

Reconfiguring Identity Through Historical Consciousness: A Rüsenian Reading of Vishakanya in Roshani Chokshi's Mythic Fiction

Cathrine Christy M

Department of English, SASTRA Deemed to be University, Thanjavur, India

Chitra A.R.

Department of English, SASTRA Deemed to be University, Thanjavur, India

Abstract—Our inherent tendency toward retrospective meaning-making is interrogated through a critical examination of past narratives, which are often shaped by bias and presentist concerns. This paper proposes historical consciousness as an expanded interpretive framework for navigating the present and anticipating the future through engagements with the past. While the transmission of historiography through formal education has been widely examined, comparatively less attention has been paid to the role of fictional narratives in cultivating historical consciousness. Mythic fiction functions as a narrative medium in which myth and history intersect, facilitating the articulation of temporal consciousness while reflecting cultural and historical sensibilities. This study analyses how historical consciousness is mediated through select mythic works by Roshani Chokshi, namely *A Crown of Wishes* (2017) and the short story “Poison and Gold” from *Star-Touched Stories* (2018). The analysis centres on the character Aasha, a Vishakanya, to examine the interplay between cultural memory, temporality, morality, and identity formation. Employing hermeneutic textual analysis, the study explores the reinterpretation of the Vishakanya motif within shifting cultural and historical contexts. The application of Jörn Rüsen's framework demonstrates Aasha's evolving historical consciousness and its implications for psychosocial and moral transformation, shaped by inherited cultural narratives. The findings suggest that mythic fiction operates as a significant narrative site for reinterpreting cultural memory and fostering historical consciousness in contemporary readerships.

Index Terms—historical consciousness, temporality, Vishakanya, cultural memory, moral consciousness

I. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, authors retell mythological stories to address contemporary social realities, encouraging readers to reconsider the cultural and historical representations embedded in these narratives. Writers treat myth as a reservoir of belief systems that enable the populace to interpret human complexities within their processes of meaning-making. It is regarded as a distinctive genre that differs from related forms such as legends and fables due to its historical foundations (Cruz & Frijhoff, 2009). Consequently, mythic narratives evoke a sense of historical plausibility among readers while implicitly transmitting cultural memory. Myth and history cannot be regarded as entirely separate domains, as they function as complementary modes of discourse (Heehs, 1994). While myth operates through symbolic narratives and imagery, history attempts to document and interpret factual events.

Biased interpretations have shaped historical accounts, raising questions about one's dependence on such narratives for retrospection. History cannot be regarded as an epistemically neutral domain, as it is constructed according to the needs of different time periods (Frog, 2020). Historical distance presents an additional obstacle, particularly for younger audiences who may find it difficult to establish emotional connections with events from the distant past (Clark & Peck, 2018). The inheritance of experiential dimensions from the past remains complex, as historiography tends to rely on objective premises. Meanwhile, historiography underwent a significant transformation in the 20th century, as scholars increasingly scrutinised grand narratives and replaced them with pluralistic interpretations of history (Seixas, 2012). This shift enabled individuals to infuse their own memories and cultural values into the historicity of communicated narratives. Postmodernist scholarship has challenged conventional methods of acquiring historical knowledge, as various media increasingly fictionalise history.

Understanding past interpretations requires a conceptual framework that maps their intersection with subjective premises rather than merely learning factual accounts of the past (Zanazanian, 2019). The framework of historical consciousness allows individuals to engage with history at a deeper level. “The concept of historical consciousness refers both to the ways people orient themselves in time, and how they are bound by the historical and cultural contexts which shape their sense of temporality and collective memory” (Clark & Peck, 2018, p. 2). It amplifies an individual's ability to interpret the past through practical and ethical choices, thereby denoting one's orientation within social positioning

(Zanazanian, 2019). It provides a critical framework for addressing challenges associated with historical interpretation, including cultural plurality and the instability of identity (Rüsen, 2012).

Mapping the role of historical consciousness through historical fiction foregrounds analytical concerns regarding the interpretive and representational potential of narratives in cultural and historical contexts (Curthoys, 2011; Abdigapbarova, 2020). In this context, mythic fiction serves as an alternative medium through which the legitimacy of transmitted historical knowledge can be questioned. It tends to portray universal contingencies through symbolic storytelling, an aspect that remains limited in factual narratives. Such discourse provides a functional paradigm for evaluating the interaction between cultural memory and temporal consciousness. Mythic retellings represent adapted versions of culturally distant narratives that are reinterpreted within contemporary contexts. They carry temporality in ways that restore lived experiences, which eventually kindle collective identity (Cruz & Frijhoff, 2009). The emotional ethos inherent in mythic storytelling revitalises the cultural and historical zeitgeist that conventional historiography may not fully capture.

Existing scholarship on historical sensibility has largely been confined to historiography and educational pedagogy. While existing research highlights the role of historical media, limited attention has been paid to deconstructing mythic fiction as a medium for cultivating historical consciousness within specific cultural contexts. History education requires embedding awareness of an individual's ontological positioning, as such awareness significantly influences how individuals interpret their identities within narrated historical frameworks (Seixas, 2012). This necessitates further scholarly attention to illustrate how past narratives inform one's social positioning through specific characters in fiction.

Contemporary writers fuse mythic or legendary narratives with historical crises, thereby portraying ancient stories as forms of historical experience (Hossain, 2024). The works of Roshani Chokshi integrate mythological elements with historical sensibilities by situating legendary figures within narrative frameworks. Existing studies of these texts focus on uncovering archetypal elements and the fusion of cultural dimensions within mythic space (Pallapati, 2018; Chitra, 2024). The portrayal of Vishakanya in these works provides a narrative lens for analysing the dynamics of historical consciousness, as the figure is often associated with historical imagination. Vishakanyas are described as "poison maidens" who acquired immunity to toxic substances through the practice of mithridatism. According to certain historical accounts, young girls with unfavourable horoscopes were trained to become poisonous courtesans capable of alluring political rivals. Thus far, Vishakanya has rarely been subjected to qualitative literary analysis. This study examines the dissemination of historical consciousness through the mythic fictions *A Crown of Wishes* (2017) and the short story "Poison and Gold" from *Star-Touched Stories* (2018). It focuses on the representation of the legendary figure Vishakanya, whose narrative trajectory reflects the negotiation between identity, inherited traditions, and individual agency.

The typology of Jörn Rüsen conceptualises historical consciousness as an ontogenetic process operating at the level of individual cognition and moral reasoning (Rüsen, 2004). His framework explicates the role of pre-established narratives in shaping an individual's understanding of reality (Zanazanian, 2019). It outlines four modes of historical interpretation: traditional, exemplary, critical, and genetic. These modes represent progressive ways in which individuals interpret historical experiences and integrate them into their understanding of the present and future. This theoretical framework functions as a guiding structure that informs human activity and establishes meaningful connections across temporal dimensions (Rüsen, 2004). The paper addresses the following research questions:

- How can mythic fiction function as a medium for conveying historical consciousness?
- What role does historical consciousness play in the identity formation of Vishakanya in the selected fiction?
- How does historical consciousness contribute to moral consciousness and psychosocial development?

The study adopts a qualitative interpretive approach to analyse traces of historical consciousness in the representation of Vishakanya within selected mythic fiction. Roshani Chokshi's works, *A Crown of Wishes* (2017) and the short story "Poison and Gold" from *Star-Touched Stories* (2018), are selected for analysis. These texts reinterpret the legendary figure Vishakanya through the character Aasha and provide narrative contexts in which historical sensibilities can be explored. Applying Jörn Rüsen's typology to Vishakanya's trajectory reveals the dynamics involved in negotiating individual social positioning in relation to inherited narratives of the past. The study employs hermeneutic textual analysis to interpret the selected texts. It begins with close reading, leading to the identification of thematic codes related to the portrayal of Vishakanya. This is followed by a contextual analysis of Aasha within historical and psychosocial frameworks across different stages of the theoretical model. The analysis explores the relationship between identity formation and moral awareness as represented in mythic narratives. The study further investigates how historical consciousness may influence the development of psychosocial attitudes and moral awareness within a literary framework.

The objective of the study is to emphasise the significance of temporal frameworks in shaping individual experience, as reflected in the trajectory of Vishakanya's psychosocial development and moral consciousness. The study posits mythic fiction as a potent narrative medium for representing past conventions, thereby fostering a critical reconsideration of historical understanding.

II. DISCUSSION

A. Narrative Reconfiguration of Vishakanya in Roshani Chokshi's Works

Modern and postmodern writers have amplified myths through techniques such as satire, parody, and allegory to address social failings. Roshani Chokshi is one such writer who has retold Indian mythological narratives that exist at the fringes of grand narratives. She employs the genre of fantasy to integrate cultural and historical references in her works, treating them as entities that gain meaning through characters' experiences. She states in her course, namely *The Muse, the Myth, the Legend: Storytelling from Start to Finish*, "we do not read a book set in World War I because trench warfare makes us feel some way. The setting is a powerful anchor in a story, but what is anchoring is the emotional magnitude of the characters' choices" (Chokshi, 2025, 00.06.58).

The selected works for this study illustrate the aforementioned narrative approach. The analysis focuses on the Vishakanya named Aasha in the selected works of Chokshi. In *A Crown of Wishes*, the protagonists Gauri, Vikram, and Aasha participate in a magical tournament, while Aasha, a Vishakanya, seeks the possibility of experiencing human life (Pallapati, 2018). "Poison and Gold" from *Star-Touched Stories* presents Aasha's struggle between complicit self-acceptance and her desire for freedom, as she attempts to live as a human within the Bharata empire (Chitra, 2024). The character's movement between human and otherworldly realms functions as a liminal narrative space in which understandings of history are reshaped to become interpretive, active, and ethically engaged. Mythic spaces perform varied roles, serving as social boundaries among humans and as sites of supernatural agency in the Otherworld (Frog, 2020). The use of liminal space enables Chokshi to subvert traditional stereotypes and to give voice to marginalised representations of certain mythological figures. The representation of Vishakanya in the selected works diverges from culturally rooted narratives, as she is portrayed as seeking liberation from imposed identity and constrained agency.

In historical and legendary narratives, Vishakanyas are typically represented as poisonous young women employed as instruments of execution within royal courts of ancient India. They are described as using various methods to kill, including fatal glances, poisonous breath, perspiration, bites, and sexual contact (Penzer, 1952). References to such figures appear in multiple narrative and artistic traditions, including the Puranas and historical murals (Jain, 2017). Historical discourse has produced varied accounts regarding the existence of Vishakanyas. The political intrigue of the Mauryan Empire is depicted in the Sanskrit play *Mudrarakshasa*, which records that Chanakya employed a Vishakanya to assassinate King Parvatak (Modi, 1929). Similarly, *Gesta Romanorum* describes a Vishakanya as an agent sent to assassinate Alexander.

In these ancient narratives, Vishakanyas are portrayed as paradoxical figures embodying both power and vulnerability. This symbolic duality provides a critical lens for interpreting the figure in contemporary retellings. In contrast, Roshani Chokshi reimagines the Vishakanya as a resistant subject who challenges imposed roles, as the character actively seeks to reconstruct her agency within the framework of human experience.

B. Historical Consciousness Through the Trajectories of Jörn Rüsen

Chokshi unfolds the repressed emotions and desires of Vishakanya within the socio-cultural context. In a live interaction with Chokshi, she states the reason for injecting human desires into the character Vishakanya: "I was always taken by this idea that a woman who is raised to be a weapon, I wanted to know what she would feel like as a woman" (R. Chokshi, personal communication, February 15, 2025). Aasha's transformation is interpreted through four stages, namely, traditional, exemplary, critical, and genetic, as laid out by Jörn Rüsen. The following analysis mirrors how Aasha's journey reflects a progression in historical consciousness. Preconditions noted in the character, which track the transition to subsequent stages, are also mentioned.

(a). Adherence to Traditionality and Ethnic Customs

The traditional type denotes the preservation of inherited traditions and emphasises continuity with the past as a means of legitimising present actions. Traditions derived from past actuality are considered significant extensions of the present and future. Aasha and her sisters preserve their customs by being adept in dance, poetry, philosophy, singing, and seduction, which they use to trade in the market of the Otherworld. They allure humans with deep-seated desires and entice them into their unconscious through beauty or seduction. Aasha's adherence to traditions mirrors her conformity to the obligations of heritage, reflecting her relational identity with her sisters. Individuals who use the past as material to configure their present provide the temporal matrix for one's relational self (Rüsen, 2004). Similarly, Aasha's conformity to the traditions stands as an anchor to guide her actions and decisions during her stay in the Otherworld. The secret desire of Aasha to live a human life is the main precondition for progressing through subsequent stages that shape identity, as reflected in the following line,

A living nightmare that snapped her joy. What was that life she had been denied? Maybe it would have been short, but at least it would be hers. But no one cared that she desperately wanted to touch someone and feel their pulse rising to her fingertips and not their life withering at her touch. (Chokshi, 2017, p. 119)

This line conveys the emotional weight of Aasha, which is instilled by the restrained pressure to conform to existing conventions. The constructivist viewpoint treats emotions as performative acts embedded in shared narratives, and their regulation strengthens the moral self (Gergen, 1998). Aasha's emotional regulation aligns her morale by upholding her

siblings' legacy. Amidst this ambivalence, her love for her sisters dominates her desires, and this psychic state serves as the precondition for the subsequent stage.

Continuity of traditions extends to the exemplary type, which involves interpreting past experiences as guiding models for current behaviour, with emphasis given to morality. In this stage, individuals treat past narratives as a medium to establish guidelines for human conduct. Here, tradition is used as an empirical reference to derive a message or lesson for the present. Aasha's actions reveal her loyalty and commitment towards her ancestry, despite the repression of her desires. Her partial disclosure of information regarding the way to exit the Otherworld to the protagonists denotes the norm of maintaining secrecy to avoid eagerness and anticipation. The decision to impart the secret in a conscious manner reflects the moral stance derived from customs. Historical consciousness serves as a hidden machinery that links learned values to current dilemmas (Rüsen, 2004). The explained incident serves as an example to indicate how Aasha is reminded of her bond with lineage to introspect her dilemmas. Aasha confronts her internal desires in a disguised manner, as she is invited to the human world by Gauri. This depicts the 'Call to Adventure' phase of Campbell's hero's journey. When she faces the question of leaving her sisters, the protagonist refuses, explaining that she cannot survive as a Vishakanya in Gauri's place by compromising her innate nature.

Her negotiated agency is defined by the conflict between the manifestation of internal desires and her external actions to maintain harmony in her surroundings. This negotiation stems from the impact of historical consciousness, as it integrates empirical constraints of the past with a longing for a better future, which implies that the self is continuously configured according to existing needs (Seixas, 2012). Aasha tends to handle the dilemma posed by her personal desires, though she gives primary importance to adhering to the conventions of her community. According to psychoanalytic theory, repressed desires are locked inside the unconscious mind to safeguard oneself from anxiety. Conscientious behaviour overshadows one's internal desires, which might be triggered later. Repression of Aasha's desire is reflected in the line given below,

Night after night, she would unspool a person's desire, slaking her hunger and trying to forget that the moment the beings left her arms, they would touch someone they loved, place food upon their tongue that would keep flavour and never turn to ash, maybe even sink their hands into the dirt simply because they could. (Chokshi, 2017, p. 181)

The moral dilemma she confronts after her encounter with humans also serves as a prior initiation into choosing life, driven by desire and curiosity. Despite her loyalty and endearing attachment to her sisters, the desire to experience human vitality grows stronger within her, serving as the precondition for the next stage.

(b). Disruption of Ancestral Continuity and Its Reconfiguration Within Contemporary Contexts

The continuity of established norms and belief systems gets ruptured in the critical type. Limitations posed by inherited values lead to questioning the validity of traditional conventions, and this leads an individual to disengage from inherited traditions. It allows an individual to develop a sense of otherness, enabling them to stand against binding commitments. The critical stage emerges when Aasha begins to question the limitations imposed by her inherited identity. Aasha has always carried reluctance about her magical abilities, which allows her inner desire to catalyse resistance. The significant realisation that makes her take the pivotal decision of leaving her identity as a Vishakanya is given below,

Knowledge and curiosity would never brush against her mind. She would only know an enclosure of silk and poison. She would know only the desires of others and nothing of her own. In a hundred years, perhaps the Vishakanya magic would ebb little by little, turning them human once more if they lived that long. (Chokshi, 2017, p. 323)

Aasha's desire to become human signals a departure from unquestioned acceptance of tradition. It also resolves the dilemmas she has been carrying, and she prioritises her desires by negotiating her state of existence. In the human world, Aasha struggles with complexities due to her unfamiliarity with the customs of the Bharata empire, which turns out to be an intriguing experience for her. In Aasha's quest for self-discovery and independence, she experiences anxiety about carrying her innate abilities as a Vishakanya, such as her allure to feed on humans. She eventually confronts an affective burden due to the vulnerability that arises from her twofold nature. The historical past is often imbued with emotional charge and mobilised through negotiating oneself and addressing contemporary concerns (Pihlainen, 2013). It paves the way for internal conflict between an individual's abilities and the pressure to conform to established conventions. This conflict is mirrored in Aasha's struggles to reconcile her identity as a Vishakanya within the constraints of societal expectations. Aasha gets excited to explore her sensibilities as a human; in contrast, she gets petrified by her toxic instincts, which she finds hard to control.

Aasha is sent to the tower of the Spy Mistress to receive the required training for becoming the ideal successor. The challenges she faces during her training period evoke her susceptibility. Aasha entrusts Zahril, the previous Spy Mistress of the Bharata Empire, but their incompatibility deepens her ambivalence. Her vulnerability initially leads her to violate the norms established by Zahril, and these challenges pave the way for her to identify her true self. Aasha questions her nature as a Vishakanya, and various human emotions influence her growing resistance to her identity. This interrogation of her nurtured customs serves as the precondition for the subsequent stage.

The genetic stage represents a dynamic understanding of historical change, where individuals reinterpret the past in relation to evolving contexts, thereby enabling adaptive transformation. In this stage, an individual's past is revisited to navigate current situations, as Aasha reflects on her experiences to understand how they shape her identity. Accepting

transformation becomes a necessary condition for sustaining the continuity of the past alongside the present. Aasha's journey of overcoming her insecurities leads her to embrace her true identity, instilling in her self-awareness and competence. Later, she realises that her true identity helps her overcome fears and control her abilities, which is encoded in the following line, "But now she saw that the key to controlling her abilities was simply to be herself. That the very act of freeing herself from trying to be anyone but herself had released the grip of her worst fears" (Chokshi, 2018, p. 202). The series of insecurities that Aasha encounters in the Spy Mistress tower makes her understand the value and richness of being a Vishakanya.

She relies on the skills and instincts she has acquired in the Otherworld as a Vishakanya to survive in the human world. During her final examination of navigating the right path in a chaotic environment, she uses available resources and her previous experiences to solve the riddle. Prioritising desire leads Aasha to attain self-acceptance, which stands as the root of her transformation. When Aasha returns to the Bharata empire, she comprehends her significant role in the court's political dynamics. Her empathy and ability to connect with others make her feel valued and appreciated, despite the distance from her sisters. Aasha realises the value of holding on to her identity, which is intertwined with her emotional and behavioural responses. Her self-reclamation occurs through an understanding of her strengths and weaknesses, which denotes an optimistic transformation. Liberation from the illusion of romanticising past conventions is intertwined with the acknowledgement of their continuous reconfiguration in the present (Pihlainen, 2013). Parallel comparisons between Aasha's present and her past serve as a catalyst for shedding her sense of inferiority. Aasha's acknowledgement of her origins deepens her understanding of identity and agency as she adapts to new possibilities. Her adaptation to the current environment in which she resides, while maintaining a hold on her roots, indicates her competence and flexibility.

C. Interpretive Synthesis and Psychosocial Implications of Historical Consciousness

Fiction does more than merely narrate past events; it reaffirms collective identity through a presentist impression and showcases how the represented character might respond to contemporary contingencies (White, 2005). Similarly, analysing Vishakanya through the lens of historical premises parallels the experiences of oppressed women seeking liberation amidst patriarchal constraints, guided by experiential learning. Analysing the historical consciousness of Aasha maps out the array of psychosocial traits that account for the maturation of consciousness. The progression of her character demonstrates that identity formation evolves through continuous negotiation between past experiences and present aspirations. The accompanying psychosocial traits identified in the analysis of Aasha are illustrated below.

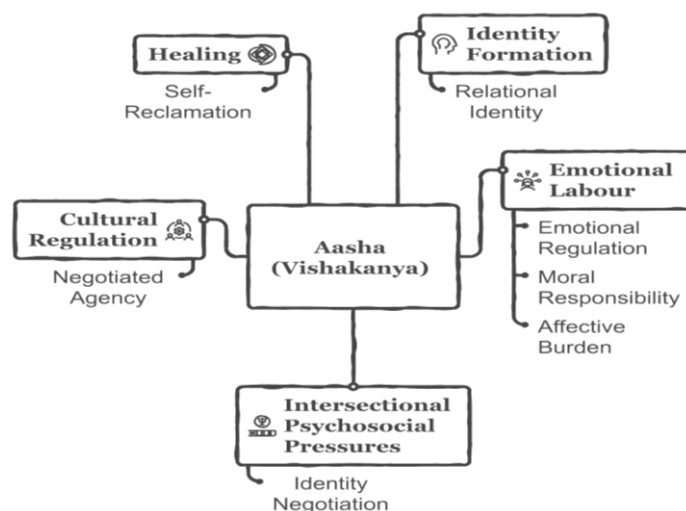


Figure 1. Psychosocial Attitudes of the Character Aasha

Iterations of psychosocial attitudes across various stages of historical consciousness elucidate that identity is not a static element and that its formation is not a linear progression. In Aasha's journey, resistance is observed twice through the paths of individuation. One instance occurs when she exercises her autonomy, and the other is noted in the trials that she confronts in the Spy Mistress's tower due to internal conflict. Sustained emotional labour has refurbished her former self by acknowledging the value of her ethnic roots. Aasha's identity and understanding of reality evolve through the resurfacing of emotional and moral dilemmas. The historical consciousness of an individual is rejuvenated through emotional dilemmas and resistance. The inherited past tends to question one's identity when it clashes with personal will.

Moral consciousness is the primary psychosocial aspect that is intertwined with historical reasoning. It is harnessed through values that are assimilated with the apprehension of past actuality (Gergen, 1998). Likewise, Aasha's morality is intertwined with her gratitude for her clan and its customs, which prompts her to reflect on her past in times of uncertainty. Her moral reasoning aligns with her social positioning, as evinced by her preservation and expression of attitudes derived from her dual identity. Thus, the accumulation of moral reasoning stems from historical memory, which relies on the representation of the past. By reflecting on the influence of customary conventions in past experiences, individuals

develop the ability to reinterpret them in an informed manner and make reasoned decisions (Seixas, 2012). Aasha's historical consciousness aids her in actively redefining identity, alongside the acceptance of established traditions. For every individual, embracing past legacy becomes a necessary stipulation for mobilising moral consciousness in one's actions, as it binds past actuality with present values (Rüsen, 2004).

Myths act as a durable medium that conveys the past as a collective experience, imbued with truth as an indispensable quality (Cruz & Frijhoff, 2009). This study validates mythic fiction as an instrumental factor in sharpening the sense of temporality through the analysis of historical consciousness. Chokshi's representation of Vishakanya illustrates the role of contemporary literature in challenging mythological stereotypes while raising questions about broader concerns such as history, identity, and cultural memory. The impact of historical consciousness on Aasha reveals the psychosocial attitudes involved in identity formation. The study tends to elevate the interpretive relevance of myths in the posthuman era by integrating historical consciousness with mythic fiction. Therefore, it stands as a contribution to mythic discourse and to the study of the legendary figure Vishakanya.

III. CONCLUSION

Tracing Aasha's historical consciousness through different stages reveals her development from imbibing her heritage to acknowledging her identity and personal agency. The study demonstrates how an individual internalises temporal sensibility by configuring representations of the past to navigate present complexities. Application of Jörn Rüsen's typology to Aasha highlights her attachment to cultural heritage and transmitted values associated with the Vishakanya lineage. The initial stages reflect her internalisation of communal traditions and her sense of loyalty to the collective identity she shares with her sisters. However, the growing uncertainty surrounding her inherited legacy marks a transition into the critical stage, in which she begins to question the cultural assumptions that define her existence. Tension between Aasha's heteronomous self and personal aspiration exposed her to psychological conflict. It is resolved at the genetic stage as Aasha reconciles with her historical heritage, acknowledging her individuality.

Within this framework, mythic fiction emerges as a powerful medium for illuminating the relationship between historical consciousness and personal identity. Though mythic fiction is considered the least reliable source for understanding history, it could be credible for depicting the climate of the past and its cultural sensibilities. Chokshi's representation of Vishakanyas deviates from portraying them as female agents used solely for political affairs by foregrounding Aasha's struggle with the nature of her existence. Through this representation, she emerges as an individual capable of negotiating tensions between tradition and self-determination.

This study is a contribution to existing scholarship on historical consciousness, as it addresses a research problem situated within historiography and educational pedagogy. This paper also attempts to analyse the representation of Vishakanya, the character who is rarely subjected to analysis. It does not insist on mythic fiction as the ideal medium for the propagation of historical awareness. Rather, it highlights its interpretive potential in fostering reflective engagement with cultural memory. Consequently, the stages in Rüsen's typology are not to be understood as rigid psychological phases experienced uniformly by individuals, but as analytical categories that illuminate diverse modes of engaging with the past. The study is limited to the revelation of associated psychosocial attributes with regard to Aasha and does not indulge in the analysis of psychic nuances associated with the progression of temporality. The scope of this study is limited to the textual analysis of selected works, focusing specifically on the character Aasha as a narrative embodiment of temporality.

The findings indicate that mythic fiction functions as a narrative medium that showcases the interconnection between cultural memory and contemporary social concerns. Mythic discourse can be employed in classrooms, which enables the learners to track the influence of imbibed past narratives in shaping their actions and decisions. Future research may extend this inquiry by examining Aasha's depersonalisation in her efforts to balance historical lineage and flexibility with contemporariness. The study, therefore, affirms the analytical significance of mythic fiction as a narrative medium through which historical consciousness, identity formation and moral consciousness can be critically reinterpreted within contemporary literary discourse.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The first author, Cathrine Christy M., sincerely acknowledges her research supervisor, Dr. A. R. Chitra, for her invaluable guidance, insightful suggestions, and constant encouragement throughout the course of this research. Her scholarly mentorship, thoughtful feedback, and unwavering support played a significant role in the successful completion of this study.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abdigapbarova, Z. (2020). Forming the historical consciousness of the student through teaching fiction. *International Journal of Linguistics Literature and Culture*, 6(4), 27–37. <https://doi.org/10.21744/ijllc.v6n4.903>
- [2] Chitra, A. R. (2024). Exploring Mythmaking in Chokshi's *Star-Touched Stories*. In S. A. Menon & A. Yuvaraj (Eds.), *Making Sense of Myth and Mythopoeia* (pp. 102–115). Blue Rose Publishers. Retrieved January 24, 2026, from <https://bit.ly/4kfbSfm>
- [3] Chokshi, R. (2017). *A Crown of Wishes*. Wednesday Books.

- [4] Chokshi, R. (2018). Poison and Gold. In R. Chokshi (Ed.), *Star-Touched Stories* (pp.123-234). Wednesday Books.
- [5] Chokshi, R. (2025, February 15). *Module two live Q&A* [Live interaction]. In *On muses, myths, and legends: Storytelling from start to finish*. The Writers Conservatory (Teachable). Retrieved November 19, 2025, from <https://thewritersconservatory.teachable.com/courses/winter-2025-fantasy/lectures/58241191>
- [6] Clark, A., & Peck, C. L. (2018). Historical Consciousness: Theory and Practice. In A. Clark & C. L. Peck (Eds.), *Contemplating Historical Consciousness: Notes from the Field* (pp.1-15). Berghahn Books.
- [7] Cruz, L., & Frijhoff, W. (2009). Introduction: Myth in History, History in Myth. In L. Cruz & W. Frijhoff (Eds.), *Myth in History, History in Myth* (Vol. 182, pp. 1-15). Brill.
- [8] Curthoys, A. (2011). Harry Potter and Historical Consciousness: Reflections on history and fiction. *History Australia*, 8(1), 7–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14490854.2011.11668354>
- [9] Frog. (2020). Otherworlding: Othering Places and Spaces through Mythologization. *Signs and Society*, 8(3), 454–471. <https://doi.org/10.1086/710159>
- [10] Gergen, K. J. (1998). Narrative, moral identity, and historical consciousness: A social constructionist account. In J. Straub (Ed.), *Erzählung, Identität und historisches Bewußtsein*. Suhrkamp. Retrieved December 8, 2025, from <https://scispace.com/pdf/narrative-moral-identity-and-historical-consciousness-a-2dupr2kcfq.pdf>
- [11] Heeds, P. (1994). Myth, History, and Theory. *History and Theory*, 33(1), 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2505649>
- [12] Hossain, E. (2024). Intersectionality of Myth, History and Culture: A Study of Cross-Cultural Boundaries and Transformation. *Green University Review of Social Sciences*, 10(1), 1-10. Retrieved January 5, 2026, from https://siteadmin.green.edu.bd/uploads/documents/journal-article/11_1734670112_article-document.pdf
- [13] Jain, V. (2017). Vishakanya: The Poisonous Celibate. *International Research Journal of Commerce, Arts and Science*, 8(4), 187-194.
- [14] Modi, J. J. (1929). The Vish Kanya or Poison Damsel of ancient India: Illustrated by the Story of Susan Ramashgar in the Persian Burzo-Nameh. In *Anthropological papers, Part IV: Papers Read Before the Anthropological Society of Bombay* (pp. 226-239). Bombay, British India Press. Retrieved December 10, 2025, from <https://fid4sa-repository.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/4010/1/The%20Vish%20Kanya%20or%20Poison%20Damsel.pdf>
- [15] Pallapati, J. L. (2018). *A Crown of Wishes: A Reimagining of Myth and the Negotiation of Fate* [Master's thesis]. Karnataka University.
- [16] Penzer, N. M. (1952). Poison-Damsels. In M. N. Penzer, *Poison-Damsels and Other Essays in Folklore and Anthropology*. London: Privately Printed for C. J. Sawyer. Retrieved January 18, 2026, from https://archive.org/details/McGillLibrary-rbrc_poison-damsels_OCTAVO-6550-17777/page/n5/mode/2up
- [17] Pihlainen, K. (2013). On historical consciousness and popular pasts. *História Da Historiografia International Journal of Theory and History of Historiography*, 7(15), 10–26. <https://doi.org/10.15848/hh.v0i15.685>
- [18] Rüsen, J. (2004). Historical Consciousness: Narrative, Structure, Moral Function and Ontogenetic Development. In P. Seixas (Ed.), *Theorizing Historical Consciousness* (pp. 63-85). University of Toronto Press.
- [19] Rüsen, J. (2012). Forming Historical Consciousness – Towards a Humanistic History Didactics. *Antíteses*, 5(10), 519-536. <https://doi.org/10.5433/1984-3356.2012v5n10p519>
- [20] Seixas, P. (2012). Progress, presence and historical consciousness: confronting past, present and future in postmodern time. *Paedagogica Historica*, 48(6), 859–872. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2012.709524>
- [21] White, H. (2005). Introduction: Historical fiction, fictional history, and historical reality. *Rethinking History*, 9(2–3), 147–157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642520500149061>
- [22] Zanazanian, P. (2019). Examining historical consciousness through history-as-interpretive-filter templates: implications for research and education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 51(6), 850–868. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2019.1652935>



Cathrine Christy M. completed her undergraduate and postgraduate studies in English Literature at Holy Cross College. She is currently a Research Scholar in the Department of English at SASTRA Deemed to be University, pursuing research in Mythological Studies. She has published research articles in international peer-reviewed journals. Her research interests include Mythology, Indian Literature, Subaltern Studies, and Cultural Studies.



A. R. Chitra completed her undergraduate studies in English at Holy Cross College and pursued her postgraduate studies, M.Phil., and Ph.D. in English at S.T. Hindu College. A University Gold Medalist, her doctoral research focused on Indian Writing in English and Postcolonial Theory. She is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at SASTRA Deemed to be University. She has published research articles in international peer-reviewed journals, and her areas of interest include Postcolonial Literature, Mythology, Indian Literature, and Cultural Studies.