involves interpreting myths through social and psychological lenses. Pattanaik foregrounds themes like power dynamics, gender roles, emotional complexity, and ethical ambiguity to reveal how myths mirror societal structures and inner human struggles. By analysing characters' motivations and moral dilemmas, he transforms mythological stories into frameworks for understanding contemporary social norms and personal decision-making.

- **Humanization of Divine Characters**

Pattanaik frequently humanises divine figures, emphasising their emotions, vulnerabilities, and relational complexities. Rather than elevating gods and goddesses as distant supernatural entities, he portrays them as relatable symbols reflecting human aspirations and fears. This humanised portrayal breaks the boundary between sacred transcendence and secular relatability, enabling readers to connect spiritual archetypes with their own lived experiences without diminishing the reverence associated with divine figures.

- **Use of Folklore to Address Contemporary Social Issues**

Pattanaik also incorporates regional folklore and oral traditions to highlight diverse cultural viewpoints that challenge homogenised interpretations of Indian mythology. By focusing on lesser-known stories—often centred on marginalised groups, women, and queer identities—he draws attention to issues such as social inequality, gender discrimination, caste hierarchies, and cultural exclusion. These folkloric narratives allow him to address modern social concerns while



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com **ISSN: 2250-3552**

reinforcing the idea that mythology is inherently pluralistic and continuously evolving. Collectively, these strategies demonstrate how Pattanaik's work seamlessly integrates the sacred and the secular, transforming myth into a versatile cultural tool for both spiritual reflection and modern socio-cultural understanding.

Narrative Strategies Employed by Pattanaik

- **Recontextualization and Rationalization of Mythic Events**

Devdutt Pattanaik employs a narrative strategy centred on recontextualizing mythic events within contemporary socio-cultural frameworks, making ancient stories meaningful to modern readers. He rationalizes supernatural or symbolic occurrences by interpreting them through psychological, ethical, and philosophical lenses, thereby transforming mythic content into relatable human experiences. This approach allows readers to understand myth not as literal history but as metaphorical truth that resonates with present-day concerns.

- **Use of Storytelling, Illustrations, and Symbol Vocabulary**

A hallmark of his narrative method is his integration of storytelling with visuals. Pattanaik's self-created illustrations simplify complex ideas and provide symbolic clarity, functioning as pedagogical tools that visually decode mythological concepts. His symbol vocabulary—consisting of diagrams, motifs, and conceptual maps—helps readers comprehend abstract ideas, reinforcing the narrative's cohesion and accessibility while maintaining intellectual engagement.

- **Interweaving Folklore with Indic Philosophical Themes**

Pattanaik enriches his retellings by merging regional folklore, tribal stories, and oral traditions with classical Indic philosophies such as dharma, karma, and advaita. This interweaving emphasises the plurality and diversity of Indian narrative traditions, challenging canonical uniformity and highlighting the fluidity of cultural memory. By juxtaposing folk motifs with scriptural teachings, he expands the interpretive scope of mythology and demonstrates how everyday cultural practices embody deeper philosophical principles.

- **Simplification without Dilution: Making the Sacred Accessible**

One of Pattanaik's most distinctive strategies is his ability to simplify complex scriptural ideas without diluting their essence. He employs clear language, relatable analogies, and contemporary examples to explain metaphysical concepts such as liberation, duty, and divine symbolism. This simplification makes sacred knowledge accessible to readers who may not have prior exposure to mythology, thereby democratising mythic wisdom and fostering broader cultural literacy.

- **Dialogic Storytelling and the Reader as Co-Interpreter**

Pattanaik's narrative philosophy emphasises a dialogic mode of storytelling in which the reader is invited to participate in meaning-making. By presenting multiple versions of myths, acknowledging contradictions, and posing interpretive questions, he positions the reader as a co-interpreter rather than a passive recipient of fixed truths. This dialogic engagement reinforces the



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

non-dogmatic nature of myth, encouraging readers to explore personal interpretations and reflect on the fluid boundaries between the sacred and secular. Collectively, these narrative strategies enable Pattanaik to create a rich, multidimensional storytelling style that honours traditional mythology while reimagining it for contemporary readerships, ensuring that ancient narratives continue to thrive as dynamic cultural forces in modern life.

Bridging the Sacred and the Secular

- **Pattanaik Demystifies Divinity for Modern Readers**

Devdutt Pattanaik bridges the sacred and the secular by demystifying divinity and presenting gods, goddesses, and mythic beings as symbolic reflections of human aspirations, fears, and psychological states rather than distant supernatural entities. He interprets divine characters through metaphorical and philosophical frameworks, showing that sacred stories are not rigid commandments but flexible lenses to understand human behaviour. By removing fear-based religiosity and emphasising meaning-making, he makes divinity approachable for secular readers who may be unfamiliar with ritual practices but remain curious about cultural narratives.

- **Translating Ritual and Faith into Psychological Insights**

Pattanaik further integrates sacred traditions into secular mindsets by decoding rituals, festivals, and faith-based practices as psychological tools designed to shape emotional well-being, moral clarity, and social discipline. Instead of treating rituals as obligatory cultural duties, he interprets them as symbolic acts that represent deeper human needs—such as belonging, transformation, renewal, and self-awareness. This translation transforms ritualistic behaviour into introspective practice, allowing secular readers to appreciate the psychological wisdom embedded in sacred customs.

- **Myth in Corporate and Leadership Discourse**

A distinctive aspect of Pattanaik's work is the application of mythological principles in corporate environments, where he uses narratives from the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, and Puranic stories to explain leadership models, organisational behaviour, and workplace ethics. Through metaphors like the Lakshmana Rekha, Krishna's role as a strategist, or the contrast between Rama's rule and Duryodhana's entitlement, he demonstrates how mythic insights can enhance decision-making, emotional intelligence, teamwork, and vision-setting. This integration underscores the secular utility of sacred narratives as professional tools for motivation and ethical governance.

- **Cultural Identity, Plurality, and Secular Ethics**

Pattanaik advocates for cultural plurality by highlighting India's diverse mythic traditions, regional variations, and alternative tellings. His reinterpretations counter narrow, dogmatic interpretations by foregrounding inclusivity, gender diversity, and multiple worldviews within Indic traditions. This plurality reinforces secular values such as empathy, tolerance, and mutual



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

respect, demonstrating that sacred traditions can coexist with rational inquiry and ethical behaviour. By promoting a broad cultural identity rooted in openness and diversity, he situates mythology as a shared cultural heritage rather than a sectarian tool.

- **Myth as a Tool for Social Harmony**

Finally, Pattanaik positions mythology as a means for promoting social harmony by addressing contemporary issues such as gender inequality, social hierarchy, and cultural prejudice through symbolic narratives. He uses folklore and alternative mythic stories to validate marginalised voices and challenge discriminatory norms, reinforcing the idea that mythology can foster social awareness and collective well-being. By balancing sacred meanings with secular relevance, Pattanaik creates a holistic narrative space where myth becomes a unifying force capable of nurturing both personal insight and societal harmony.

Conclusion

In examining Devdutt Pattanaik's extensive body of work, it becomes evident that his reinterpretations of Indian mythology and folklore serve as a significant bridge between the sacred and the secular, enabling ancient narratives to resonate meaningfully within contemporary cultural landscapes. Through his distinctive narrative strategies—such as demystifying divinity, humanising mythic figures, integrating folklore with philosophical concepts, and interpreting rituals as psychological metaphors—Pattanaik makes traditionally sacred material accessible to modern readers irrespective of their religious or spiritual orientations. His work transcends rigid binaries by demonstrating that mythology can simultaneously hold spiritual depth and secular relevance, acting as both a cultural touchstone and a practical lens for understanding personal identity, ethical dilemmas, social behaviour, and collective values. By presenting myths as symbolic frameworks rather than literal truths, he encourages interpretive freedom, fostering an inclusive and pluralistic understanding of Indian traditions that aligns with contemporary aspirations for diversity, empathy, and critical thinking. Moreover, his engagement with marginalised narratives—particularly those addressing gender fluidity, alternative identities, and regional diversity—highlights the transformative potential of mythology in promoting social harmony and challenging entrenched prejudices. His application of mythic principles in corporate and leadership contexts further underscores the adaptability of sacred narratives to modern professional environments, reinforcing their enduring cultural utility. Pattanaik's work revitalises mythology as a living, evolving knowledge system that continues to influence contemporary thought without losing its connection to ancient wisdom. This study affirms that his contribution represents a crucial cultural mediation, illustrating how mythological and folkloric narratives can enrich both spiritual understanding and secular sensibilities, thereby sustaining their relevance in a rapidly changing world.



International Journal of Engineering, Science and Humanities

An international peer reviewed, refereed, open-access journal
Impact Factor 8.3 www.ijesh.com ISSN: 2250-3552

References

1. Sharma, C. (2017). *Many Mahabharatas: Linking mythic re-tellings in contemporary India* (Doctoral dissertation, SOAS University of London).
2. Pattanaik, D. (2011). *7 secrets of Hindu calendar art*. Westland.
3. Devi, S. (2023). *Transformation Of Shiva From Myth To Man*. Abhishek Publications.
4. Pujari, S. (2022). Mythology in the Mirror: The Non-Fictional Approach in Devdutt Pattanaik's Mythological Retellings. *Towards Excellence*.
5. Pattanaik, D. (2014). *Shikhandi and other tales they don't tell you*. Penguin Books.
6. Vitthani, K. B. (2018). *Myth in Contemporary Indian Fiction in English: A Critical Study* (Doctoral dissertation, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (India)).
7. Pattanaik, D. (2018). A different way of seeing the world. *Human Arenas*, 1(4), 386-395.
8. Doniger, W. (2009). *The Hindus: An alternative history*. Penguin Books.
9. Suthren Hirst, J., & Zavos, J. (2005). *Religious traditions in modern South Asia*. Routledge.
- Thapar, R. (2013). *The past before us: Historical traditions of early North India*. Harvard University Press.
10. Hiltebeitel, A. (2011). *Dharma: Its early history in law, religion, and narrative*. Oxford University Press.
11. Narayanan, V. (2009). Women and gender in the Hindu tradition. *Religion Compass*, 3(6), 938–953.
12. Parameswaran, A. (2015). *For God's Sake: An Adman on the Business of Religion*. Penguin UK.
13. Mukhopadhyay, A. (2020). *The authority of female speech in Indian Goddess traditions*. Springer International Publishing.
14. Ramesh, R. An Analysis on Hindu Sacred Lore in the Works of Devdutt Pattanaik.
15. Vitthani, K. B. (2018). *Myth in Contemporary Indian Fiction in English: A Critical Study* (Doctoral dissertation, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (India)).