



Myth and the Market: Indian Consumer through a mythological lens

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Abstract: Indian Mythology has long impacted the cultural identities, collective values, and remunerative structures advancing through wavering political and economic landscapes. In an era governed by commercialism and consumerism, mythological narratives persist to shape labelling, business ethics and merchandise strategies in contemporary India. This paper explores the intersections of mythology, capitalism and consumer culture through the analysis of Devdutt Pattanaik's *Business Sutra* and Gurucharan Das's *India Unbound*. While Pattanaik describes how Indian businesses function in a mythological economy that is unlike that of Western corporate logic, Das provides a voice to the transformation of the Indian economy post-liberalization as culture and tradition are being commercialized.

Keywords:

Collective values, Mythology, Remuneration, Commercialism, Consumerism, Economic landscapes, Capitalism, and Post-liberalisation

Introduction:

In Contemporary India, mythology is no longer restrained to the domain of religious stories; it finds itself negotiating a productive role within the sphere of economic thought and consumer culture. On the stage of global capitalism, mythological symbols are reconfigured to design brand identities, shape the psychology of the consumers, and legalise corporate practices. The dual invocation of divine archetypes and epic metaphors in marketing not only exploits cultural familiarity but also embellishes products with a set of inherited values and moral authority. Therefore, Indian Mythology Serves as a context for understanding business conventions that contradict Western corporate ideologies with Indian philosophical ideologies. However, resistance but the traces of the transitions of India's economy emphasize the upsurge of consumer culture and monetization of traditions. Through Devdutt Pattanaik's *Business Sutra* and Gurucharan Das's *India Unbound*, the paper analyses how archaic symbols, religious motifs and mythological archetypes vivaciously shape economic virtue, brand identities, and market behaviour in India's capitalist territory.

Literature Review:

Indian mythology has traditionally functioned as the foundational narrative that shaped its cultural, social, and ethical paradigms. In recent times, scholars have started to investigate the manner in which mythic traditions interact with the present notions of capitalism, branding, and consumer orientation. Devdutt Pattanaik's *Business Sutra: A Very Indian Approach to Management* (2013) is perhaps the most telling example of interpreting Indian mythology through the prism of modern business ethics and leadership. He seeks to challenge Western models of management by presenting Hindu epics with the deities themselves, wherein Krishna's cunning and Shiva's detachment symbolize different leadership archetypes grounded in dharma and perception. In this manner, his work serves as a bridge between the traditional narrative and organizational culture, offering an indigenous alternative to the global capitalist discourse. As noted by scholars such as Arindam Chakrabarti and Radhika Natarajan, this approach to mythmaking enables mythology to serve as an active instrument in interpreting corporate identity and self-worth within the Indian context.

Concurrently, Gurcharan Das's *India Unbound* (2000) narrates the socio-economic story of India, charting the course of her transition from a state-controlled tale of an economy into a liberalized market. Das provides an account of how economic reforms in the 1990s changed the ethos of middle-class aspiration; consumerism has developed against calls for cultural conservation. Das shows the process in which mythic notions of sacrifice, duty, and ambition are converted into the language of entrepreneurship and market growth. Scholars such as Sunil Khilnani have opposed Das's views, stating how commodification of tradition also ponders upon the questions of authenticity and moral consumption. Nonetheless, Das's tale serves as a great disciplining and understanding of the mythic past of India that is not wiped out but consumed and repackaged by capitalism. Together, Pattanaik and Das show that mythology is not just a memory culture but an active ideological force punctuating the consumer landscape of India.

Mythology in Indian Fiction:

Mythology has always been an integral and redemptive source from which timeless fables, symbols, and archetypes formulate the cultural consciousness of the subcontinent. Ancient texts like Mahabharata, Ramayana, and various Puranas symbolize this set of ideas more alive than anything else, where the Indian writer becomes active, assessing through mythology the nature of man, moral dilemmas, or existential truths. These myths themselves provide, among others, conflicting opposites like good vs. evil, the concept of duty (dharma), and the consequences of action (karma), all of which reverberate through eternity and resonate equally across generations. This in turn, offers tools to the Indian writers to create stories that are at once familiar and traditional ideas recast into innovative forms.

One widespread trope in contemporary Indian fiction reinvents mythology to address modern issues such as gender and identity questions, interplays of politics and social justice. This retelling aims to show alternative perspectives, particularly from the viewpoint of the women, the marginalized, and even the so-called villains, challenging existing paradigms and forcing readers to reconsider their inherited narratives. Mythology is also used as an allegory, reflecting the present society and all of its contradictions.

From literary fiction to magic thrillers, mythology has proved itself very amenable for adapting between temporally disparate poles-from past to present, forming the context, and enriching the continuity within Indian storytelling. Among the most obvious examples of the phenomenon is the survival of mythical symbols in brands and advertisements. Religious iconography, epics, and

folktales offer a wealth of visual and ideological substance through which companies have sought to reinforce trust, authenticity, and emotional connection with consumers. The popular understanding is that the success of man is the fruit of heaven: this leads to kinds of economic behavior by which firms also align themselves with spiritual stories. From advertising that endorses Hindu gods as endorsers of prosperity to advertisements associating products with ancient rituals, myths still serve as economic capital.

Ethics in Business in Indian Context:

In India, business ethics draw heavily from religious and philosophical traditions that underscore the concepts of karma, dharma, and overall well-being. Unlike Western philosophy, which professes competition and individualism in corporate conduct, Indian culture has incorporated myriad ethical considerations that espouse mythological faith. With leadership, ethics, and strategic decision-making, the Ramayana and Mahabharata, India's two most revered epics, set the normative basis. These texts continue to play a role in the operations involved in business; leaders persons are inspired by characters from mythology.

Pattanaik's Business Sutra reveals the Indian-Western business ethics tellingly through the metaphor of gods. A western business runs on "goal-harnessed" model like that of the Greek hero Achilles, who fights for personal glory. An Indian business, on the other hand, more resembles Krishna in the Mahabharata in the fact that its management concept is more holistic and adaptable rather than goal-oriented. Family-run business houses such as Reliance and Tata focus on continuity rather than profit-making and thus represent dharmic business practices-making examples.

Gurcharan Das focuses on the development of business ethics after liberalization in India within the domain of India Unbound. While competition in the capitalist arena intensified, businesses found a mythological framework for sustaining the moral boundaries. Philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and ethics in leadership continue to remain important pillars in a long-term belief that says economic prosperity should also be coupled with social good. These ethical frameworks show the extent to which mythology would still influence corporate decision-making and employee relations in India's fast-globalizing economy.

Branding Mythologies and Marketing Techniques:

In India, mythology has been declared as the most powerful branding tool for weaving product narratives, advertising strategies, and consumer perceptions into one's life. Companies draw upon many mythologies with the idea of adding a feature of authenticity, trust, and even a historical continuity. Associating the product with these mythological concepts would create an emotional tie for consumers who seek tradition and spiritual meaning in their purchases. Patanjali Ayurveda is a company founded by Baba Ramdev that illustrates the use of mythology in branding. The company advertising its products as ancient Vedic knowledge presents itself as an alternative to Western consumerism. The emphasis on 'pure' and 'natural' ingredients strengthens the Hindu belief in Ayurveda-making traditional wisdom unjustly claim superiority over modernistic thought. Amul frequently ties its advertising campaigns to mythological and cultural themes that elicit nostalgia and national pride.

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According to Pattanaik in Business Sutra, storytelling is vital for branding, while rich sources for these stories come from mythology. He demonstrates that contemporary brands function as modern myths, thereby framing their consumers' identities and aspirations. Das, in India Unbound, describes how economic liberalization has now spread this phenomenon, really inundating advertisement with myth, product packaging with myth, and corporate storytelling with myth. Hence, today's strategic use of mythology gives an edge to Indian branding on the overcrowded world platform.

Global Mythical Narratives in Consumer Cultures:

While Indian brands have traditionally drawn upon Hindu mythology to build their consumer loyalty, Western brands have also resorted to mythologizing for identity establishment. In fact, using ancient tales in advertising is worldover-the phenomenon that shows how mythology is a universal determinant of economic behavior. Luxury brands especially capitalize on such mythic archetypes to evoke a sense of exclusivity, magnificence, and power, it seems.

Nike, for instance, has acquired its name from the Greek goddess of victory, perpetuating the brand's idea of athletics and conquest. The tagline, "Just Do It," gives an indication of the hero's journey and inspires the consumer into the struggles and achieve greatness. Rolls-Royce too, employs imagery about an aristocracy and divine right to create an aura of superiority and status. This is quite akin to the Indian branding, whereby products are linked to gods and kings to appeal to the aspirational consumer.

Pattanaik, in his analysis of these cross-cultural narratives, avers that Western brands pivot around the idea of individual heroism, while Indian brands characterize the ideas of collective identity and spirituality. As Das argues in India Unbound, it is as if the anti-globalization mood blends these two narratives; Indian consumers simultaneously accept Western aspirations and ancient mythology in the context of their buying behavior. By intermixing the local myth with the foreign one, the true character of newly arrived capitalism comes to effect.

o economically liberate one's mythologizing:

The economic reforms of 1991 transformed the economy of India from a socialist economy into the phenomenon of a consumer economy. Traditional symbols soon became highly commodified as many businesses began to cross-link cultural heritage and modern consumerism. Mythology was a commercial property in an economy that reinforced national consciousness while propagating capitalist expansion. Das sheds light on the liberalization of the economy and answers that it also meant a loosening of India's relationship with tradition. The economic reforms, therefore, nurtured a new aspirational class that accepted both materiality and cultural

authenticity. This contradiction is dramatically showcased by the commercialization of festivals in which Diwali and Navratri have been transformed into peak shopping seasons. Win the blessing of the God, asked the advertisement, thus propagating the idea that consumption equals prosperity.

According to Pattanaik, *Business and the Fate of Ethics in the New World*, the commodification of myths reduces them to just a story with embellishment. Even as they are used for storytellers' benefits, such commercialization robs them of any remaining spiritual aura. Materialism and the glamour of status symbol brands have tended to replace actual 'myth' with a marketing ploy. There is growing tension between the role of 'myth' in the arena of capitalism and whether the use of myth in advertising actually promotes cultural identity as opposed to providing a masked vehicle for commercial interest.

Mythology and Digital Consumerism: The Role of FOMO

In the digital age, myths have begun to find their place and purpose in online consumerism through the chief instrument of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out). New myths of exclusivity, success, and metamorphosis are generated by social media influencer culture and targeted advertising to influence buying orientation in unprecedented ways.

Luxury brands utilize FOMO to create marketing around their products, claiming them to be rare, divine, and unattainable, just like the legendary possessions of gods and kings. Limited-edition collections, high price tags, and celebrity endorsements create a semblance of status and power. This manner of advertising preys on very old myths about destiny and exclusivity, drawing consumers into associating goods with social prestige.

Das, in *India Unbound*, goes on to explain how the advent of digital capitalism has intensified aspiring consumerism in India. Pattanaik, again in *Business Sutra*, cautions that while myth has always been a part and parcel of storytelling, commodifying it through digital marketing would take it away from its original meanings. The fact that mythology is transformed into a commercial tool raises potent questions about the ethics of branding and the consumer culture ahead.

Conclusion:

As India continues to grow into a global developing economy, the aspect of mythology in capitalism shall always exist. As some brands use mythology for telling stories and preserving cultures, others will exploit the same for pure commercial advantage. The challenge is to balance tradition with modernity, ensuring that myths do not become mere instruments for marketing but are continued to be meaningful narratives in shaping identity and values. Both the *Business Sutra* and *India Unbound* therefore point out that mythology remains at the heart of economic aspirations, corporate ethics, and consumer psychology. Myths determine how people see success, wealth, and status in a capitalist world, whether through orthodox symbols or digital storytelling.

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