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## Forgotten Gods and Legends: Voices of Marginalised Myths through Podcasting and YouTube

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### Abstract

This paper explores the resurgence of marginalized and “forgotten” gods, myths, and legends through the medium of podcasts and YouTube videos and shorts in contemporary India, with particular attention to marginalised perspectives. It examines how digital platforms enable the re-narrativization of mythological traditions that were historically suppressed, excluded, or reinterpreted within dominant frameworks. Engaging with theories of myth (structuralism and post-structuralism), subaltern studies, and digital media, the paper argues that podcasts function as democratized narrative spaces where myth is not merely revived but contested, reconfigured, and politicized. The study highlights how marginalised reinterpretations challenge hegemonic mythologies, foreground alternative cosmologies, and reclaim cultural memory. Ultimately, the paper proposes that podcasting, YouTube videos, and shorts enable a “counter-mythic discourse” that destabilizes canonical narratives and opens new epistemic possibilities. This research intends to explore how Podcasts work as a performative and archival medium, giving voices to the voiceless and creating a space for marginalised voices, thoughts, and beliefs to be interpreted, and is being used to reclaim, reimagine, and preserve within the interdisciplinary field of digital humanities. This study seeks to examine the aesthetic, ethical, and political dimensions of mythic storytelling in the digital era. This paper intends to work with a few questions, like- 1. How do Podcasts functions as counter archives? 2. How do listeners interpret and engage with podcasts? 3. Can Podcast mythologies become a tool of cultural diplomacy or resistance in global politics? 4. What myths and legends are globalised via Podcasting?

**Keywords:** Podcasts, Myths, Post-colonialism, Counter-archive, Digital media, Audience Reception, Globalisation, Cultural diplomacy, Storytelling,

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### **Introduction:**

Stories have always been fascinating for readers and listeners, and it has passed down from generation to generation orally. "Stories from fables and folktales impart practical knowledge of how we should think, look at, interact, and behave with others in our everyday life". (Mandal). Mircea Eliade highlight the significance of myth to comprehend the sacred and the human experience in his famous work, "The Sacred and the Profane" (1959). "For traditional man, reality is a sacred reality" (Eliade 12). But as we develop technologically, we have entered the age of digital connectivity, and podcasting has emerged as a powerful platform for storytelling. As an easy access for listeners, Podcasting reawakens oral storytelling and its interpretations and retellings. Podcast provides a democratized space for classical retelling and dominant mythological stories, while few podcasting channels work with marginalised voices and myths, those belonging to indigenous, Dalit, Adivasi, or Indigenous and diasporic communities, which are often devalued or rather erased. Myths, legends, and folklores are often considered as living heritage, and expressions that are based upon three concepts of people, nation, and tradition. (Lyngdoh)

Podcasts not only tell stories but also work as an archive of cultural memory. It also functions as a decentralised narrative platform. Mythological podcasts focus on folklore, legends, and epics becomes a popular site for contemporary audiences. This research intends to explore how Podcasts and YouTube videos work as a performative and archival medium, giving voices to the voiceless and creating a space for marginalised voices, thoughts, and beliefs to be interpreted, and is being used to reclaim, reimagine, and preserve within the interdisciplinary field of digital humanities. This study seeks to examine the aesthetic, ethical, and political dimensions of mythic storytelling in the digital era, and the central argument is that podcasts do not merely retell myths; they reconfigure them within a global, participatory, and digitally mediated framework that simultaneously resists and reproduces structures of power. Foucault explains the production of knowledge as a process of ordering and reordering the given meanings and thoughts. His notion of 'heterotopia' appears as an alternative space that came out of the destabilized structures of familiar grounds of knowledge, and when it is destabilized, it will again form new structures and formations differently, ultimately creating a new dominant mode of knowledge and power. Foucault thereby disrupts the notion of fixed origins; he writes, "heterotopias... dissolve our myths" (Foucault).

### **Context:**

Malinowski in his celebrated work titled, "Magic, Science, and Religion" (1948), that myths perform as a "charter of primitive faith" and play a crucial role in formation of cultural values and practices. "Myth is a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force" (Malinowski). The interpretation of myth has undergone a profound theoretical transformation, moving from its earlier understanding as sacred revelation toward more critical, interdisciplinary frameworks. Scholars like Freud and Jung have challenged the traditional interpretations of myths and religious scriptures as literal truths and divine revelations. For them, these myths and divine texts are just the expressions of human fears and unconscious motivations. On the other hand, Claude Levi Strauss and Malinowski were trying to focus on the structuralist and functionalist approaches towards myth-study. Claude Levi Strauss opined that myths, their meaning, and logic are just the

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underlying structures of human ideas and thoughts, which ultimately merge with different religions and mythological stories, revealing a universal pattern in human understanding. Malinowski's view on religion or myths is just a projection of human fears in the moment of crisis. Barthes and Foucault deconstructed myth as a tool used to legitimise the rule of the dominant power structure. Roland Barthes adds a second level of signification to Saussure's theory of Sign by focusing on signs that are elevated to a new position of myth analysis and create an immediate meaning. Foucault emphasises that myths emerge from the power of imagination and also focuses on how myths and images shape our understanding of the world. Said and Bhabha advocate for decentralising the voices in order to hear marginalised voices. Feminist scholars have been trying to prove how patriarchy perpetuates its power dynamics by subverting the female counterparts. The proliferation of mediated platforms, particularly podcasts, has intensified the fluidity and hybridity of mythic narratives. Myths now circulate across fragmented digital networks, where they are continuously reinterpreted, adapted, and contested. This ongoing transformation destabilizes the distinction between "original" myth and its contemporary reconfigurations, rendering myth a dynamic and negotiated field of meaning rather than a fixed cultural artifact. Consequently, for contemporary audiences, myth is experienced not as a stable inheritance but as an evolving discourse shaped by technological mediation, cultural politics, and participatory engagement.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

#### **Postcolonial Archives and Counter-Memory**

Postcolonial theory critiques the colonial archive as a structure that privileges certain histories while silencing others. Counter-archives emerge as alternative repositories that recover suppressed voices, oral traditions, and subaltern narratives. Podcasts, with their accessibility and decentralization, function as digital counter-archives that challenge textual and institutional authority. Podcasts enable the revival of myths excluded from dominant literary canons, including regional, oral, and marginalized traditions. By recording and disseminating these stories, they create alternative archives that resist colonial and elite historiography. Podcasts often reinterpret well-known myths, offering alternative readings that challenge dominant ideological frameworks. This process transforms the archive from a static repository into a site of contestation. Unlike traditional archives controlled by institutions, podcasts allow individuals to curate and interpret myths. This decentralization democratizes knowledge production.

#### **Myth as Structure and Transformation**

Levi-Strauss provides a scientific and rigorous analysis method for ethnological anthropology through structuralism. Especially in the study of mythology, structuralism advocated to explore the hidden links between myths, which is a beneficial exploration to uncover the mystery of human culture. He emphasized that the exploration of the complementarity between individual psychological phenomena and social structure is an important direction for the development of ethnological anthropology (Zou). Myths are not static narratives but dynamic systems of meaning that evolve through reinterpretation. Myths, legends, and stories, with their wide dissemination potential, are as free as the human spirit and as mobile as the human body (Eser & Asmadili). Structural approaches emphasize underlying patterns, while post-structural perspectives foreground fluidity and multiplicity. Podcasts amplify this transformative quality by enabling continuous reinterpretation.

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Mythological podcasts often reach diasporic audiences, creating transnational connections. This fosters dialogue between cultures and promotes mutual understanding. Podcasts contribute to the global circulation of cultural narratives, functioning as instruments of soft power. By presenting myths to international audiences, they shape perceptions of cultural identity. In the process of global dissemination, complex myths may be simplified or commodified, raising questions about authenticity and representation.

### **Mediatization and Audience Reception**

Media does not simply transmit content; it reshapes how it is understood. Podcasting, characterized by intimacy and seriality, fosters active listener engagement. Audiences become co-interpreters rather than passive recipients. Listeners engage with podcasts through repetition, reflection, and discussion. The portability of podcasts allows integration into everyday life, making myth a continuous presence rather than a distant tradition. Many listeners approach mythological podcasts with scepticism shaped by modern education. However, engagement often leads to reflexive belief systems that integrate critical thinking with spiritual exploration. Digital platforms enable the formation of communities where listeners share interpretations, debate meanings, and contribute to evolving narratives.

### **Indian Myths, Legends, and Forgotten Gods and Goddesses:**

Taleju Bhawani myth, still revered as a goddess who made kings, Malla Kings of Nepal took her from India and protected her by building a temple in Vasantapur.

Mariamman- Goddess of rain, disease, healing (especially smallpox), worshipped in villages across South India, often excluded from mainstream Sanskritic mythology.

Alakshmi- Sister or opposite of Lakshmi. She is associated with poverty, conflict, and inauspiciousness. She is forgotten because society prefers auspicious gods, and negative deities are suppressed or ignored. But without Alakshmi, balance cannot be maintained.

Khandoba- Warrior god worshipped by farmers and pastoral communities, seen as a form of Shiva.

Pidari- fierce village goddess linked with Kali, often associated with snakes, village rituals, and protection.

Singbonga- deity followed by the Santhal tribe, Singbonga is a supreme sun deity, considered as the creator of the world and often associated with light, life, and order.

Marang Buru (Great Mountain Spirit)- Protector deity of the Santhal community, often associated with hills and forests. Symbolically mountain shows stability and ancestral presence that links the land with identity.

Dharti Aayo / Dharti Mata - Earth as mother deity who sustains life and punishes ecological imbalance. Worshipped during agricultural rituals and seasonal festivals.

Budha Deo - Ancestral god or Guardian spirit, protects the community, and is connected to lineage and ancestry.

Koya Punem Deities- keepers of forests, animals, and seasons, shows every natural element has a spirit.

Kankali- fierce mother goddess associated with protection and destruction.

Oladevi- protector against Cholera

Bonbibi- protector of forest dwellers, often saves humans from tiger attacks and opposes demon-like Dokhin Rai.

Dharma Thakur- rural god of justice and fertility.

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Ghantakarna- protector of rural people, healer of disease, and often associated with bells.

Mangala- worshipped locally for protection and prosperity.

Matangi- emerged from the skull of Shiva, after a violent ritual that broke the sacred into profane. She rules over what society throws away- pollution, decay, leftover food. The more she is rejected by society the stronger she becomes. She is considered as goddess of trash but she is the keeper of truth.

Shitala- goddess of smallpox and disease.

Tvastar- is one of the most ancient yet relatively forgotten deities in early Vedic mythology, he represents a cosmic artisan figure whose role later becomes marginalised in mainstream Hindu narratives. He is somewhat similar to Hephaestus (Greek myth) and Vulcan (Roman myth).

The Yali (or Vyala) is not exactly a god or goddess, but a powerful mythological hybrid creature in Indian art, especially in South Indian temple traditions. It is a liminal being- neither one thing nor another, it contains the body of a lion, the trunk of an elephant, and sometimes features of a horse or serpent.

### **Objectives:**

To examine how content creators in digital platforms shows function as myth-keepers?

To analyse the role of digital platforms as a resurrector of erased myths and legends.

To explore how viewers and audiences connect themselves emotionally and spiritually?

To critically examine the ethics of myth narration or myth-making in the commodified digital era.

To access the role of podcasting in restoring cultural memory.

To study how digital platforms recontextualise oral storytelling

### **Methodologies:**

Qualitative methods are well- suited for exploring such phenomena as the interpretation, acceptance, reclamation, and adaptation of myths. By systematically analysing podcast episodes that deal with marginalised mythological stories, it will also help us to detect the nuanced dynamics of interpretation of such narratives in relation to global politics. This research endeavour will try to seek how these narratives and texts are understood and utilized by different individuals and communities.

Discourse Analysis- Examining how language and storytelling in digital platform shape power, identity, and cultural memory. The analysis focuses on a selected corpus of myth-oriented podcast episodes, chosen for their engagement with themes such as cultural memory, marginalized narratives, and reinterpretations of traditional myths. Rather than treating podcasts as neutral storytelling platforms, this study approaches them as discursive sites where meanings are actively produced, negotiated, and contested.

Media Archaeology- By applying Case Studies, detailed analysis of specific shows and YouTube shorts (e.g., RAAAZ by BigBrainco, Ranveer Allahbadia, DB Shorts, DivineWTFacts, The Mythological Niche, Time Travel Talks, True Realms, Mythflix AI studio, Sacred Studio, The Past Revealed), we can trace how past cultures and stories are reborn in Podcast form and YouTube shorts.

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**Discussions:** The analysis of myth-focused podcasts reveals a complex reconfiguration of cultural memory within the conditions of digital modernity. Myth has the power to transform the world, where each individual is baffled with uncertainty and chaos inside out, and myth stands as immense help from the superficiality of modern life (Ellwood). Rather than functioning as neutral platforms of preservation, podcasts and YouTube videos emerge as active epistemic sites where myths are reassembled, contested, and circulated across shifting cultural and political terrains. This necessitates a rethinking of myth not as a static inheritance but as a dynamic process of mediation, shaped by technological infrastructures, audience participation, and global flows of meaning. “Myth is a language” (Barthes) because for Barthes Myth is not defined by the Gods, Goddesses, stories, or religion, but by its functions, in his work *Mythologies* he states that “Myth is a type of speech that is not defined by its object or purpose, but by the way it is uttered” (Barthes). Myth is a language like system that communicates cultural ideas, and therefore, Tvastar becomes Hephaestus and Vulcan in Greek and Roman mythology.

At the level of postcolonial critique, podcasts can be understood as counter-archival formations that challenge the authority of colonial and elite knowledge systems. By recuperating oral traditions, regional narratives, and marginalized mythic figures, they intervene in what may be termed the politics of memory. These digital archives disrupt the fixity of the colonial archive, foregrounding instead a plurality of voices and temporalities. In doing so, they resonate with broader postcolonial efforts to reclaim narrative agency and to re-inscribe subaltern histories within contemporary discourse as presented in the story of Yatinath, another form of Shiva told by Akshat Gupta in one of his youtube videos, the story he presents where Lord Shiva called by the name Yatinath wants to put Ahuk in a test of his devotion, Ahuk is a forest dweller, belong to some marginalised tribal community, Shiva changed himself in a simple sage and wanted to rest in Ahuk’s home in the forest during night, Ahuk and his wife agreed to please the sage by their hospitality and they wanted to take care of the rishi by guarding the door during night to save him from any harm from wild animals and Ahuk got killed while protecting his guest, and in the morning Ahuka was heartbroken but remain steadfast in her devotion and duty, Lord Shiva revealed his true form and blessed them with another life as Nala and Damayanti known for their love and virtue. So, the tale becomes a site of cultural resistance, preserving non-western ethical frameworks. Joseph Campbell investigated the notion of the hero’s journey in a mythological context and its function in shaping the cultural identity of society and its people “a hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder” (Campbell).

However, this counter-archival function must be situated within the material realities of digital media. Podcasts and YouTube videos operate within platforms governed by algorithmic visibility, corporate ownership, and attention economies. As a result, the circulation of myths is not purely determined by cultural or historical significance but is mediated by metrics of engagement, shareability, and marketability. This introduces a critical tension: the same medium that enables the recovery of marginalized narratives also subjects them to processes of selection, amplification, and erasure dictated by digital capitalism.

This ambivalence is particularly evident in the global circulation of myths. Podcasting facilitates the transnational movement of narratives, allowing myths rooted in specific cultural

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contexts to reach diasporic and international audiences. In this sense, myth becomes a form of cultural diplomacy, shaping global perceptions and fostering cross-cultural dialogue. At the same time, the demands of global legibility often require simplification, translation, or adaptation, which may obscure the complexity and specificity of the original narratives. Thus, globalization through podcasts produces not a uniform dissemination but a selective and often asymmetrical circulation of mythic forms. According to Levi Strauss's interpretation of structuralism: "We simply wish to extract from the rich variety of empirical facts that observation and description can never fully encompass, constants that occur repeatedly at different times."

Audience engagement further complicates this landscape. Listeners do not merely consume mythological content; they participate in its reinterpretation. "The myth is a story that is told and retold, and in the retelling, it is transformed" (Campbell, "The Hero with a Thousand Faces"). Through listening practices, discussions, and digital interactions, audiences form interpretive communities that actively negotiate meaning. This participatory dimension transforms myth into a collaborative and ongoing process, where authority is dispersed and continually reconstituted. Yet, this decentralization does not eliminate hierarchy; rather, it reconfigures it, as certain voices and interpretations gain prominence within digital ecosystems.

Importantly, podcasts also function as sites of resistance, particularly when they foreground marginalized perspectives, including subaltern and Dalit reinterpretations of myth. In these contexts, myth becomes a tool for critiquing entrenched social hierarchies and for articulating alternative epistemologies. Such reinterpretations challenge canonical narratives, exposing the ideological structures that underpin them. However, even these resistant narratives are not immune to co-option, as their circulation within global media systems may lead to their incorporation into dominant discourses.

The coexistence of resistance and commodification, recovery and transformation, underscores the need to conceptualize podcasts and YouTube videos not as inherently emancipatory or oppressive, but as ambivalent cultural technologies. They operate within a field of tensions, where the possibilities of counter-memory and subaltern expression are entangled with the constraints of digital infrastructures and global capitalism.

Ultimately, the study suggests that myth in the age of podcasting occupies a liminal space between past and present, local and global, resistance and assimilation. It is within this space that myths acquire new meanings and functions, becoming instruments through which cultural identity, political power, and historical memory are continuously negotiated. It is precisely within this tension that transformation occurs. As myths move through podcasting networks, they are translated, hybridized, and recontextualized, generating new forms of cultural meaning and identity. Listeners, as active participants, further extend this transformation, turning myth into a collaborative and evolving discourse. The result is neither preservation nor loss, but a reconfiguration, a shifting assemblage in which past narratives are continually rewritten in relation to present concerns. In *Myth and Meaning*, he wrote in similarly plain language: "Structuralism is not profound, but its purpose is to search for the invariable, or to trace out the invariable elements of a multitude of things that are apparently

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ambiguous. What he is trying to explore is a new direction in the world of symbols governed by law, to break down myths and to resolve the functions behind the various elements in mythological stories, so as to simplify them into a few simple types, to reveal the deep structure of human consciousness hidden behind myths (Levi Strauss).

### Conclusion:

What emerges from this study is not a static account of mythic revival, but a recognition of myth as an ongoing process of mediation, continuously shaped by technological, cultural, and political forces. Podcasts do not simply retrieve myths from a lost past; they rearticulate them within new circuits of meaning, where narration, reception, and circulation are inseparable. Myth, in this sense, is no longer an inherited structure but a performed and negotiated practice, unfolding across digital temporalities. At the core of this process lies an irreducible tension. Podcasts function simultaneously as counter-archives that recuperate silenced voices and as products of global media systems that risk reabsorbing these voices into commodified frameworks. This tension is not a limitation to be resolved but a constitutive condition of digital modernity, where resistance and incorporation operate in tandem. The mythic, therefore, becomes a site where power is both contested and reproduced, where subaltern expression coexists with algorithmic visibility and market logic. Thus, the significance of myth in the age of podcasting lies not in its endurance but in its capacity to adapt, contest, and reimagine. It is through this ongoing process of tension-driven transformation that myth continues to function as a vital medium for negotiating cultural memory, identity, and power in an increasingly interconnected world.

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