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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project titled "The Universality of Human Experience: Comparative Analysis of the Films *Your Name*, *Weathering with You* and *Suzume*" is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Vani P. Nair, Assistant Professor, Department of English.



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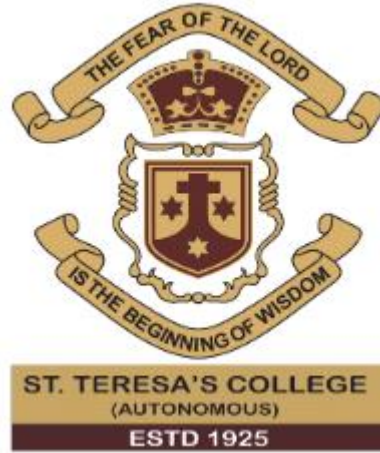
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**THE UNIVERSALITY OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF  
THE FILMS *YOUR NAME*, *WEATHERING WITH YOU* AND *SUZUME***



*Project submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous) in partial fulfilment of the requirement for  
the degree of BACHELOR OF ARTS in English Language and Literature*

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**The Universality Of Human Experience : Comparative Analysis Of Films *Your Name*,  
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**2021-2024**

**Supervising Teacher: Dr. Vani P. Nair**

Sacred stories that describe the world and human experiences are called mythology. Anime is a prominent animation style used in Japanese tv shows and movies. Many animes draw inspiration from the rich tapestry of Japanese mythology and folklore. This project titled the “Universality of Human Experience: Comparative Analysis of the Films *Your Name*, *Weathering with You* and *Suzume*” tries to conclude that movies in general and Japanese anime in particular holds the potential to demonstrate the universal aspect of human experience by tracing its roots back to the earliest and foundational myths of different cultures. The movies used for this project are *Your Name*, *Weathering with You* and *Suzume* directed by Makoto Shinkai. The theory used for this project is based on Joseph Campbell's seminal work *The Thousand Faced Hero* where he discusses about the concept of “monomyth”. Methodological frame work for this project involved categorizing instances taken from the above mentioned movies into divisions of etiological myth, historical myth and religious myth. Various instances which portray particular myths from the movies were identified and contrasted to their Indian counterparts to prove their universality.

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## Introduction

Anime is a prominent animation style in Japanese TV shows and movies . It frequently blends narratives with striking and vibrant visuals. Japanese audiences were the target audience for the majority of early anime films. As a result, they made numerous allusions to Japanese culture. It often provides a glimpse into the values and concerns of its creators and viewers and significantly shapes people's perception of Japanese culture. In the past, Japan was often seen by many westerners as a mysterious and exotic place. However, through anime, people have been able to see more realistic portrayals of Japanese culture.

Japanese culture is frequently depicted in anime through the settings and characters, which embody traditional Japanese values. Many anime draw inspiration for their stories and characters from the rich tapestry of Japanese mythology and folklore. It explores the enriching narratives of Japanese mythology, leaving a lasting imprint. Many of the animes also incorporates Japanese festivals and rituals into their narratives, offering a glimpse into the country's diverse and culturally significant heritage.

Sacred stories that describe the world and human experience are called myths. While some may have come from true events, others may be sourced from fictions . However, mythologies are more than just stories; they have deeper significance in both ancient and contemporary societies. The topics of myths, such as birth, death, the afterlife, the beginning of man and the world, good against evil, and the essence of man, represent the universal worries of humanity throughout history. A myth draws on the collective human wisdom, a universal cultural narrative. The fact that myths are produced by so many dispart peoples who have never met is a great example of how universal mythologies are.

This project aims to conclude that movies in general and Japanese anime in particular hold the potential to demonstrate the universal aspect of human experience by tracing its roots back to the earliest and foundational myths of different cultures.

Makoto Shinkai is a multi-talented individual from Japan who has ventured into various fields such as directing, writing, producing, animating, editing, cinematography, voice acting, manga artistry, and graphic designing. During his time in Chuo University, he majored in Japanese literature and was a member of a club that focused on creating picture books for children. Over the years, Shinkai has gained recognition for his remarkable films, including *The Place Promised in Our Early Days* (2004), *5 Centimeters Per Second* (2007), *Children Who Chase Lost Voices* (2011), *The Garden of Words* (2013), and *Your Name* (2016).

Shinakai's animated characters have a subtle approach, mainly relying on body language and the surrounding environment to depict their progression throughout the movie. This influence is evident in his character design, characterized by flat faces and distinct dark lines delineating facial features. In traditional animation, there would be no lighting effects or blurring, as artists earlier believed that the image itself conveyed sufficient information. Notably, Shinakai's attention to detail and realistic backgrounds in his drawings create a natural feel within his animations, immersing the viewer into his imaginative world. What sets him apart from others in the world of anime is the way his films effectively communicate powerful messages that are deeply rooted in their themes, ensuring that these messages resonate with the audience without any loss of meaning. The conveyed messages primarily revolve around relatable aspects of life.

In the movie *君の名は* (*Your Name*, 2016) at the start of the movie, Taki Tachibana and Mitsuha Miyazumi find themselves in a body-switching spell that provides some amusing moments for the audience. However, the tone shifts when the swapping abruptly stops. As they investigate the cause, they realize that their existences may be on different planes. The catalyst for their intertwined destinies is a meteor that altered the course of both their lives. *Your Name* tells a love story that surpasses time and space, blending hyper-realism with fantastical elements. The film marked a career-changing point for director Makoto Shinkai, as his evolving artistic style established him as a prominent figure in the world of anime cinema. *Your Name* showcases a fresh and innovative approach that combines fantasy with real-world settings, taking place in both rural Japan's Hida region and the vibrant Tokyo.

In the movie *天気の子* (*Weathering with You*, 2019), the highly anticipated film following the success of Shinkai's *Your Name*, tells the story of Hodaka Morishima, a troubled high school student on the run from the police. Along his journey, he meets Hina, a girl with the ability to control the weather, who is also searching for a place to call home. The film takes a magical turn when Hina displays her weather-controlling powers at a shrine on the roof of an abandoned building. Inspired by her abilities, Hodaka comes up with a plan that would benefit both of them by using her powers to earn a living and secure a place to live. However, the world is not ready to accept Hina's extraordinary talent, leading to a series of challenges and chaos. Despite the obstacles, *Weathering with You* remains an exhilarating adventure and a delightful cinematic experience.

Shinkai's film, *すずめの戸締まり* (*Suzume*, 2022) premiered in Japan at the end of 2022, following the success of his previous work *Weathering with You*. The story takes place in Kyushu and begins with an unexpected meeting between the two main characters, Suzume Iwato

and a mysterious man named Sota. Sota, who is fascinated by deserted areas in rural Japan, asks Suzume if she knows of any in her town. The movie shows Iwato and Sota exploring magical realms through enchanted doors. Once again, Shinkai incorporates the theme of magic into his film, highlighting the architectural crisis in Japan that has resulted in abandoned houses and ghost towns. *Suzume* captivates viewers with its fast-paced and thrilling narrative, while still paying homage to Shinkai's distinctive artistic style.

There are three core chapters to this project. The first chapter "defining myths and it's types" focuses on defining myth and exploring its different features. It also includes an explanation of the types of myth used for comparison, such as etiological myth, historical myth, and religious myth. Chapter two "categorizing myths adopted the films" takes a closer look at how these myths are applied to the three movies in different instances. Lastly, chapter three "contrasting Japanese myths to their Indian counterparts" examines and compares various instances portrayed in movies with their Japanese and Indian counterparts to reveal the universal aspect of human experience.

## Chapter 1

### Defining Myths and its Types

Universality is a metaphysical explanation of how things can possess a shared characteristic, attribute or quality and be owned by to the homogenous category or natural type. When two things mimic mutually in any of the above manners, it could be expressed that they partake in a common property or exemplify it.

Myths are narrative accounts that depict the tales of our forebears, as well as explaining the genesis of humans and the world they inhabit. They shed light on various deities, mystical creatures like satyrs, nymphs, and mermaids, as well as heroic figures who possess extraordinary powers, often bestowed upon them by Gods. Moreover, myths offer insights into the source or intricacies of age-old traditions, and they elucidate natural phenomena such as the dawning and twilight, the lunar phases, and the changing seasons, as well as thunderstorms and lightning bolts. This chapter elucidates the defining features of myth and it's categories in descriptive form.

In the article written by Joshua J. Mark on mythology from *World History Encyclopedia*, Carl Jung, a psychiatrist from the twentieth century, states that myth plays a crucial role in the human mind. He believes that as humans, we seek to make sense of the world, which can often feel disordered and without purpose. In the following quote based Jung's work *The Portable Young* he comments the following:

The human mind, just like the world, is incredibly intricate and can be analyzed and explored from numerous perspectives. However, we are faced with the same challenge when trying to understand both the mind and the world: their complexity is far too vast

for us to comprehensively study. Instead, we are limited to using general guidelines and focusing on certain aspects that capture our interest. Everyone creates their own understanding of the world and constructs their own personal framework, often isolating different elements from one another (Jung, *The Portable Jung*).

As time passes, they may assume that they have fully comprehended the meaning and structure of the entirety. Yet, it is important to recognize that the finite human mind will always fall short in grasping the infinite essence of the world and the mind. The “infinite” Jung references is the representation of the awe-inspiring and enigmatic nature of the divine, sacred, and mighty, which is responsible for the inherent fascination in stories and motifs of mythology as it imparts a definitive purpose to human life. The belief in something greater and more potent than oneself offers the assurance of guidance and shelter amidst an unpredictable world.

It is crucial to record that what we now refer to as mythology was once the religious belief of ancient civilizations. The tales that comprise ancient mythology fulfilled a similar role for people in those times as the stories from accepted religious texts do in contemporary society. These stories served to offer explanations, consolation, and guidance to their audience, while also fostering a sense of unity, coherence, and security among a community of individuals who shared the same beliefs according to Jung.

The theorist who proposed the concept of universality of myth is Joseph Campbell, a renowned scholar who famously championed the exploration of myths, highlights the significance of mythology as a fundamental framework for all societies and the basis for every individual’s consciousness. Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) was an American mythologist, essayist, teacher and of Writing at Sarah Lawrence College from 1934 to 1972. His work centered on comparative mythology and comparative writing. In his seminal work *The Hero*

*with a Thousand Faces*, he discusses what he calls the “monomyth”. Monomyth discusses similarities in the themes, characters, purposes, and stories of mythology from different cultures, eras, around the world, and throughout history. Campbell concludes that myths convey a great deal of meaning.

Mythology transforms the life of a believer from that of an ordinary person to that of an immortal. The myth elucidate, at the most rudimentary level, facts, customs, the origin of toponyms or geological formations, but it can also elevate a historical event to the epic or even supernatural realm. Above all, myth serves as a model for the individual’s own life journey.

Classifying is an essential cognitive function that arranges data into groups according to similarities and differences, enabling us to make sense of the world around us. The benefits of classifying myths can be better understood by considering the factors that follow. Classifying myths based on the comprehension of their themes, motifs, and cultural significance allows us to organize and access rich cultural past. Comparing stories from different cultures is made easier by classification, which highlights similarities and differences that may provide light on both cultural variance and basic human experiences.

Through classification Scholars are able to carry out in-depth analyses and interpretations that uncover symbols, cultural values, and hidden meanings. Classifying myths can help them to present data in an orderly manner, increasing their instructional value, and making it easier to communicate their relevance and significance. Segregating myths ensures that they be passed down through the generations for understanding and cultural enrichment, as well as making preservation easier. There are numerous contrasting types of myths, but they can basically be divided into three groups: etiological myths, historical myths and religious myths.



Etiological myths, derived from the Greek word *Aetion*, which means “reason”. In essence, an etiological myth narrates the origin of something. It could be the story behind a particular custom or practice that persists within a culture, or it could be an account of a natural occurrence such as thunder or stars.

These myths give people a cultural framework for different facets of life and aid in their understanding of the world. They frequently mirror the ideals, convictions, and life experiences of the culture that produced them. It explains the origins of various features of the world, including the universe’s genesis, the advent of thunder and the seasons, the development of humanity, and the establishment of cultural conventions and traditions.

These stories frequently have symbolic components that stand for higher meanings or provide moral or cultural lessons. Etiological myths have a strong hold on the cultural setting in which they are based. They offer insights into the cultural legacy and identity of the culture that produced them because they mirror its values, beliefs, and worldview. The diversity of human experiences and beliefs is reflected in the variations of etiological myths found in many cultures and geographical areas. These tales are used to pass on wisdom and information from one generation to the next. Through oral tradition and storytelling, they preserve historical events, cultural traditions, and valuable lessons. Typically, etiological myths include mythological figures gods, heroes, or other supernatural beings that are essential to the genesis or interpretation of the phenomenon under discussion. It may be modified or reinterpreted over time to take into consideration of the recent scientific findings and cultural advancements, to stay relevant in evolving social circumstances.

Historical myths recount historical events, elevating them to a higher plane of meaning than the event itself, assuming it ever occurred. It is a narrative or story that blends historical

events with legendary or mythical elements. These myths often embellish or distort actual historical events, figures, or circumstances to create a more compelling or morally instructive tale. They can assist numerous purposes, such as reinforcing cultural identity, justifying political power, or providing explanations for complex historical phenomena.

Historical myths can be found in many cultures and have been used all through antiquity to shape collective memory and comprehension of the past. It straddles the boundary between imaginative storytelling and historical accuracy by fusing mythical or mythological elements with real-life events or individuals. These sagas constantly include heroic or legendary persons who have a significant impact on historical developments. They might also have adversarial characters who are portrayed as enemies or villains.

They usually describe past occurrences in a way that supports particular values, beliefs, or political objectives, and they often include moral or ideological overtones. Historical myths are frequently entwined with the identity of a country or culture, acting as a means of glorification of previous accomplishments, rationalizing claims to territory, or bolstering a feeling of shared identity and pride. These interpret historical events selectively, highlighting some details while downplaying or ignoring others in order to further a specific story or goal. Like other kinds of myths, historical myths can have allegorical or symbolic components that go beyond the literal interpretation of events to reveal deeper meanings or universal truths. They are often handed over from generation to generation through oral tradition, storytelling, and cultural activities, which allows them to change and develop over time. In order to maintain their relevance and resonance with modern audiences, historical myths may be reinterpreted or adjusted to fit shifting political, ideological, or cultural settings.

Religious myths are stories that, in each religious tradition, transmit cultural, moral, or spiritual truths. They often include supernatural creatures, occurrences, or narratives about how the world and humanity came to be. These myths fulfil several functions, including clarifying natural occurrences, establishing moral standards, providing consolation during difficult times, and fostering a sense of collective identity and togetherness. Myths vary greatly among cultures and faiths, but they usually help believers better comprehend their faith and their role in the universe. These stories are frequently preserved in holy books or scriptures that the religion regards as canonical. These writings could contain creation myths, tales of supernatural creatures, testimonies of miracles, and moral lessons.

They often contain cosmological aspects that depict the organization of the cosmos and the interaction between humans, gods, and the natural world, as well as cosmogonic narratives that explain the universe's genesis. Divine or supernatural entities like gods, goddesses, spirits, angels, or demons that are frequently depicted in religious tales. These entities are the subject of adoration and devotion and frequently have major responsibilities in the development, upkeep, and alteration of the globe.

Creation myths a part of religious myth, describe how the universe, people, and other living things came into being, are a common feature of religious mythologies. They usually include tales of heavenly or mythical characters that either serve as warning examples of immorality or as models of virtue to impart moral and ethical lessons. They are frequently connected to the religious tradition's ritualistic activities and worship rites. Stories can be told, performed, or remembered as a part of religious rites, celebrations, or farewells. Religious myths provide common tales, symbols, and beliefs that bind followers of the religion together and set differentiates them from others, helping to build a sense of communal identification and

belonging. In the framework of religious studies, theology, and spiritual practice, religious myths are open to interpretation and reinterpretation. They are frequently seen as conduits for heavenly wisdom or revelation.

## Chapter 2

### Categorizing Instances Adopted from the Films

In this chapter instances found in the respective films are classified into categories of etiological myth, historical myth and religious myth. An etiological myth recounts the story of something's origin. It might be the narrative of a centuries-old cultural ritual or practice, or it might be a description of a celestial event like thunder or stars.

In the movie *Weathering with You* we come across the ancient legend of the “Sunshine Maiden” where it is believed that in each generation, a girl with this power will be born. However, her presence will cause never-ending rainfall in Japan. According to this folklore, there is a legendary figure known as the weather maiden who possesses the extraordinary ability to control the climate as desired by the people. It is believed that in every generation, a weather maiden is born in each village. However, there is a limitation to this power. As the weather maidens exert their abilities more and more, they gradually transform into water and eventually vanish completely when they become transparent to a certain degree. Throughout the film, one of the main characters Hina, cited as the ‘Sunshine Maiden’, experiences the consequences of her abilities of granting wishes to people through her prayers to the sky, as she continues to use them, she becomes increasingly frail. Eventually, she fades away, transforming into water and ceasing the cloud that has been occupied with flourishing foliage as she becomes as close to transparent as water as number of her prayers fulfilling the wishes increase .

The movie reveals that her powers stem from the rooftop of *Yyogi kaikan*, where her sincere prayers were answered and she gained the power to make it sunny during the heavy and continuous rainstorm. When she prayed to the *Tori* gate while on the rooftop shrine, she was

transported into the sky. Upon her return, she gained the ability to clear up rain by praying and became known as the sunshine girl.

In the movie *Suzume*, calamities occur when gates in deserted regions across the country of Japan are opened, these earthquakes are triggered by a different-dimensional being known as “worms”. The “worms” are creatures that break free from the gate of “Ever After”, resulting in extensive devastation to the human world. “Ever After” in the movie is a place connected to the door where the souls of the dead rest. To impede the “worms” that escapes into the human world from “Ever After”, the door locker locks the door that safeguards the entrance after chanting the prayer dedicated to the land God, *Ubusunagami*. *Ubusunagami*, is a Shinto deity, that diligently guard the life on land, offering protection from pre-death to post-death.

In order to seal the “worms”, the profession of door lockers emerged in the movie *Suzume*. The profession of door locking takes inspiration from *Jinchisai*, a construction industry ritual in which workers offer prayers to the deity of the land before commencing construction activities.

The Inspiration for the concept of “worms” from the movie *Suzume* closely resembles the tale of *Namazu*. According to Japanese mythology, dragons and the colossal catfish known as *Namazu* are creatures of the underworld responsible for causing earthquakes. To pacify them, deities pierce them with stones known as *Kanameishi*.

The concept of keystones are inspired by *Kanameishi*, it is a mythological rock that is believed to hold down the Japanese archipelago. Keystones are a crucial element in the film *Suzume*, possessing spiritual force that has been safeguarding Japan from natural disasters since

ancient times. It is widely believed that these keystones serve as a deterrent for earthquakes in Japan.

Symbolically, the keystones represent the head and tail of a dragon, which is said to be sealed within the entire Japanese continent. One keystone is located in the East, while the other is situated in the West, with the dragon believed to weave its way through villages and lakes. As new eras dawn, the location of the keystones changes; they appear where they are most required by the people. People's perception influences the shape of the land, the patterns of rivers, and the relationship between individuals and the land, which is in a constant state of evolution. For decades unknown to most, the keystones have been silently healing the land.

The movie *Your name* involves the exchange of souls between the two main characters Taki Tachibana and Mitsuha Miyamizu, the closest reference to the concept of switching souls can be identified to the *Torikaebaya* manga series by Mori. It is a captivating tale that follows the intricate journey of two sisters, Saya and Mana, who find themselves entangled in a supernatural twist of fate that causes them to switch bodies. Saya, the elder sister, possesses the extraordinary ability to swap bodies with her younger sister Mana.

This enchanting narrative delves into the challenges they face as they strive to keep their secret safe while adjusting to a life filled with uncertainty. Navigating the complexities of each other's worlds, the sisters encounter a myriad of obstacles and relationships, which play a crucial role in shaping their identities and understanding of their familial bonds. Throughout the story, the author delves into the emotional and psychological aspects of leading a double life, scrabble into themes of self-discovery, sacrifice, and the arduous task of guarding deep secrets.

Against the backdrop of the supernatural, the characters rattle with their own vulnerabilities and insecurities. Weaving together a tapestry of relationships, friendships, and personal growth, it sheds the light on the intricate nature of human beings and the resilience required to overcome unforeseen circumstances. This engrossing series gradually unveils the mystery behind the ability to switch bodies, infusing the narrative with an element of intrigue and suspense. As the sisters embark on a quest to comprehend the origins and purpose of this supernatural phenomenon, their relationship deepens, leading to an intense exploration of the forces at work in their lives and their profound bond with each other. The events occurring in this manga is parallel to the circumstances in the film *Your Name*, where they go through deepening of relationship with friends of both Taki and Mitsuha, they both depending on each other and eventually revealing the mystery of soul switching and saving *Itomori* from impending disaster by Taki travelling to the past by drinking *sake* brewed by Mitsuha which he found in the cave dubbed as god's adobe and evacuating people from the crater impact zone.

Historical myths are tales that combine historical events with legendary or mythical aspects, giving a deeper meaning to the events. Both movies, *Your Name* and *Suzume* are inspired from the major earthquake dubbed as March 2011. This incident creates the foundation for both movies. The movie *Suzume* draws inspiration from the devastating earthquake that struck Japan in March 2011. The concept of "Ever After" having wrecked ships, crumbling buildings and doors situated in abandoned venues are inspired from this earthquake.

This earthquake triggered a tsunami in Iwate Prefecture, with a towering wave reaching up to 40 meters in height. Extensive stretches of Japan's Pacific coast, spanning 2,000 kilometers, were also affected by this tsunami. The aftermath saw the tsunami disabling power



and cooling systems in three Fukushima reactors, leading to a catastrophic nuclear disaster. Within the first three days, all three nuclear cores had predominantly melted.

According to Japanese police records as of December 2020, the incident resulted in a grim toll of 15,899 confirmed dead, 2,527 individuals missing and categorized as presumed dead, and 6,157 individuals injured in eastern Japan.

In the movie *Your Name*, the main lake in *Itomori*, called Lake *Itomori*, was also inspired from earthquake that struck Japan in march 11. The lake was created when the nucleus of comet *Tiamet* fell towards *Itomori* city's location. The movie reveals that the comet has struck the city at least twice in its history, once during the formation of Lake *Itomori* and again during the events of the movie, which takes place on October 4, 2013 in a parallel timeline. The *Goshintai*, a large crater in the area, is believed to have been created by another fragment of comet *Tiamat* falling to the ground . In the timeline set in 2013, the destruction caused by the comet hitting *Itomori* is known as the "*Itomori* Disaster"..

Religious myths are anecdotes that communicate moral, spiritual, or cultural lessons within specific religious tradition. Heavy influence of Japanese religious customs can be inferred from the movies whose root inspiration is derived from Shinto religion. Shinto is the indigenous belief system of Japan and it exists before written history. Shinto is a complex system of beliefs, customs, and institutions centered around the Japanese landscape, the seasons, and the way these pertain to the people that reside therein. The influence of Shinto religion can be felt avidly used in these movies.

The Shinto ritual of braiding cords or *kumihimo* is portrayed as a belief held by *Musubi*. The term "*kumihimo*" Is roughly translated as "collection of threads." In the movie *Your name*,

the braided cord holds great significance for *Itomori* and is believed to symbolize the goddess *Musubi* at *Miyamizu* Shrine. These threads have the ability to transcend space and time, bringing together Taki and Mitsuha, the two protagonists of the movie.

According to East Asian mythology, an invisible thread connects two individuals who are destined to be together, whether it be in a romantic or platonic relationship, this shows how the red chord gifted by Mitsuha to Taki connected them. In the film colours of threads hold significant symbolism; the comet is depicted in white thread, Lake *Itomori* in blue, *Katabe Doki* (twilight) in orange, and the red thread of destiny is represented by red. The scene of Mitsuha and her sister Yotsuha and the grandmother braiding threads of above colours foreshadows the subsequent events which would unfold in future.

*Kuchikamizake*, also known as *Kuchikaminosake*, is a traditional Japanese alcoholic drink made from rice. Its unique production method involves using human saliva as a fermentation starter. This ancient beverage, which derived its name from the words “mouth,” “chew,” and “sake,” was one of Japan’s earliest alcoholic offerings. The movie *Your Name* depicts the ritual of fermenting rice with saliva as an act of offering one’s essence to God, done by Mitsuha and her sister Yotsuha during the sacred festival offering prayers to the god of *Itomori* as it represents the *sake* that is presented to the local god of *Itomori*. Presenting *sake* is believed to give the person performing the ritual’s half of soul to god as offering. It also connects together Taki and Mitsuha together as it is this *sake* which is drunk by Taki at god’s adobe cave to switch to Mitsuha’s soul one last time to stop the doom befalling *Itomori*.

Mitsuha and Yotsuha in the movie *Your Name*, participate in a sacred ritual at the temple known as *Miko kagura*. In this ceremonial dance, the *Miko* embodies the deities and communicate with them by speaking, singing, and dancing as if they were the gods themselves.

During their performance, Mitsuha and Yotsuha portray the tale of the comet *Tiamet*, they depict two bodies, represented by bells, soaring through the sky with long red tails, perfectly synchronized, before eventually separating and descending to Earth. The positions they assume at the end of the dance represents the mural in the God's abode in the cave which Taki stumbled upon during his visit to *itomori* to try to soul switch with Mitsuha to help prevent the doom of *itomori* from the past, symbolizing the division of the comet into two parts.

In the movie *Suzume*, the door lockers say and devote the following prayer to close the gates which leads to “Ever After”, the resting place of souls depicted . The prayer is quoted as:

I divine God who dwells beneath this land you have long protected us for generations,  
They mountains and rivers that we long called our own I return to you .(Suzume,12:29-12:56)

This prayer is said to god of land in order to return the land contaminated by negative energies due to its abandonment back to gods hand for purifying it thereby closing the gates which connect the land to “Ever After”.

According to Japanese mythology, cats are divine beings who are believed to guide individuals to a underworld. In the film *Suzume*, Daijin is depicted as a cat that assists Suzume in crossing the gates, which ultimately lead her to the afterlife known as “Ever After” to save Sota who got turned into keystone as Daijin, the former keystone who got freed due to Suzume.

“Ever After” is the place referred in the movie as the place connected to the door, a place where the souls of dead reside and where no humans can enter. The “Ever After” is described in the movie as follows:

Ever After- a bright night sky filled with stars and fields. This world other half where worm dwells and where all time exist simultaneously. Ever after is where all souls go to rest, it is not somewhere living beings can reach. ( Suzume,51:56-52:6)

### Chapter 3

#### Contrasting Japanese Myths to their Indian Counterparts

The basis on which mythologies appear to be relatively alike to one another is because human societies are indistinguishable to one another in different ways. Thus, we could conclude that myth's universality results from societal factors that cause common consciousness experiences. The reason why most mythologies are similar is that they provide almost similar answers to questions that people have about the world around them and about life both before and after death. Many of the Gods are endowed with human-like personalities, human-like concerns, and human-like communities, which makes them similar to one another. The purpose of this chapter is to present contrasting mythologies from Japan and India in order to highlight their commonalities and demonstrate their universality.

Motivated by the idea of interweaving chords depicted in the movie *Your Name*, contrast between the legends of the red thread of fate found in Japanese mythology with that of the *Mauli* thread present in Indian mythology. According to Japanese mythology, human relationships are predestined by a scarlet cord that the gods tie to the pinky fingers of those who discover each other in life. The red string may twist, shrink, or stretch, as is unavoidably common, but it will never break. The ulnar artery, which links the heart and the pinky finger, is the source of this tradition. The thin vein that travels from the heart to the hand and finishes in another person's heart travels across the unseen realm.

In the Indian culture, it is customary to tie strings known as *Mauli* threads during weddings and the festival of *Raksha Bandhan*. These threads are believed to provide protection from various dangers and negative energy, as well as diseases. Additionally, they help us receive blessings from our deities and bring positive energy into our lives. The *Mauli* threads are referred

to as *Trideva* and *Tridevi*, representing the three gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara, as well as the *Tridevi* Lakshmi, Saraswati, and Maheshwari, by tying *Mauli* to our hands, we receive the blessings of all these gods. Tying *Mauli* on *Anant Chaturdashi*, a festival dedicated to lord Vishnu on the month of september is believed to bring good luck, prosperity, and good health. The thread also holds significance in the *Atharva Samhita*, a collection of 730 hymns containing 5987 mantras divided into twenty books.

Inspired by concept of “Ever After”, a place dubbed as resting place for souls of the dead in the movie *Suzume*, comparison of folklores associated with the land of dead in both Japanese and Indian mythologies are discussed .

The philosophy of land of dead in Buddhism dominates Japanese thinking when it comes to the concept of death. There are certain concepts that originate from Shinto, but in Shinto, death is the end of the path because there is no myth of an afterlife. Buddhism typically rejects the idea of a “afterlife.” The cycle of rebirth known as samsara traps all living things. In order to escape the cycle of samsara and cease being born again, the aim of Buddhism is to realize the actual nature of life, which is connected to the idea of Buddha-nature. Buddhism teaches that there are regions of paradise and hell, but being reincarnated in any of them is not the aim.

In Pureland Buddhism a different form of Buddhism, which the majority of Japanese people follow, people are meant to offer prayers to Amitabha Buddha when they pass away. If they succeed, Amitabha will lead them to the Pureland—a wonderful place to discover the true meaning of life and break free from *Samsara*. Though it still possesses the conditions to make enlightenment easier than on Earth, the Pureland is still not perfect since pain is still possible and you are still caught in *Samsara*.

In *Zen*, another concept which is gaining popularity in Japan, the emphasis is more on gradually developing merit and your Buddha-nature in a less intense way, as we are not as obsessed with enlightenment in “this life.” Since it is believed that only humans possess the potential and conditions necessary to become buddhas, it is hoped that living a virtuous and meritorious life will enable you to be reborn as a human and go on your *Zen* practice. This is in contrast to the beliefs of some other schools of Buddhism, such as Shingon and Tibetan Buddhism, who are less concerned with the hereafter because you shouldn’t be doing that. Instead, they lean more toward enlightenment in “this life” and have more rigorous ceremonies and regulations.

In Hinduism, a major philosophy followed in India there are two main perspectives to the afterlife., the philosophical and the legendary. First, the philosophical: every person is made up of three bodies: the physical body, which is seventy percent water and some biomatter, is called *Sthūla śarīra*; the energetic, psychic, mental, and subtle body is called *Sūkṣma-śarīra*; and the causal body, which is called *Kāraṇa śarīra*, is made up of all of our subconscious things, such as mental impulses, etc. As a result, the person is a stream of consciousness that moves through all of the bodily changes that occur to it and then into another physical body upon its death. The subtle body and the causal body are the two parts that transmigrate.

*Mantra* chanting is a useful tool for cultivating pleasant, wholesome thoughts. The quality of our rebirth (*antim smaraṇa*) is determined by the thoughts we have at the moment of death. Therefore, it is important to be aware of our thoughts and to cultivate them. We appear for an exit interview at the court of Lord Yama, the God of Death, as we pass away from this life. The cosmic accountant Chitragupta and the cosmic intelligence officer Varuna make up the panel. We receive counselling regarding our successes and shortcomings as well as a mirror

reflecting our complete life. Philosophically, these three guys are projections of our own minds, it is important to emphasize.

For a period of rest and recreation, Yama, the Lord of Dharma and Justice, then takes us to a heavenly holiday region called *svarga*, if we have been exceedingly benevolent. The length of our vacation is restricted by our good acts.

Once again, just to the extent of our great immorality, we are transported to a cosmic incarceration (*Naraka*) to accelerate our bad *Karma*. There, we cause great misery to other beings. *Karma* dictates that most people take rebirth almost instantly because they are middling and neither extremely good nor wicked. It is vital to remember that in Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu belief systems, neither heaven nor hell are eternal states. We reincarnate to carry on our spiritual development once we have used up all of our goodness and malice. Although rebirth might occur as an animal (*tiryak*), a person (*manuṣya*), or a God (*deva*), it is commonly taught that spiritual evolution occurs from lower to higher species. When someone dies traumatizingly, they may assume the form of a *Preta* or Hungry Ghost and stay on Earth eternally until specific rituals are performed to release them. This is the *Sarva Pitru Amavasya* ceremony that is performed every year.

Influenced by the main character in the film *Weathering with You*, Hina, who is shown as becoming transparent as water after each fulfilment of wishes from people, comparison between the water deities of Japan and India are made.

Gods associated with water (particularly fresh water) is called Mizugami. Water is vital to agriculture, and farmers' ability to produce a given amount of crop can be determined by the availability and quality of water. *Suijin*, a term commonly used to refer to mythical water species



are connected to Tanokami (rice-field gods). The majority of *Suijin* are discovered enshrined beside paddy fields or on the dikes of irrigation canals.

Sometimes, *Suijin* are typically enshrined beside rice fields or on the dikes of irrigation canals. *Suijin* may occasionally be discovered revered at the sources of agricultural streams as Mikumari no kami, or the deity that distributes water; in these instances, they may also be connected to Yama no kami, the God of the mountains are found enshrined in sources of water used in daily life, such as family wells and water-drawing places, in addition to their association with the water utilized in agriculture. Among those representing *Suijin* are dragons, *Kappa* (water imp), and snakes. They are regarded as either the incarnation of a deity or as divine servants.

Similarly in Indian mythology, being the God of water, Varuna has an impact on the aquatic world. According to the *Puranas*, Lord Varuna is one of the twelve Gods known as *Adityas*, deriving from the mother of Gods, Aditi, and is the son of Kashyapa. Varuna is regarded as the king of waterways and is in charge of rivers, seas, and oceans. He is also tasked with regulating the clouds and rain. There is a common belief that worshipping the deity protects humans against lightning and thunder. In Japanese mythology, Lord Varuna is referred to as Suiten, in eastern buddhism god Varuna is considered as a *Dharmapala*. *Dharmapala* is the term used to refer to the protector of Buddhist *dharma*. He is also considered as one of twelve devas and presides over western direction of Japan.

The concept of soul switching between the characters of the movie *Your Name*, Taki Tachibana and Mitsuha Miyamizu becomes the core plot that advances the movie forward. It is this phenomenon which helped Taki to help prevent the *Itomori* disaster by evacuating people to a safe place away from the crater impact thereby preventing death of people present during

splitting of comet *Tiamet* . Inspired by this plot point we try to analyze similar folktales with themes of gender switching in both Japan and India.

In India the tale of *Birth of Shikandini*, a story taken from *Amar chitra katha* can be regarded as an example a myth that incorporates gender switching as one of its themes. In this story we see princess of *Panchala* who was called Amba in her previous life, performs severe penance for wearing garland of lotuses gifted by Kartikeya. One day a *yaksha* named Sthunakarna saw her and asked for the reason for her presence in the forest. To which she narrated the story of her previous life , which she remembered due to her boon from lord Shiva that blamed Bheeshma for her humiliation due to not marrying her and for Shaliva's refusal to marry her. The *yaksha* moved by her narration agreed to help her. He asked her to exchange her gender with him as it would be easier for her to fulfil her revenge as a man. The princess turned into a man came to be known as Shikandin later at *Kurukshetra* war Arjuna following advice from lord Krishna rode with Shikandin and on the tenth day of battle, Shikandin and Arjun shot arrows at Bheeshma which led to his fall. With Bheeshma's death Shikandin avenged Amba, her previous incarnation's humiliation and fulfilled her mission.

Similarly in Japanese mythology we find a tale with premise of gender switching in the book called *Torikaeba monogatari* , a tale from late *Heian* period of Japan .The story tells of a *Sadaijin*, a term used to refer to high ranking courtier ,who has similar looking children from different mothers but their respective mannerism are that of opposite sex. The two children after coming of age ceremony are presented in front of the court as daughter disguised as a man and son disguised as a daughter. The man disguised as a woman ,now known as *Naishi no kami*, term used to refer to head of ceremonies committee, becomes the sheltered princess's confidante whereas the woman disguised as a man becomes *Chunagon*, term used to refer to a midranking

courtier. *Naishi no kami*( man disguised as a woman)is pursued by men and *Chunagon*(woman disguised as man) have a platonic affair with elder *Yoshino* princess and lady of *Reikeiden*.

*Saisho o chijo* who was the best friend of *Chunagon*(woman disguised as man) turns his attention to *Chunagon* after discovering her true identity had sex with her and *Chunagon* gets pregnant. *Naishi no kami*(man disguised as women) has sex with the sheltered princess and she becomes pregnant. *Nishi no kami*(man disguised as women) searches for *chunagon*(woman disguised as man) and after *Chunagon* gives birth and they swap places.

## Conclusion

This study argues about how mythologies can be used to examine the universality of the human experience illustrated by comparing its similarities to mythologies inspired from countries of Japan and India. The idea that human experience is universal is based on the fact that similar human awareness is shared by all communities, irrespective of its geological borders. Here we arrive at the conclusion that humans share similar sentiments is through mythologies which propagate similar characteristics, experience or even similar gods.

We examine these themes by taking movies of Makoto Shinkai as medium for comparison and finding similarities from instances portrayed in these movies to mythologies of both Japan and India. Concept of “monomyth” proposed by Joseph Campbell can be used as framework for this project. This concept taken from his book named *The Hero with Thousand Faces*, which states that any mythology has similarities in the themes, characters and purpose from different eras and culture around the world. Comment of Carl Jung is also used to express similarity of human consciousness existing among individuals irrespective of their geographical boundaries or cultures.

Movies used for this project are some of Makoto Shinkai’s influential works namely, *Your Name*, *Suzume* and *Weathering with You*. The instances from these movies have been isolated here to subject them to mythological analysis, drawing instances from Japanese and Indian mythologies. Instances from the movies are categorized into three classifications of etiological myth, historical myth and religious myth. The following instances from the above movies have been taken up for proving the objective of this project. Instances taken from the movie *Suzume* include the concept of “Ever After” as place a resting place for human souls, the prayer chanted by door lockers for closing the gates that are connected to “Ever After” and lastly

Japanese belief of cats leading people to underworld for souls. From the movie *Your Name*, instances of the *Kagura* ritual dance, *Itomori* disaster, the concept of soul switching and the braiding of threads ( *kumihino*) are taken . The instances from the movie *Weathering with You* include origin of Hina's power and her becoming as transparent as water.

As part of comparative analysis the mythical elements drawn from the movies which were of Japanese origin are compared to their Indian counterparts to identify their similarities. This contains story about red string of fate from Japan compared to Maui threads from India , the different opinion about concept of afterlife from both cultures, comparing of similarities of water gods portrayed in both nations and the gender change themed folktales from both regions. This project draws a conclusion that movies in general and Japanese anime in particular, hold the potential to demonstrate the universal aspect of human experience by tracing its roots back to the earliest and foundational myths of different cultures.

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