

## **Introduction of various Modern Theories of Myth**

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### **Abstract:**

The origin of myth is derived from Greek word “MYTHOS”, that is story or word. The study of myths is known as mythology. Myths are figurative stories of the isolated past that concern cosmology and cosmogony. Myths articulate that how characters go through or perform an ordered sequence of events. Myths may modify eventually, mainly after making contact with other cultures. A Myth is a tale with a supernatural aspect that has been told again and again with differences. It has an unusually strong potential for meaning but this meaning may be in the form of allegory. Origin of myth and the meaning of the myth can be understood with the help of different theories of myth.

**Key words:** Mythology, Theories of Myth

Culture and society shall never die as the roots of the past nourish and nurture the present and future and literature mirrors them all. Literature can never divorce itself from its rich heritage. Hence today we find many writers re-presenting the myth of the past and retelling the stories from the present perspective. Myths represent the ingenious traditions about the nature, history and the external circumstances of the world, God, human being and society .A myth is a tale or convention which claims to preserve a primary truth about the individual life in a society. There are some modern and ancient theories of myth which have been used by the writers for analyzing different myths.

Theory of myth should clarify something about the fact. There are many theories of myth but all theories are not equal because different theories explain different thing about myth. Some theories of myth might explain every fact and phenomenon related to myth. Grading the theories of myth is not simple. There have been many theories about the origin of myth but none of the theories give absolute answers to the question as to how myth has come into existence. The first most important theory about the origin of myth has been given by Euhemerus followed by some modern philosophers —Friedrich Max Muller, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, Bronislaw Malinowski, Sir James George Frazer, Levi-Strauss, C.G.Jung and Freud.

Euhemerus has suggested that myths are based on historical facts. Muller has stated his theory that mythology is a disease of language. Later on Tylor has proposed his theory of myth. For tylor myth constructs and functions to explicate events in the physical world. For Tylor ‘Primitive science’ and ‘modern myth’ both are self contradictory. Here science stands for natural. For Tylor myth is completely intellectual. Disagreeing with Tylor’s theory Malinowski proposed his own theory of Myth which emphasizes on the psychological condition of human being that has led them to create myth. According to Malinowski human being knows that there is a boundary between what man can or cannot clarify practically. Malinowski says that man creates myth when he reaches on this boundary. His theory deals with social phenomena as custom and laws. J.G Frazer, an anthropologist whose theory is more similar to the theory of Tylor who (Frazer) asserts myth more than purely primitive .For both myth and science wrap the same variety of phenomena. This deals with physical phenomena which are more literally than symbolically. For Jung and as for Freud myth should be read symbolically rather than literally. There are four fundamental theories of myth. These theories are:

### **1. Rational Myth Theory**

2. **Functional Myth Theory**
3. **Structural Myth Theory**
4. **Psychological Myth Theory.**
- 4.i. **Archetypal Myth Theory**

**The rational myth** theory says that myths are produced to enlighten natural actions and forces that happen in everyday life; Along with it also says that gods and goddesses controlled all of these activities of nature. Creation myths from different cultures are all examples of rational myths. They clarify how man is produced, what god and goddesses use and what procedures they obtained to create human beings. The existence of man is a natural event but creation myths provide other clarifications, which rationalize existence and other events.

**Functional Myth Theory** This Functional Theory is given by Bronislaw Malinowski. In this theory he gives the stress on the social function of Myth It tells that what kind of things should be done and what should not be done. It also explains that myths are created for the social control. Myths are created as a kind of social control. The functional myth theory tells that how myths are used to teach morality and normal social behavior to the people. The functional myth theory also says that myths are produced for social control and serve the function of covering stability in society. An example of a functional myth is the story of Amaterasu, a goddess who is visited by her brother in her kingdom. When she hears of her brother's visit she is worried he will try to take over her kingdom and arms herself to fight him, however, they do not fight. She allows her brother to stay in her kingdom until he ruins parts of it and entirely wears. In Malinowski's view, in all types of society, every aspect of life every custom, belief, or ideamakes its own special contribution. French Sociologist Marcel Mauses was the most important supporter of this Functional theory of myth, for this approach he used a term "total social facts" in reference to religious symbols and myths.

**Structural Myth Theory-** Lavis strauss states that myth is like language (and coined the word 'Mytheme') or rather is language. Myth is not only expressed through language, but its functionsis also like language as De Saussure has described The Nature of the Linguistic Sign and his isolation between "langue" and "parole". Levi Strauss also believed that myth also has its langue which is

the synchronous structure which allows the exact parole of a certain myth. While details may contrast from myth to myth, but structure remains the unchanged.

Myths can be broken into individual units (Mytheme) which like the basic sound system of language (phonemes) gains meaning only when combined together in a particular manner. Levi Strauss assumed that myths do not deal not concepts, but structures, and these structures correspond to the structure of brain. He saw the division as the basic structure of everything, and stated that myths are an effort to arbitrate between binary oppositions (raw/cooked, wild/tame, high/low, etc.)

As Lévi-Strauss is interested in the structural pattern of myth, he states that meaning of myth is in structure and identifies that myths are structured in binary opposition for instance good vs. evil/ or good mother vs. evil mother, for e.g. in west Penelope as mother of Telemachus, Christ's mother Mary, while in east Yashoda, the mother of Krishna is the example of good mother whereas Ishtar from *Gilgamesh*, Circe from *The Odyssey* or in east *Kekai* in *Ramayan* are the terrible mothers.

Structural theory of myth says that myths are based on human emotion. These categories of myths explain the two aspects of the human mind; the good aspect and the bad aspect. They illustrate the alienated self and the duality of human nature. For instance Myths about Hercules show how the human mind can be both good and bad. Hercules did both good and bad things. One of the bad things he did was (in "Jason and the Argonauts") he stole a brooch pin from the treasure chamber of the god Talos. This sin caused his friend to be killed. Hercules knew that his friend was killed because of his sin, so to make up for it, he vowed to stay on the island until his friend was found.

**Psychological Myth Theory.** The psychological myth theory explains that myths are related with human emotion and appear from the human subconscious. All around the world cultures have similar wishes, question and fears which is not easy to explain that is why psychological myths are made and there are archetypes shared between cultures. Archetypes are universal forms and characters used by all cultures. Such as Helen, Penelope, Ram and Sita. These archetypes are the examples of how people think alike.

Sigmund Freud was one of the most important writers who wrote about the myth from psychological standpoint. Freud said that myth was the vague wish-dreams of people. The significance of Freud's study of myth lies in his view that the construction of mythic concepts does

not depend on cultural history. Instead, Freud's study of the psyche stated a free, trans-historical mechanism, which is based on personal biologic conception of man. He proposed a fact known as Oedipus complex, that is, boy child's repressed desire for his mother and a parallel wish to displace his father. (Electra complex for girl child) According Freud, this fact is also visible in myth and dreams, fairy tales, folktales.

Freud believed that myths are a type of day-dream that has a symbolic meaning which expresses the conflict and wishes of unconscious. There are all the signs of the dream mechanisms of summarizing dislocation and splitting: 1) this is a process of connecting a number of ideas and emotions in one symbol; 2) it's a procedure of shifting or changing an idea or sentiment from one object to another to some extent which is sufficient to represent; 3) it divide an object into two parts, each part have positive or negative quality.

- **Archetypal theory**

Archetype according to Jung is, "An image of a probable sequence of events, a habitual current of psychic energy. To this extent it can be equated with the biological pattern of behavior." (Walker,5).

Jung's concept of archetypal of the collective unconsciousness to the world of mythology is a stony one. For a better understanding of archetypal it is a must to understand the concept of collective unconsciousness properly. Unconscious is only an assembling place of repressed and forgotten contents. Superficial layer of this unconscious is personal, which Jung calls *personal consciousness* But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which is inborn or inherited, and is termed as *collective consciousness*. This part of unconscious is universal not individual and it has that form of behavior which are same in every individuals and represent an ordinary psychic. The presence of this psychic existence can be recognized only by the contents, and these contents are capable of consciousness. The content of the personal unconscious is known *feeling toned complexes* and the content of the collective unconscious is known as *archetype*.

An archetype is found in multiple variations in the field of mythology. For instance as everyone likes decorating charismas tree and hiding the Easter egg without knowing the fact that what do these customs mean. As in East Ram who might be an ordinary human being is considered as God but nobody tries to explore the reason behind this, and why a heart struck with arrow is the

symbol of love. In west, Helen is an archetype of beauty while Penelope represents dutiful wife. Every man wishes his partner to be beautiful like Helen and Penelope by heart. These archetypal images are so packed with meaning that nobody thinks of asking what they really do mean. That is why Jung and Freud believe that myth should be read symbolically not literally.

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