



Research Paper

## Cultural Identity in the Select Novels of Raja Rao and Amish Tripathi

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### Abstract

*This research investigates the evolving dimensions of cultural identity in the fictional works of Raja Rao and Amish Tripathi. Engaging with postcolonial and archetypal frameworks, the study probes how both authors construct and contest Indian cultural values and selfhood in their narratives. The research is informed by critical theory, mythology, and socio-political discourse. By locating the authors in their respective socio-historical contexts, this paper attempts to present a comparative discourse on how Indian culture and identity are envisioned, preserved, reinterpreted, and transmitted across generations.*

**Keywords:** Discourse; Selfhood; Dynamics; Cultural Identity; Hybridity.

Culture has historically functioned as a dynamic and indispensable framework for interpreting social consciousness. In Indian philosophical traditions, culture transcends material existence and reflects a spiritual continuum that defines life's moral and ethical parameters. The inquiry into cultural identity—understood as a group or individual's awareness and affiliation with a set of social norms, beliefs, and mythic symbols—becomes especially pertinent when juxtaposed against a rapidly globalizing world.

In the wake of globalization, transnational economies, and digital connectivity, cultural identities are no longer insular or homogeneous. The resultant identities are fragmented, hybrid, and often contested. These postmodern conditions provide the backdrop against which literary interpretations of identity must be reconsidered. Cultural identity, therefore, becomes a contested terrain of negotiation, resistance, and adaptation.

Literature as a medium offers not only a reflection of these cultural anxieties but also a means of reconstructing heritage. Raja Rao, writing in the wake of India's struggle for independence, and Amish Tripathi, writing in contemporary times, articulate the nuances of Indian cultural identity through different literary strategies. Yet, both authors are united in their deep allegiance to India's spiritual and mythic consciousness.

This paper is anchored in postcolonial theory as articulated by Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Bhabha's notion of hybridity and Spivak's subaltern studies offer critical tools to examine cultural transformation and agency. Simultaneously, the study draws from Carl Jung's archetypal theory to explore recurring mythic patterns and symbols. The insights of Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Antonio Gramsci, and Mikhail Bakhtin provide additional conceptual grounding in cultural studies and identity formation.

Raja Rao's novels reflect a profound engagement with Indian metaphysics and Gandhian idealism. In *Kanthapura* (1938), Moorthy emerges as a spiritual leader who instills nationalist consciousness by invoking indigenous cultural values. Rao's use of sthala purana, oral tradition, and myth establishes a narrative that reinforces collective memory and identity.

In *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), Ramaswamy's spiritual journey transcends geographical boundaries and explores the tension between East and West, tradition and modernity. The metaphysical quest for the Absolute, informed by Vedantic philosophy and guru-shishya parampara, forms the cornerstone of cultural identity in the novel. Rao's characters do not merely mimic tradition but actively reinterpret it to construct an authentic self.

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* and *Ram Chandra Series* respond to the identity crisis of contemporary Indian youth. Drawing upon Vedic mythology, Puranic narratives, and philosophical discourses, Tripathi reconstructs gods as historical and humanized figures. Shiva and Ram become not divine absolutes, but moral exemplars navigating dharma in a complex sociopolitical world.

Tripathi democratizes ancient wisdom, offering readers an accessible mythology deeply rooted in Indian culture. His novels resonate with Stuart Hall's notion of identity as a production, always in process, never complete. Through narrative innovation and intertextual engagement with tradition, Tripathi fosters a cultural revivalism that is conscious, critical, and adaptive.

While Raja Rao privileges spiritual introspection and philosophical profundity, Tripathi emphasizes action, reform, and accessibility. Rao's prose is meditative, often abstract, reflecting his allegiance to sadhana (spiritual practice). In contrast, Tripathi's language is direct and cinematic, reflecting mass appeal and pedagogical intent.

Both authors, however, reaffirm the vitality of Indian cultural identity in an age of dislocation. Rao situates identity in the metaphysical and eternal; Tripathi locates it in the socio-political and mutable. This difference, rather than divergence, speaks to the multifaceted nature of Indian culture, which accommodates both the inward journey and external engagement. Raja Rao and Amish Tripathi, though writing in different epochs and idioms, represent a continuum in Indian literary efforts to define and preserve cultural identity. Rao's philosophical narratives and Tripathi's mythological reimagining serve as cultural texts that reclaim indigenous knowledge systems and resist epistemic erasure. In an era marked by cultural homogenization and rootlessness, their works underscore the need to revisit, reinterpret, and reassert Indian identity through literary engagement.

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