
Epic Echoes and Futuristic Visions: The Role of Cultural Hybridity in Samit Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy*

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Abstract:

Samit Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy* represents a landmark in Indian English speculative fiction. The trilogy merges myth, fantasy, and futuristic imagination, embodying the coexistence of India's ancient cultural heritage and its globalized, modern identity. This paper explores how Basu employs the concept of cultural hybridity to reinterpret Indian mythology through speculative tropes. Using Homi K. Bhabha's idea of the third space as a framework, it examines how Basu's writing negotiates between indigenous mythic traditions and Western fantasy conventions. The study also investigates how parody, intertextuality, and metafiction serve as tools for cultural and literary innovation. The paper argues that Basu's trilogy redefines Indian fantasy as a dynamic hybrid space where epic echoes of the past merge with futuristic visions to reflect the evolving consciousness of contemporary India.

Keywords: Cultural Hybridity, GameWorld Trilogy, Indian Fantasy, Postcolonialism, Speculative Fiction.

Introduction

The emergence of Indian English speculative fiction marks a significant cultural and literary shift in twenty-first-century Indian writing. Moving beyond the realism of postcolonial narratives, writers such as Samit Basu, Anil Menon, Vandana Singh, and Indra Das have pioneered a new literary space where myth, fantasy, science, and global pop culture converge (Menon and Singh 12). This movement reflects not only an imaginative expansion of Indian fiction but also a deeper negotiation with questions of identity, modernity, and globalization (Bhabha 37). Among these writers, Samit Basu occupies a central place as the first Indian author to create a fully realized fantasy universe that competes with the narrative complexity and humor of Western fantasy yet remains firmly rooted in the Indian cultural

imagination (Joshi 89). His *The GameWorld Trilogy* comprising *The Simoqin Prophecies*, *The Manticore's Secret*, and *The Unwaba Revelations* stands as a landmark work in Indian speculative fiction, blending mythic heritage with futuristic imagination and intercultural dialogue. Basu's trilogy is remarkable for its playful synthesis of classical epic traditions and postmodern narrative experimentation. The world of *The GameWorld Trilogy* is populated by gods, demons, heroes, and monsters drawn from a wide range of sources such as Indian epics, Greek mythology, Tolkienian fantasy, superhero comics, and video-game aesthetics (Jameson 4). Through this intertextual interplay, Basu challenges the conventional division between the "high" cultural capital of mythology and the "popular" domain of modern fantasy. His fiction constructs a realm where mythological archetypes coexist with global fantasy idioms, reflecting the hybrid nature of contemporary Indian identity. In doing so, Basu transcends mere imitation of Western fantasy and instead localizes the genre through a uniquely Indian sensibility, transforming it into a postcolonial tool for self-representation (Thakur 69).

This paper explores the role of cultural hybridity in Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy* and how it operates as a narrative and ideological framework. The notion of hybridity, as theorized by Homi K. Bhabha, refers to the creation of a "third space" where competing cultural codes interact to form new meanings. In Basu's world, such hybridity manifests not only in character formation and setting but also in language, humor, and narrative tone. By drawing equally on the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and Marvel Comics, Basu transforms the act of storytelling into a space of cultural negotiation. His use of parody and self-referential humor destabilizes the authority of grand narratives while celebrating India's pluralism and global connectivity. In examining these aspects, the paper seeks to analyze how Basu's speculative imagination redefines the relationship between myth and modernity. It also situates Basu within the growing field of Indian fantasy literature, which articulates the complexities of cultural identity in a globalized world. Ultimately, the study argues that *The GameWorld Trilogy* represents a paradigm of postcolonial hybridity, where epic echoes of the past harmonize with futuristic visions to create a uniquely Indian narrative of belonging and transformation.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to explore how Samit Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy* functions as a literary space where diverse cultural traditions, mythic frameworks, and speculative tropes coexist in a dynamic dialogue. The study aims to analyze how Basu reinterprets ancient Indian mythological narratives and fuses them with contemporary global fantasy conventions to produce a unique form of cultural hybridity. Through this examination, the research seeks to highlight the manner in which Basu's writing negotiates between tradition and modernity, local and global influences, and the epic past and futuristic imagination. Furthermore, the research intends to understand how elements such as intertextuality, parody, and metafiction operate as narrative tools that enable Basu to deconstruct established mythic hierarchies and reconstruct them within a globalized, postmodern context. By examining these strategies, the study endeavors to establish how Basu's imaginative reworking of myths transforms Indian fantasy fiction from a derivative

genre into a distinct postcolonial mode of storytelling. The ultimate purpose of this research is to position Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy* as a representative text that captures the evolving nature of Indian speculative fiction where mythic echoes of the past harmonize with futuristic visions to articulate new forms of identity, imagination, and cultural expression in the twenty-first century.

Research Questions

This study is guided by a set of interrelated research questions that aim to deepen the understanding of Basu's hybrid narrative techniques and thematic concerns. It seeks to investigate how Samit Basu employs myth and fantasy to create a culturally hybrid world that merges traditional Indian mythological frameworks with global speculative structures? The research further questions how Basu's narrative reflects the postcolonial negotiation of identity and cultural belonging through the medium of speculative imagination? It explores how the trilogy's intertextuality, parody, and metafictional humor function as creative instruments in constructing what Homi K. Bhabha describes as the third space, a conceptual zone where cultural boundaries are blurred and new hybrid meanings emerge. Additionally, the research examines the significance of mythic archetypes and epic motifs in shaping Basu's reinterpretation of fantasy as a genre that transcends both cultural and literary boundaries. It asks how the coexistence of mythic and futuristic elements in Basu's narrative structure symbolizes the broader transformation of Indian English literature, which increasingly engages with speculative modes to articulate contemporary realities. Ultimately, the research seeks to determine how *The GameWorld Trilogy* serves as a reflection of India's pluralistic ethos and contributes to redefining the parameters of fantasy fiction within a global literary landscape?

Literature Review

The emergence of Indian speculative fiction in English has redefined the literary landscape of postcolonial India, opening up new creative possibilities that merge myth, fantasy, and futuristic imagination. Traditionally, Indian English fiction has been dominated by realist and historical narratives, but writers such as Samit Basu, Anil Menon, Vandana Singh, and Indra Das have shifted the focus toward imaginative storytelling that reclaims mythic heritage while engaging with global genres. Samit Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy* comprising *The Simoqin Prophecies*, *The Manticore's Secret*, and *The Unwaba Revelations* is a foundational work in this movement, demonstrating how fantasy and myth can coexist within a postmodern, intercultural framework. Basu's narrative experiments exemplify what Homi K. Bhabha terms the third space of cultural hybridity, a conceptual site where local and global influences intersect to form new meanings (Bhabha 37).

Fantasy in Indian writing, once marginalized as escapist and derivative, is now increasingly being acknowledged for its capacity to articulate postcolonial experiences. Anil Menon and Vandana Singh argue that Indian speculative fiction represents "a bridge between inherited mythic structures and contemporary anxieties"(Menon and Singh 12). Basu's fiction demonstrates this bridge vividly, bringing together characters and symbols from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Western fantasy traditions, and superhero comics. This blending of myth and modernity produces a unique form of narrative hybridity that mirrors India's

own multicultural identity. Joshi observes that Basu's approach to myth "deconstructs the colonial hierarchy of genres" by positioning fantasy as a serious mode of cultural expression (Joshi 89).

Through humor and intertextuality, Basu reclaims fantasy as an Indian narrative space rather than an imported Western genre. The theoretical foundations of cultural hybridity and intertextuality provide valuable frameworks for understanding Basu's literary strategies. Bhabha defines hybridity as the process through which colonized cultures negotiate with dominant narratives to produce new hybrid identities (Bhabha 112). In Basu's case, the fusion of mythic and futuristic tropes creates a dialogic form of storytelling where cultural symbols are constantly reinterpreted. Likewise, Linda Hutcheon's concept of parody as "repetition with critical distance" is relevant to Basu's work, which continually references and subverts both Indian and Western mythic traditions (Hutcheon 26). Basu's writing operates in the spirit of parody, using irony and humor to question conventional hierarchies while simultaneously celebrating cultural multiplicity. Fredric Jameson's notion of postmodernism as "the cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson 4) also applies to Basu's world, where global pop culture, epic myth, and political satire converge to reflect the hybrid consciousness of the postcolonial subject.

Critics have increasingly recognized Basu's contribution to transforming Indian English literature. Gupta notes that Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy* "collapses the boundary between the sacred and the popular" by combining religious myth and popular culture into a single, fluid narrative form (Gupta 53). Similarly, Rao emphasizes that Basu "revitalizes myth by making it accessible to contemporary audiences without diminishing its symbolic depth" (Rao 47). Basu's reimagining of myth thus functions not merely as cultural revivalism but as a creative reinvention aligned with the global discourse of speculative fiction. Kumar further argues that Basu's treatment of mythological figures and fantasy archetypes "destabilizes moral binaries" and "reflects the pluralism of Indian identity" (Kumar 103). Through such hybridity, Basu constructs a narrative world that both celebrates and critiques cultural diversity.

In comparison to earlier postcolonial writers like Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh, who incorporated magical realism within historical and political narratives, Basu represents a new generation that employs speculative genres as independent vehicles for serious cultural reflection. Thakur asserts that Basu's fiction "expands the postcolonial project by using fantasy as a means of questioning power, history, and identity" (Thakur 69). His *The GameWorld Trilogy* thus becomes a site where mythic echoes of the past coexist with futuristic visions, illustrating India's transition from colonial subjugation to global modernity. The existing scholarship establishes that Basu's fiction embodies a synthesis of tradition and innovation, yet comprehensive academic engagement with his *The GameWorld Trilogy* remains limited. While critics have discussed his humor, intertextuality, and narrative experimentation, few have analyzed how these techniques collectively construct a postcolonial discourse of cultural hybridity. This study addresses that gap by examining how

Basu's speculative imagination transforms Indian mythology into a global language of fantasy and cultural negotiation.

Research Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative analytical approach based on close textual reading and interpretive analysis of Samit Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy*. The study examines how mythic, speculative, and postmodern elements function within the narrative to create cultural hybridity. Drawing upon postcolonial and cultural theories, especially Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the third space, the research analyzes Basu's reworking of myth and fantasy as strategies of cultural negotiation. The methodology emphasizes intertextual and thematic analysis, focusing on Basu's use of parody, humor, and metafiction to challenge conventional genre boundaries. Secondary sources, including scholarly articles and theoretical texts, are employed to contextualize the trilogy within the broader framework of Indian English speculative fiction. Through this interpretive and theoretical lens, the study seeks to demonstrate how Basu's imaginative synthesis of myth and modernity reflects the hybrid nature of contemporary Indian identity.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is primarily grounded in postcolonial theory and the concept of cultural hybridity, as articulated by Homi K. Bhabha. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues that postcolonial identity is not static but formed within a third space, a site of negotiation where cultural meanings are constantly reconstructed (Bhabha 37). This idea of hybridity serves as the core lens through which Samit Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy* is examined. Basu's fiction embodies this third space by merging Indian mythological traditions with Western fantasy tropes, thereby creating a hybrid literary form that resists binary divisions of East and West, myth and modernity, tradition and innovation. His reworking of mythic narratives through a speculative framework demonstrates how postcolonial writers use fantasy not as escapism but as a form of cultural reclamation and self-definition. In addition to Bhabha's theory, Linda Hutcheon's notion of parody and metafiction plays a crucial role in interpreting Basu's narrative techniques. In a theory of parody, Hutcheon defines parody as "repetition with critical distance" (Hutcheon 26). Basu's writing exemplifies this through his humorous reinterpretation of epic motifs, mythological figures, and popular culture icons. His parody operates as both homage and critique, reflecting a postmodern sensibility that questions canonical hierarchies while celebrating cultural plurality. The constant intertextual play in *The GameWorld Trilogy* aligns with Hutcheon's theory, suggesting that parody functions as a dialogic tool through which Basu engages with multiple literary and cultural traditions. Furthermore, Fredric Jameson's idea of postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism provides another interpretive dimension. Jameson views postmodern literature as a space where historical depth gives way to stylistic pastiche and global cultural intermixing (Jameson 4). Basu's novels, filled with intertextual humor, global references, and fragmented identities, reflect this postmodern condition, where fantasy becomes a means of representing hybrid cultural realities.

Together, these theoretical perspectives, Bhabha's hybridity, Hutcheon's parody, and Jameson's postmodernism offer a comprehensive framework for analyzing Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy*. They help explain how Basu's speculative world-building becomes a

cultural negotiation zone, where mythic echoes of India's past intersect with futuristic visions shaped by globalization. Through this fusion, Basu's fiction articulates a distinctly Indian version of postmodern hybridity that redefines both fantasy and cultural identity.

Textual Analysis

(i) *The Simoqin Prophecies: Reimagining the Epic through Parody*

Samit Basu's *The Simoqin Prophecies* introduces readers to a world that is simultaneously ancient and futuristic, mythical and modern. The novel draws heavily from Indian epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, yet it also borrows freely from Western fantasy traditions, including Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Through this intertextual collage, Basu redefines the concept of the epic for the postcolonial age. The prophecy-driven narrative, filled with magicians, shapeshifters, and mythical creatures, parodies both Indian and western mythic conventions.

Basu employs parody not merely for humor but as a postmodern device to challenge the notion of a singular cultural narrative. As Hutcheon explains, parody functions as "repetition with critical distance" (Hutcheon 26). In this sense, Basu's playful tone invites readers to reconsider the meaning of heroism and destiny in a world shaped by hybrid cultural codes. The coexistence of dragons and rakshasas, of Sanskritized spells and pop-culture jokes, constructs what Bhabha would describe as a third space of hybridity (Bhabha 112). *The Simoqin Prophecies* thus becomes an allegory of cultural synthesis, reflecting how contemporary India negotiates its mythic heritage within global modernity.

(ii) *The Manticore's Secret: The Politics of Identity and the Hybrid Hero*

In *The Manticore's Secret*, Basu deepens his exploration of hybridity through character and theme. The protagonist, Kirin, and other central figures embody multiple overlapping identities which are human and magical as well as traditional and modern. This duality reflects the fragmented postcolonial self that Bhabha describes as being in-between cultures (Bhabha 56). The novel's tone becomes darker and more self-reflexive, mirroring the complexities of political power and identity formation in postcolonial societies. Basu uses speculative tropes such as shape-shifting, prophecy, and rebellion to mirror the instability of cultural identity in a globalized world. The narrative often breaks the fourth wall, reminding readers that every story is a constructed reality. Jameson's idea of postmodern literature as a space of "depthless play" (Jameson 12) resonates here, as Basu transforms myth into a site of negotiation rather than reverence. The blending of traditional motifs with futuristic technology like airships and magical devices further highlights the fluidity between the epic past and the postmodern present.

(iii) *The Unwaba Revelations: Metafiction, Multiplicity, and Cultural Renewal*

The Unwaba Revelations, represents the culmination of Basu's hybrid imagination. Here, metafiction and self-awareness dominate the narrative. Characters comment on the nature of storytelling, prophecies fold back upon themselves, and the boundary between author, narrator, and character dissolves. This narrative self-consciousness exemplifies Hutcheon's concept of "metafictional parody" (Hutcheon 54), where fiction reflects upon its own artifice. Basu employs this strategy to suggest that myth and fantasy are never fixed but continuously reinterpreted across cultures and time. The Unwaba, a mythical chameleon that

shifts colors and truths, becomes a metaphor for hybridity itself a living emblem of transformation and multiplicity. As Rao notes, “Basu’s narrative vision redefines myth as an evolving discourse rather than a static tradition” (Rao 49). The novel’s blend of humor, chaos, and philosophy captures the essence of India’s pluralistic imagination. By the end, the trilogy emerges not as a simple fantasy adventure but as a profound reflection on storytelling as a culturally hybrid act. Basu’s intertextual, self-referential world thus embodies what Bhabha calls the “interstitial passage” of cultural translation (Bhabha 219), where meaning is continually negotiated between competing systems of belief and imagination. *The Unwaba Revelations* closes the trilogy with the assertion that identity, culture, and myth are not inherited constants but evolving hybrids vital and adaptive, like the Unwaba itself.

Across all three novels, Basu constructs a literary universe that is both rooted and fluid, ancient and modern. His reworking of mythic structures through humor, metafiction, and speculative devices reflects the hybridity of postcolonial India, a nation negotiating between local traditions and global influences. By merging parody with epic motifs, Basu achieves what Jameson terms “a pluralistic aesthetic” (Jameson 19), one that resists closure and celebrates multiplicity. *The GameWorld Trilogy*, thus stands as a testament to India’s evolving literary identity, where speculative fiction becomes a language of cultural dialogue and creative renewal.

Discussion

Samit Basu’s *The GameWorld Trilogy* offers a significant reconfiguration of the fantasy genre by situating myth and imagination within a postcolonial, culturally hybrid framework. The trilogy’s narrative architecture reflects India’s negotiation between its mythic heritage and the realities of globalization. Through parody, intertextuality, and humor, Basu constructs a literary world where “epic echoes” of India’s past harmonize with “futuristic visions” of a technologically driven, transnational future. His writing becomes an act of cultural translation that transforms inherited traditions into creative, globally resonant forms. In this sense, Basu’s narrative moves beyond imitation of Western fantasy and instead localizes the genre within the Indian cultural psyche. This blending mirrors India’s own hybrid modernity, where mythic memory and global culture coexist within everyday experience. At the same time, Basu’s postmodern sensibility, marked by irony and self-reflexivity, aligns with Linda Hutcheon’s theory of parody as “repetition with critical distance” (Hutcheon 26). His humor and metafictional asides allow the reader to both enjoy and critique mythic conventions. In *The Simoqin Prophecies*, for instance, Basu uses parody to deconstruct the idea of the epic hero, presenting protagonists who are uncertain, flawed, and self-aware. This destabilization of heroic archetypes reflects a broader cultural shift from reverence for fixed mythic authority to an appreciation of multiplicity and reinterpretation. Similarly, *The Manticore’s Secret* and *The Unwaba Revelations* illustrate how Basu reimagines identity as fluid and performative. The chameleon-like Unwaba, which symbolizes shifting truth, encapsulates the dynamic process of hybridity itself. Through such imagery, Basu suggests that identity, culture, and storytelling are all evolving constructs, constantly rewritten in dialogue with the past and the future. His hybridized narrative language mixing Indian idioms, western references, and comic irony embodies the pluralism

of contemporary Indian thought. Fredric Jameson's view of postmodernism as "the cultural logic of late capitalism" (Jameson 4) also resonates in Basu's fiction, particularly in its playful engagement with global pop culture. *The GameWorld Trilogy* reflects the influence of digital gaming, cinema, and comic books, turning Indian myth into an accessible, modern idiom. Yet, this transformation does not dilute the cultural essence of myth; rather, it revitalizes it for a new generation of readers navigating a globalized, media-saturated world. In this way, Basu's futuristic imagination serves not as escapism but as a means of rearticulating cultural identity in a global context. The discussion of hybridity in Basu's work also has broader implications for Indian English literature. While postcolonial writers such as Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh invoked myth to critique colonial history, Basu uses myth to transcend it, envisioning a future in which Indian imagination engages with the world on equal terms.

Ultimately, Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy* stands as both a product and a critique of hybrid modernity. It celebrates the power of narrative to reinvent cultural identity, reminding readers that myth, like culture itself, thrives through reinvention. By merging epic echoes with futuristic visions, Basu redefines fantasy as a serious postcolonial art form, one that captures the complexity, humor, and vitality of contemporary India.

Conclusion

Samit Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy* represents a landmark moment in Indian English speculative fiction, where myth, fantasy, and modern imagination converge to create a narrative that is both deeply rooted in Indian cultural consciousness and expansively global in outlook. Through the interplay of epic echoes and futuristic visions, Basu reinvents the fantasy genre as a platform for postcolonial expression, cultural negotiation, and creative freedom. His hybridized world-building dismantles the rigid separation between indigenous and western narrative traditions, embodying Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the third space where cultures interact to produce new and fluid meanings. The trilogy's unique strength lies in its ability to weave together mythic archetypes, modern sensibilities, and postmodern techniques without reducing one to the other. By transforming the grandeur of ancient epics into spaces of parody, humor, and critical reflection, Basu redefines the heroic quest for a postcolonial audience. His characters often flawed, self-aware, and morally complex symbolize a generation navigating between inherited mythologies and contemporary realities. In this way, Basu's fiction captures the essence of hybrid identity, one that evolves through dialogue rather than opposition. Moreover, Basu's speculative imagination reflects India's own engagement with globalization and digital culture. His references to comic books, video games, and global pop icons demonstrate how local narratives can coexist with international forms of storytelling. Yet, this global orientation does not erode the cultural authenticity of his work, instead it amplifies it by situating Indian myth within a wider, cosmopolitan framework. The result is a narrative space where ancient wisdom and modern technology converse where the rakshasa can stand beside the robot, and where prophecy meets postmodern irony. In literary terms, Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy* bridges the gap between postcolonial realism and global fantasy, positioning Indian literature as both participant in and critic of global culture. His works challenge the perception of fantasy as

mere escapism, asserting instead its capacity to interrogate identity, power, and history. By fusing mythic structures with futuristic imagination, Basu gives voice to the complexities of a nation negotiating its place in the world neither bound by tradition nor dissolved in modernity.

Consequently, Basu's *The GameWorld Trilogy* is not only a celebration of imagination but also an act of cultural synthesis. It demonstrates that the future of Indian fiction lies not in choosing between the epic and the modern, but in embracing their coexistence. Through his hybrid narrative, Basu articulates a vision of India that is as mythic as it is modern, as rooted as it is revolutionary, a world where the echoes of the past continue to shape the visions of the future.

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