



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCE RESEARCH, IDEAS AND INNOVATIONS IN TECHNOLOGY

ISSN: 2454-132X

Impact factor: 4.295

(Volume 5, Issue 1)

Available online at: www.ijariit.com

(Re)-mythifying the popular: Are some excavations too strenuous for ordinary readers

Poumita Paul

poumiknowsyou@gmail.com

Tripura University, Agartala, Tripura

ABSTRACT

*Over the last decade, rectification and reinterpretation of Historical and Mythological facts had been one of the most popular themes in Indian English Literature. The demystifications portrayed in the works of Ashwin Sanghi, Christopher Doyle and Amish Tripathy were very much successful in indulging the element of mystery and thrill amongst the readers due to their adroit defamiliarization of the familiar tales. To attain such defamiliarization, many authors tend to adopt a number of interdisciplinary methodologies to excavate the alternate interpretations. These calculative discourses from the fields of Geography, Archaeology, Chemistry, Geography or Mathematics form the twists in the tale that leads to the conclusion. But, the problem is that what fraction of the Indian myth-loving culture is subjected to these bodies of knowledge. For example, Ashwin Sanghi's: *The Krishna Key* has an illustration of the Cartesian equation in a quatic plain curve to obtain The Swastika symbol. Hence, the theme primarily associated with the cultural aspects, seem to take an applied dimension. Unfortunately, such methodologies of interpretation cannot be perfectly grasped by the Indians belonging to every exposure of the society. It needs sheer knowledge and scholastic prerequisites to fully enjoy the depth of such works. This paper tries to find the gravity and the extent of relatability of such depictions with the common readers of the country, the probable problems and as such, identify the authors' objectives and the presumable target readers.*

Keywords— (Re)-mythification, Past, Interdisciplinary, Strenuous, Target readers, Contemporary Indian English literature

1. INTRODUCTION

Readership in India always had a strange reverence towards its enriched past; be it in the form of mythology, history or the country's political tradition. This, probably, is the reason that even after a lot of literary revamps, 'past culture' is a leading concern in a large number of 21st-century novels. However, to cater to the needs of the Post-modern readers, a commercial contemporary author chooses to provide a different interpretation of the popular past. This includes an innovative restructuring of the existing mythological and historical tales. As such, to defamiliarize the familiar, authors like Christopher C Doyle, Ashwin Sanghi, Mainak Dhar, Clark Prasad, Satyarth Nayak and Rajiv Menon intend to add a thrill amongst the readers through mystery-solving excavations.

The concern of this paper lies in the implementation of mechanisms in such excavations, which at times, seems too scholarly for the common readers. For instance, in Ashwin Sanghi's *The Krishna Key*, the pursuit for the Swastika Mani accompanies various calculative measurements such as the latitudinal and longitudinal extensions of the globe and the Cartesian equations in a quatic plain curve. These syntheses of academic disciplines in a single cultural text, however, become a little hard to chew for the common readers. Unfortunately, Sanghi's novel is not the only one to make the list. The reading of such work clearly needs sheer knowledge and scholastic prerequisites to be relished fully, which are ironically boasted of being ideals for a common history lover or a thriller freak.

This paper, in this regard, would make an attempt to explore facets regarding the authorship and readerships of these historical/mythological thrillers. It would like to examine:

- Perceptions behind the implementation of the new techniques
- Readers and their problems.
- Is there a solution to the problem

2. PERCEPTION BEHIND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW TECHNIQUES

Most of the contemporary Indian mythological/historical thrillers follow systematic encryption of clues that would lead towards the climax. The semiotics involved in the encryptions usually constitute to a number of systematised multi-disciplinary approaches

addressing the culture. For example, a mythological symbol with geographical significance studied through mathematical equations. Clark Prasad's application of Quantum Mechanics to understand the Vedas is an example as such. However, there are a number of influential factors guiding the perceptions of such authors.

2.1 The new idea of a thriller

Generally, a thriller refers to such work of fiction or drama that are designed to hold the interest by the use of a high degree of intrigue, adventure or suspense. But, nowadays, the idea is often characterised by the essential features associated with the popular products of the genre. As such, it is worth mentioning that the instinct associated with popular thrillers like *The Bond Series* or Robert Ludlum's *Bourne Series* or the works of Dan Brown displays highly technical and applied academic equations, often subjected to encoding and decoding. As such, many authors tend to generate this stereotyped idea of a thriller by imposing such encryptions of academic arsenals in every possible theme.

2.2 The Dan Brown factor

Dan Brown is, perhaps, a father figure in the world of historical reinventions. In his *The Da Vinci Code*, *Angels and Demons* and *Inferno*, Brown firmly crafted an alternative view of the Biblical readings employing highly calculative measures. Symbology, Cartography, Geometry and Cryptography etc, were the companions of the thrills produced by these novels.

Dan Brown's influence is evident in almost all the Indian retellings. His technique of encryptions subjected by conspiracy theories, thus, gets recurred within the Indian counterparts.

2.3 Authorial ambitions

Every author loves to bag from his product, be it in terms of money or applaude. So, after being witnesses to the intellectual roasting of certain popular commercial authors, every author tends to impose a little intellectual genius onto his work. Synthesis of various disciplines is, hence, a good way to garner praises.

But, at times, it feels like instances in such historical and mythological thrillers are little too dramatic. For example, in Ashwin Sanghi's *The Rozabal Line*, the operations of diverse disciplines like Oriental Meditation Therapy, Psychological Counselling sans Astrological numbers corresponding each other to reach the climax seems to fit in perfectly as the scenes of a feature film. Thus, it is often felt that authors like Ashwin Sanghi or Rajiv Menon are often oriented towards audio-visuality.

2.4 Peer pressure

Much like the competition amongst the school kids, the authors of this genre to are sometimes ridden by such aspects of psychology. For example, if author A implements Nuclear Studies in his mythological thrillers, author B would go for synthesis of Quantum Physics and Astronomy. As such, author C would employ the juxtaposition of Chemical Science, Meteorology and Genetic Biology in his work. Thus, the trend of scholasticism increases with the intellectual difficulties of the common readers.

3. READERS AND THEIR PROBLEMS

Targeted primarily towards history lovers, such texts of cultural reinterpretations are amongst the highest grosser of Indian English fictions. Though Sanghi and Doyle's books are widely praised by a section of Indian readers, the problem arises when a reader tends to go through the code-breaking aspects of such novels. The successful relishment of any thriller lies in the systematic acquiring of every bits and pieces of the narrative puzzle, failing to which, a reader's interest gets lost. As such the application of erudite scholasticism in these retellings leads to disproportionate titillations amongst the readers. Age, qualification and fields of study are amongst the factors responsible for such disproportions.

3.1 Age and understanding

Two of the most common topics for an elementary level debate competition are Religion vs Science and Science vs Arts. Looking at the enthusiasms for reciprocal harassments among the parties, it is quite evident that Science + Theology = Literature is quite an absurd concept till a certain age. Also, the likes of Gold-Dollar transactions (as in Ashwin Sanghi's *Chanakya's Chant*) or Quantum Mechanics (as in Clark Prasad's *Baramulla Bomber*) are quite aliens for most of the students within the Secondary School curriculum. As such, decoding of such historical-mythological thrillers would not be proper for the History toppers till a certain age.

3.2 Academic qualifications

According to Census 2011, only 4.5% of the Indians are enrolled as Graduate or above. As such, the academic depth does not allow most of the English-knowing School/College-dropouts to have a proper connection with such scholastic syntheses in the reinterpreted texts.

3.3 Field of study

Being aware of the phenomena of a system gives every reader the pleasure to enjoy reading. But, a synthesis of many disciplines within a single text, somehow deprives such chances. To be frank, a person of highest qualification in mythological studies might not be fully aware of the quatic plane equations. As such, he might face a number of problems while studying Ashwin Sanghi's mythological thrillers. On the other hand, an Electrical Engineer going through Christopher C Doyle's *The Mahabharata Series* might face problems while going through the Archeo-geographical phenomena within the texts. As such, such a synthesis of scholasticism fails to generate an expert reader, depriving them of total relished.

Also, readership backgrounds are varied and a person attracted towards such reinterpretations might be a man/woman of Commerce and Management, Arts and Humanities or Science and Technology. It should also be remembered that such Post-Stream bifurcation academics dismiss large fraction knowledge from a student's genius.

4. CAN THE PROBLEM BE SOLVED

They say, literature has no rules and this trend would also remain to exist, at least for some time. Though the plots and threads of text are unchallengeable, an effective declaration and generic classifications adopted by the literary faculty of India, the authors, the publishers and the promoters might help a little the readership of such texts. The following measures if not solve, might address this problem.

4.1 The genre

A proper exploration of attributes should be studied before clubbing a text into a genre. For example, marking both Amish Tripathy's *The Shiva Trilogy* and Ashwin Sanghi's *The Krishna Key* as Mythological Thrillers would not be a wise idea.

4.2 Target audience

A perfect statement regarding the target audience of the texts should be declared for not a mere Mythology or Theology lover or a child addicted to *Harry Potter Series* or a Historical genius can adopt the strings of Scholastic synthesis in such texts.

4.3 Author's part

The authors should be more slow, simple and gradual in the application of such phenomena of knowledge, to allow the readers a comfortable cope-up with the narratives.

5. CONCLUSION

The problem with the problem is that not many people would like to address such an issue. Since the fan-bases of most of these thrillers lie within the adults with higher qualifications and the play of ego and intellectual priorities becomes major factors leading to generalised praise for them.

As such, who will bell the cat. But, the superficial acceptance of such texts would certainly lead to a decayed readership and half-way scholasticism much like the pleasure garnered by the impatient readers skipping to the last page of a detective story. Still, research would be done and these would be submitted; may be on the characterisations or the reinventions, leaving the synthesis of knowledge undisturbed. So, is the author or his efforts successful as such?

Nonetheless, one has to speak, get the literary faculties alarmed to get a proper classification of genre and readership. Such a measure might lead the authors to inculcate the prerequisites and follow the process with chunks of simpler knowledge.

6. REFERENCES

- [1] Brown, Dan, *The Da Vinci Code*, Anchor, 2006 Edition.
- [2] Brown, Dan, *Angels and Demons*, Atria Books, Reprint Edition, 2005.
- [3] Doyle, Christopher C, *The Mahabharata Secret*, Om Books, 2013.
- [4] Doyle, Christopher C, *The Mahabharata Quest: The Alexander Secret*, Westland Ltd, 2014.
- [5] Literacy and Level of Education, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2011.
- [6] Menon, Rajiv G, *Thundergod: The Ascendance of Indra*, Westland Ltd, 2012.
- [7] Mukherjee, Dipanjoy, "Amish Tripathi's *The Immortals of Meluha (Shiva Trilogy 1): A Critical Appreciation*", *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, Vol. 4, Issue 1, January 2016. Accessed 14 May 2017.
- [8] Nair, Divya. "Ashwin Sanghi: The birth of India's Dan Brown", *Rediff.com*, 4 December 2012. <rediff.com/2012/12/04/getahead/report/slide-show-1-specials-interview-with-ashwin-sanghi/2012/204.htm>
- [9] Nayak, Satyarth, *The Emperor's Riddles*, Amaryllis, 2014.
- [10] Noorani, Shabbir I. "The Contemporary Indian historical, political novel in English: A Critical Assessment", Shivaji University, 2007. Accessed 10 April 2017.
- [11] Pannikeri, Rohit. "A fresh new narrative", *The Times of India LIFE*, 15 September 2011, 12:00 AM. Accessed 10 April 2017 <timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011/9/15/life-style/books/features/A-fresh-new-narrative/articleshow/9860844.cms>
- [12] Prasad, Clark, *Baramulla Bomber*, Niyogi Books India, August 2013.
- [13] Price, David Walter, *History Made, History Imagined: Contemporary Literature, Poiesis, and Past*, University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- [14] Ranganathan, Mala. "Reinventing history a study of Amitabh Ghosh's novels", North Eastern Hill University, 23 November 2012. Accessed 10 April 2017.
- [15] Ratna, N. "Decoding of the encoded world in elect works of dan brown", Manomaniam Sundaranar University, 2016. Accessed 14 May 2017.
- [16] Sanghi, Ashwin, *The Rozabal Line*, Westland Ltd, 2008.
- [17] Sanghi, Ashwin, *Chanakya's Chant*, Westland Ltd, 2010.
- [18] Sanghi, Ashwin, *The Krishna Key*, Westland Ltd, 2012.
- [19] Sanghi, Ashwin, *The Sialkot Saga*, Westland Ltd, 2016.
- [20] Tripathy, Amish, *The Immortals of Meluha*, Westland Ltd, 2010.
- [21] Tripathy, Amish, *The Secret of the Nagas*, Westland Ltd, 2011.
- [22] Tripathy, Amish, *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, Westland, 2013.