**A Comparative Study of the Representation of Mythology in Ashok K Banker’s Ramayana Series and Amish Tripathi’s Ram Chandra Series**

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**ABSTRACT**

Ancient myths are frequently retold in literature, with authors putting their spins on these timeless stories. Amish Tripathi’s Ram Chandra Series and Ashok K. Banker’s Ramayana Series are well-known books that approach the epic the *Ramayana* from various angles. This paper will compare and contrast how mythology is shown in these two series while also analysing the authors’ storytelling strategies, characters, plots, and cultural settings. We can learn more about how mythology is reinterpreted in modern literature by examining the distinctive writing styles of Banker and Tripathi.

A historical Indian epic called the *Ramayana* has been repeated and adapted in several media, including literature, theatre, film, and television. The *Ramayana* is still relevant to people today, inspiring them and giving them a sense of their cultural identity and moral principles. Its everlasting themes of love, responsibility, sacrifice, and heroism provide a foundation for moral behaviour and spiritual development by transcending time and culture. The *Ramayana* has been updated for the present day in literature by authors like Ashok K. Banker and Amish Tripathi, who have retold the epic in current contexts. Various visual media, such as movies, TV shows, and cartoons, have also adapted the *Ramayana*. The epic has become even more well-known due to its adaptations into various media, including movies, television shows, and graphic novels. Their retellings have introduced a fresh perspective on the epic while retaining its timeless themes and values, making it a cultural treasure that continues to inspire and influence people worldwide.

**Keywords: -** Mythology; Ramayana; Retelling; Ashok K Banker; Amish Tripathi

**INTRODUCTION**

The well-renowned and in-depth Ramayana Series by Ashok K. Banker retells the *Ramayana*, an ancient Indian epic. The Banker series, which spans numerous books and combines mythology, fantasy, and adventure themes, presents a new and modern take on the classic story. The first book in the series, “*Prince of Ayodhya*,” exposes readers to Prince Rama, the main character, and his quest to realise his destiny. Banker’s rendition explores the detailed mythology underlying Shri Rama’s conception, upbringing, and eventual exile from Ayodhya. While incorporating Banker’s storytelling techniques and clarifications, the story conveys the core concepts of the original *Ramayana*. With a focus on the characters’ motivations, struggles, and personal development, Banker investigates the intricate ties between them during the series. He gives classic characters like Rama, Sita, Hanuman, and Ravana depth and nuance, enabling readers to understand their tribulations, feelings, and victories more personally. In Banker’s The Ramayana series, women are emancipators who attempt to liberate themselves from worldly beliefs. Sita, the principal woman character in the *Ramayana*, is named after the ‘furrow’ where her father found her. The word `furrow’ also refers to the female reproductive organ. Sita is portrayed as a fertility goddess intimately connected with nature. As Banker writes about Sita: -

“ . . . Her name was Sita, literally ‘furrow’ in Sanskrit. She had been so named because her father Janak had found her in a clay cot placed in a deep furrow in the single field which he himself ploughed each year. All her life, she had heard the legend whispered around her: that she was the daughter of Prithvi, mother earth herself.” (Banker, 2005, p. 342)

The famous *Ramayana* retelling Ram Chandra Series by Amish Tripathi is reinvented in a fictitious world with a distinctive blend of mythology, history, and fantasy. Ram Chandra, the series’ main character, travels through the complicated political environment of ancient India. The first novel in the series, “*Scion of Ikshvaku*,” introduces readers to Ram Chandra, the idealistic young man who will one day rule Ayodhya. His background, connections with his family and friends, and eventual exile from Ayodhya are all explored in the story. With the addition of political intrigue, religious struggle, and moral ambiguity, Tripathi’s retelling of the tale gives the epic a rich and complex portrayal. Intriguing world-building, explicit language, and quick storytelling are all hallmarks of Tripathi’s writing. The series creates a distinctive and compelling version of the *Ramayana* that appeals to a broad audience by fusing aspects of historical fiction, mythology, and fantasy.

The study intends to investigate the two authors’ approaches to the original text, how they reinterpret the epic’s themes and characters, and how they employ literary devices and narrative strategies to craft a unique retelling. By contrasting the two retellings, the study aims to show how they differ and are similar while highlighting their advantages and disadvantages and examining how they add to the larger conversation about mythological retellings.

**CULTURAL CONTEXT**

It is impossible to overestimate the historical and cultural importance of the *Ramayana*, one of the most important and influential texts in Indian culture. The epic, which is thought to have been penned in the fifth or fourth century BCE, has been preserved through oral and written tradition and transformed into a variety of literary, theatrical, and artistic forms. The *Ramayana* has significantly influenced Indian culture and civilization, influencing millions of people’s beliefs, values, and practises throughout thousands of years. The epic has been a model for innumerable retellings and adaptations and an inspiration for singers, writers, and painters. The principles of justice, equality, and social peace embodied in the Ramayana have greatly influenced Indian political and social movements, inspiring figures like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The epic has been used to further various social and political causes, such as women’s rights, animal welfare, and environmental protection.

In his Ramayana series, Ashok K. Banker interprets mythology in a way that is firmly based on Indian customs and draws on a rich cultural legacy that dates back thousands of years. With a focus on examining the characters and ideas in a way that is both relevant and meaningful to modern Indian society, Banker’s retelling of the *Ramayana* is more than just a straightforward recounting of the epic. In addition to demonstrating his profound knowledge of and admiration for Indian intellectual and spiritual traditions, Banker’s interpretation of mythology does so. The *Ramayana* is a profoundly spiritual work, and Banker’s interpretation covers the epic’s spiritual and intellectual facets understandably and excitingly to contemporary audiences. He investigates topics like *karma*, *dharma*, and the essence of reality, offering a new and perceptive viewpoint on the significance of these ideas. As Banker writes: -

“The first law is to obey dharma at all costs. ‘For dharma is the moral code by which the pillar of Arya character stands upright.’ He paused, seeing the destination of the guru’s argument even before he spoke the words. ‘The second law is that the maharaja rules not for himself, his dynasty, clan, varna or family. He rules for the people. If he takes a decision that affects the people, then it must meet with the people’s consent.” (Banker, 2020, p.228)

Amish Tripathi draws on a vast cultural background that dates back thousands of years to interpret mythology in his Ram Chandra series, which is firmly entrenched in Indian customs. With a focus on addressing the characters and ideas in a current and meaningful way to modern Indian society, Tripathi’s retelling of the *Ramayana* is more than just a simple repetition of the epic. Through his use of language and narrative style, Tripathi’s interpretation of mythology is fundamentally rooted in Indian traditions. Tripathi writes straightforwardly, influenced by classical Indian literary traditions like the Puranas and the Vedas. This style of writing is designed to make the story accessible to a broader audience while still retaining the timeless themes and messages of the *Ramayana*. In addition to demonstrating his profound knowledge of and adoration for Indian intellectual and spiritual traditions, Tripathi’s interpretation of mythology does so. The Ram Chandra series investigates topics like karma, dharma, and the essence of reality, offering a novel and perceptive viewpoint on the relevance and meaning of these ideas. His interpretation of mythology strongly ties to current caste, gender, and corruption issues in Indian politics and society. In chapter ten, Ravan taught- the importance of money, world reality, and how to get honour, success, and self-development to Kumbhakarna. As Tripathi writes: -

“Raavan smiled. Always remember why we are strong. Why we are successful. Because we don’t fool ourselves that we are honorable or good. We know who we are. We accept it. We embrace it. That’s why we beat everyone. That’s why we will continue to beat everyone.” (Tripathi, 2022 p.110)

Banker and Tripathi’s work reflect India’s shifting cultural and social landscape. A new generation of readers looking to interact in fresh and meaningful ways with their cultural heritage have found their retellings of Indian mythology appealing. Through their works, Banker and Tripathi have made Indian mythology more accessible and relevant to contemporary readers while reflecting modern-day India’s changing social and cultural dynamics.

**STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES**

In his retelling of the *Ramayana*, Ashok K. Banker uses a variety of narrative structures and storytelling techniques to captivate the reader and make the tale more approachable and applicable to modern audiences. Employing various viewpoints and voices is one of the primary storytelling devices Banker uses. His version of the *Ramayana* is presented from the viewpoints of various characters, each of whom has a distinctive voice and viewpoint. This strategy enables Banker to go further into the motivations and experiences of each character, resulting in a more sophisticated and nuanced comprehension of the narrative and its themes. The use of colourful and evocative language by Banker is a crucial storytelling technique. His vivid descriptions bring to life the sounds, images, and scents of the ancient world where the novel is set. The story becomes more compelling and unforgettable by drawing the reader deeper into the narrative through sensory details.

In order to keep readers interested and produce a contemporary rendition of the *Ramayana*, Amish Tripathi’s Ram Chandra series employs a variety of narrative structures and storytelling techniques. Using various views is one of Tripathi’s most notable storytelling devices. The reader can learn more about the motivations and experiences of each character by focusing on their point of view in each book in the series. With this strategy, Tripathi can also explore the ambiguity and complexity of the characters, giving them more depth and flaws than one-dimensional heroes or villains. Tripathi employs imagery and symbolism throughout the series to convey a deeper meaning. For instance, the colour palette of each book’s cover represents the protagonist’s stage of life. Tripathi can explore complex concepts and issues through metaphors and allegories. The character of Sita is also a significant deviation. She was the prime minister of Mithila. Besides being a good warrior and strict administrator, she was intelligent and rational in her attitude. When Ram saw her for the first time, there was a flush on his dark-skinned face. Sita had a lean and muscular physique with a whitish complexion. Amish describes her character in highly poetic words. As he writes: -

“Had the entire universe garnered all its talents into creating a perfect face -of delicate beauty and ferocious will-this would be it” (Tripathi, 2022, p.232)

The reader’s experience of Ashok K. Banker’s and Amish Tripathi’s respective Ramayana series is significantly impacted by their employment of various storytelling approaches. The Ramayana series by Banker uses a linear narrative framework that adheres to the *Ramayana*’s customary plot arc and has a distinct beginning, middle, and end. This strategy enables the reader to follow the narrative clearly, and compellingly. In order to give the reader a better sense of place and ambience, Banker also employs descriptive language and striking imagery. While using multiple viewpoints and flashbacks to reveal the characters’ backstories, Tripathi’s Ram Chandra series uses a more intricate narrative structure.

Tripathi also used metaphors and symbolism to express more profound meaning, which gives the story more nuance and complexity. Action scenes and conflicts are used by Banker and Tripathi in their respective books to up the ante and create tension. On the other hand, Banker emphasises the spectacle of battle with thorough explanations of the characters’ equipment and strategies. To add reality and depth, Tripathi, on the other hand, concentrates more on the character’s psychological and emotional reactions to conflict.

**MYTHOLOGICAL ACCURACY AND INTERPRETATION**

The Ramayana series by Ashok K. Banker is renowned for accurately translating the original *Ramayana* text. The numerous *Ramayana* texts, including Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, the *Adhyatma Ramayana*, and the *Ramcharitmanas*, have all been thoroughly investigated and researched by Banker. Ashok K. Banker’s series closely follows the original plot and characters while developing the world-building and giving the characters greater nuance. Using Sanskrit phrases and including footnotes and glossaries to explain vocabulary and cultural references demonstrate Banker’s attention to detail. Additionally, Banker’s series adheres to the *Ramayana*’s original themes and messages, which include the value of duty, honour, loyalty, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. His narrative also combines ideas from Indian philosophy and mythology, which gives the plot more depth and richness.

Ashok K Banker is dedicated to adhering to the original text but also makes artistic licences in his translation and modification of the *Ramayana*. The story is made more approachable for modern audiences by his incorporation of features of contemporary storytelling, such as increasing the action sequences and character development. The *Ramayana* is retold more innovatively and inventively in Amish Tripathi’s Ram Chandra series, straying significantly from the original text in some areas. The events and people in the *Ramayana* are seen in a new light in Tripathi’s series, which is set in a fictitious version of ancient India.

Tripathi makes considerable alterations to the plot and characters while maintaining the fundamental structure of the *Ramayana* story, including the main characters and their responsibilities. For instance, in Tripathi’s interpretation, Sita is depicted as a warrior rather than a helpless victim. At the same time, Ravana is portrayed as a more nuanced character with shades of grey rather than a pure villain. The concept of karma and dharma, among other aspects of Indian mythology and philosophy, are included by Tripathi in his novel, which enriches and deepens it. Additionally, he adds new characters and storylines, including the Nagas, who are absent from the original *Ramayana*.

However, Tripathi’s imaginative retelling of the *Ramayana* has also come under fire for straying too far from the original text and offering an alternative perspective of the characters and events. According to some detractors, his interpretation weakens the *Ramayana*’s core themes and message. Retellings of modern myths and legends often take liberties with the mythology and reinterpret it. While some authors try to be as faithful to the original text as possible, others take significant artistic licence and offer a fresh take on the plot and the characters. Greater diversity and inclusivity in storytelling are made possible by the reinterpretation of mythology. It can also make historical narratives more approachable and pertinent to contemporary audiences.

Authors can explore themes and concerns relevant to modern audiences, such as gender, race, and social justice, by reimagining well-known stories. Creative reinterpretations of mythology can, however, also be contentious because they might be thought to weaken the story’s core ideas or message. For instance, some detractors have argued that contemporary retellings of the *Ramayana* depicting Sita as a warrior rather than a helpless victim may be detrimental to the story’s original ethos, emphasizing the virtues of devotion, sacrifice, and duty. Depending on the audience and cultural context, the reception and ramifications of creative reinterpretations of mythology might differ significantly. Any variation from the original text can spark debate and criticism in India, where the *Ramayana* is an integral element of the country’s culture and identity.

In general, imaginative reinterpretations of mythology can significantly affect how modern audiences comprehend and interpret these ancient tales. Authors can explore new themes and concerns, challenge conventional gender and power dynamics, and provide alternate viewpoints on well-known characters and events by retelling well-known stories in novel ways. To approach creative reinterpretations with compassion and respect, authors must be aware of these stories’ cultural settings and historical relevance.

**IMPACT AND RECEPTION**

The Ramayana series by Ashok K. Banker has received mixed reviews from critics. The series has received accolades from several readers and reviewers for its compelling narrative, deep characters, and realistic depictions of ancient India. Additionally, the show has received praise for presenting a feminised interpretation of the *Ramayana* and emphasizing the strength and agency of female characters. Nevertheless, Banker’s interpretation of the *Ramayana* and his use of an artistic licence in recreating conventional narratives have drawn criticism from some quarters. Many claims that Banker’s interpretation of the *Ramayana* strays too far from the original, diminishing the epic’s religious and cultural value. The Ram Chandra series by Amish Tripathi has received mixed reviews from critics. Some reviewers and readers have praised the series for its dynamic characterization, fast-paced and engrossing storytelling, and use of modern language and themes to make the ancient epic relevant to a contemporary audience. Readers in India and internationally have enjoyed Amish Tripathi’s Ram Chandra Series and Ashok K. Banker’s Ramayana Series. These programmes have a sizable fan base and have become bestsellers in their respective fields.

Their relatable and modern retelling of the old Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, is one of the factors contributing to their success. The epic’s accessibility to a broader audience and the characters’ increased relatability to contemporary readers have resulted from Banker and Tripathi’s retellings of the *Ramayana*. The stories have been rewritten in a way that will appeal to readers who are unfamiliar with the classic text or who are looking for a novel interpretation of the epic. Both authors used a narrative structure that captivates and holds the reader’s attention. The Banker’s series offers a quick-moving plot packed with adventure, romance, and action. The series is divided into several volumes, each focusing on a different part of the epic. As a result, the author could go deeper into the plot and the characters, giving the readers a thorough recounting of the epic.

On the other hand, the storytelling style in Tripathi’s series is more philosophical and introspective. Each book in the trilogy-format series examines a different facet of the epic. Although the story moves slowly, plenty of suspense and mystery keeps readers interested. The series gives a more detailed and nuanced picture of the epic while delving further into the motivations of the individuals. Both programs tackle the original book’s ideas, such as duty, honour, and sacrifice, has also been well-praised. The characters in Banker’s series are driven by a feeling of obligation to their families, communities, and countries, emphasizing the value of duty and honour. In contrast, Tripathi’s work delves deeper into the idea of sacrifice and shows the characters making tough decisions that ultimately help them grow as people. The authors’ interaction with their audience is another factor in the popularity of these series. Banker and Tripathi have engaged actively with their readers through social media and other channels. They welcomed criticism, recommendations, and feedback while also answering questions and comments from their audience. The readers now feel a sense of community and commitment to the series as a result.

The popularity of these series has also prompted their adaptation into other media, including graphic novels, audiobooks, and web series. Tripathi’s series has been turned into a web series, while Banker’s story has been turned into a graphic novel. These adaptations have helped the series reach new audiences and broaden its appeal. Some readers and critics have also praised Tripathi’s portrayal of women because he grants them the agency and autonomy frequently lacking in conventional *Ramayana* retellings.

However, there has also been criticism of the show. Some have questioned how accurately Tripathi depicted ancient India and the *Ramayana* story. Others have criticised his depiction of specific individuals and occasions, claiming that he strays too far from the text’s original intent and takes too many artistic licences. The series has also drawn criticism from some readers for its violent violence, explicit sexual themes, and profanity, which, in their opinion, are improper for retelling a well-known religious work. Contemporary Indian literature and popular culture have been significantly influenced by Ashok K. Banker’s and Amish Tripathi’s retellings of the *Ramayana*.

A new generation of writers has been motivated by their works to investigate and reinterpret Indian mythology in their distinctive ways. As a result, mythological literature has become more prevalent in India, with many authors drawing their ideas from the *Ramayana* and other ancient writings. Additionally, modern writers’ and artists’ approaches to depicting mythology in their works reflect the influence of these retellings. Instead of merely portraying them as binary archetypes, many now attempt to give a more nuanced and complicated representation of historical figures and tales.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this comparison of the *Ramayana* series by Ashok K. Banker and the Ram Chandra series by Amish Tripathi has looked at how the authors have interpreted and recreated the *Ramayana*’s traditional mythology in their modern retellings. In order to provide their distinct viewpoints on well-known individuals and events, both authors have used various narrative structures and storytelling techniques. While providing fresh interpretations of characters like Sita and Hanuman, Banker’s series is renowned for remaining faithful to the original text. On the other side, Tripathi’s series has diverged significantly from the original material, giving usually evil figures like Ravana a more complex and sympathetic portrayal. Both the Ramayana Series by Ashok K. Banker and the Ram Chandra Series by Amish Tripathi are retellings of the mythological epic *Ramayana*. However, they take different tacks and portray the narrative in various ways. Banker’s retelling is more conventional, putting more of an emphasis on character growth and closely adhering to the original narrative. With a focus on external strife and his interpretations and twists, Tripathi’s retelling of the tale is more contemporary. Both retellings offer various viewpoints on the same mythological story and are distinctive in their own right.

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