

# A Study On The Works Of Anand Neelkantan

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the RPW-1, I have chosen four papers which throw light on the Indian writing in English, particularly the contemporary works related to Indian mythology. As a continuance to the review of literature, I have selected four more papers for the RPW-2. I have studied these papers which would reflect my specific area of research—a study on the works of Anand Neelakantan. Paper-1 deals with progressive topics, modern representation of Hindu mythological characters and revisits to these stories with a feminist lens. In paper-2, we find the breaking of the binary opposition through the description of Ravana and Surpanakha. Paper-3 presents the two Indian mythological female characters—Sita and Meenakshi—as shining examples of strength and courage to women of every age. The last paper aims at breaking the stereotypical image of Duryodhana as an evil and proves him as an idealist in postmodern perspective.

### **Anand Neelkantan Biography;**

- An Indian author, columnist, screenwriter and public speaker
- An alumnus of Government Engineering college, Trichur in Kerala
- Worked for Indian oil corporation from 1999 to 2022
- Known for writing mythological fictions and the style of telling stories from the perspective of antagonists or supporting characters of a larger work
- Kalinga International literary award – 2017
- Three of his books have been shortlisted for cross word book award during the respective years

## PAPER-I

### **Retellings of Hindu Mythological Stories through 21st Century Hindi Cinema and Literature -Aayushi Dani and Sanidhya Sharma**

This research paper analyzes the correlation between ancient Hindu mythology, modern Indian literature and 21st century Hindi cinema. It focuses on the introduction of progressive topics, modern representation of Hindu mythological characters and revisits to these stories with a feminist lens. With changing times, the way centuries-old mythology is being retold has also changed. New age retellings (movies, shows, books) show a huge influence of Hindi cinema. We observe the western influence in the modern representations and portrayal of Hindu mythological characters. They display an array of divergent attitudes towards the characters and incidents in the Indian Epics and Mythology. There was an attempt to deal with the mythic tales from a feminist perspective. Respective authors/movies/shows utilized myth creatively to deal with the plight of the present. Based on analysis of movies, shows and books four parameters—Relevance, Representation, Western influence and Feminist perspective—have been used to critically assess the subject and content and the books and novels, movies and shows analyzed are the following:

<b>Movies &amp; Shows</b>	<b>Books &amp; Novels</b>
Rajneeti(2010)	The palace of illusions
Ravan(2010)	Asura:Tale of the vanquished
Sacred Games(2018)	Ajaya Book 1-Roll of the dice
Afsos(2020)	Shikhandi
Asur(2020)	The Meluha Book series

Gap: The size of the Survey and content should have been relatively more

## PAPER-II

### **Celebrating Silence and Otherness: A Reading of Kavita Kane's Lanka's Princess and Anand Neelakantan's Asura: Tale of the Vanquished** – Saba Anish & Dwijen Sharma

The present paper will attempt to study Kavita Kane's Lanka's princess and Anand Neelakantan's Asura: Tale of the Vanquished in the light of the trends that have emerged in this relatively new genre of retelling myth. In their attempt to subvert the fixity of the binary opposites, the authors have drawn insights from critical theories like postmodernism, feminism and deconstruction. The age old dichotomous assumption between good and evil has been made fluid. The postmodern writers have deconstructed both Indian history and the age old Indian perspective of victory of good over evil which has led to the breaking of the binary concepts like right vs wrong, just vs unjust, god vs demon. They broke the larger than life image of Gods sprinkling a more humane flavor to the so called demons

Kavita Kane's Lanka's Princess makes the familiar events unfold through the eyes of a woman more hated than hateful-Meenakshi(Surpanakha):

- Kuber's attempt to abduct Meenakshi
- Laxmana's maiming of Meenakshi
- Gods deceiving of Kumbhakarna
- The killing of Meghnad
- Sita's Agnipariksha

Neelkantan's narrative from Ravana's standpoint :

Two asuras-Ravan and Bhadra-voices that have so long remained suppressed and unheard – are prime narrators. The accepted notions of good vs evil are throughout thwarted in the text making the binary opposites fluid and flexible:

- Bhramins performing yagnas
- Castless society of Asuras
- Devas dishonouring their women
- Queen Mandodari abduction and molestation
- Shambuka episode

Gap: The themes like caste system, race, colour and social system could be studied comprehensively

## PAPER III

### **A New Perspective of Female Mythological Characters: Sita and Surpanakha** -Ayuta Mohanty & Puja Khandelwal

The Indian mythology reflects the patriarchal attitudes and portrays women as passive, submissive and frail beings. With passage of time, the contemporary writers have started to portray these female characters in new 'Avtaar' giving them voice and choice. This article discusses two such characters from the epic the Ramayana-Sita and Surpanakha and the books under discussion are The Girl Who Chose by Devdutt Pattanaik and Ravana's sister: Meenakshi by Anand Neelakantan. The two characters have been shown as shining examples of strength and courage to women of every age

Pattanaik in The Girl Who Chose talks about the five choices that were made by Sita to show that she was brave and strong enough to make choices and face any consequences

- Making a choice to go with Rama to forest
- Crossing Lakshman Rekha and offering food to the hungry soul
- Refusing to go with Hanuman to Rama
- Wanting to go with Rama to Ayodhya after war
- Deciding not to go with Rama to the kingdom and sending sons Luv and Kush

The novel Ravana's sister: Meenakshi too presents the story of Surpanakha in a brave light. She told Sita the following:

- One should not hold oneself responsible for other's mistakes
- Men like Rama and Ravana need to fight wars to protect their ego and safeguard their property
- She fought bitterness with all her will after maiming
- She said, "It's a sin to feel like a victim. I am not a victim, Sita, neither are you. We all made our choices. We chose our men, we chose our destinies and we chose our lives
- She explained to Sita how important it is to see beauty in every aspect of life

should have been given more voice.

#### PAPER-IV

### Postmodern Perspective on Rewriting the Myth Mahabharata: The Deviating Depiction of Duryodhana in Anand Neelakantan's Roll of the Dice -Sowmya.T and Dr.S. Christina Rebecca

Rewriting the myth paves way for the development of new concepts, ideas about certain incidents or events that in turn provide a distinct perspective of the myth. Intertextuality makes the novel open to different interpretations. This article aims at breaking the stereotypical image of Duryodhana as an evil and proves him as an idealist. The postmodern writer is free to rewrite the antique texts into the fictional modern world

Neelakantan in *The Roll of the Dice* brings to the fore the popular receptive notion of Duryodhana, not just being a catalectic personality bringing war between brothers and doing evil but also a human who longed for equality and who gave voice to the voiceless :

- Pandavas follow class distinction but Suyodhana objects to it and makes Karna, the son of a charioteer, the king of Anga based on wisdom
- Neelakantan recreates the events of targeting a bird and bringing the king Panchala presenting Suyodhana as a kind-hearted human
- There was an attempt to make the novel more fictitious by bringing in love between Suyodhana and Subhadra
- Drona hates Suyodhana for not caring for the taboos and eating with Shudras
- If Duryodhana was an evil man, why did great men like Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and the entire army of Krishna, fight the war on his side?

Gap: Is postmodernism not governed by any rule and how far is metafiction advantageous ?

#### II. Conclusion

This paper discusses contemporary mythology to a larger extent. The characters portrayed are either suppressed or supported ones in Indian mythology. Even the presentation has been made from the famous antagonists' perspective like Ravana and Duryodhana. This is an emergence of a new trend - rewriting, recreating, retelling, remembering, reintroducing, reimagining the myths with contemporary perspective in the present century. Anand Neelakantan is famous for such style of writing. This popular and familiar style of retelling myths needs to get explored to deal with the plight of the present. In such spirit the following concepts can be studied in detail:

- The impact of retelling myths on thought process can be studied in detail
- The plight of female characters can be studied
- Themes like caste, race, colour and social system may be analyzed further
- The pros and cons of Deconstruction of grand narratives can be analyzed

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