



## MYTH RETELLING AND CULTURAL EVOLUTION

*A Speculative Study Through The Reimagining Of The Varaha Avatar*

<sup>1</sup>Shreyansh Singhal, <sup>2</sup>Priyanka Dewatwal,

<sup>1</sup>Student - MA Visual Effects, Animation and Comics

<sup>1</sup>Amity School of Film and Drama,

<sup>1</sup>Amity University, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India

**Abstract:** This study examines whether retelling myth actively contributes to cultural evolution or merely reproduces the same narratives again. It argues that myth persists because the flexibility in its structure rather than its preservation. The study focuses on two cases - the Ramayana and the Varaha avatar within Vaishnava mythology. Drawing from comparative myth analysis and A.K. Ramanujan's framework of "tellings", the study shows that narrative and ontological variability are inherent features of mythic continuity. The Ramayana illustrates a continuing shift in narratives depending on region, devotion, performance, and ideology. For example, Rama's gradual divinization, and the shift to a symbol of morality, can be seen from ancient texts to tribal, vernacular, and sectarian texts. A similar examination of the Varaha avatar reveals ontological fluidity. The Varaha avatar takes many iconographic forms, such as zoomorphic, anthropomorphic, and Yajna forms, while maintaining a cosmological significance of destabilization, descent, correction, and restoration. In the initial Vedic texts, the Varaha form takes a more cohesive religious connotation. Building on these findings, the study introduces a speculative reinterpretation of Varaha - The Deep Foundation - as a conceptual test of the adaptability of myths. This reimagining stretches the structure of Varaha to include a higher-dimensional infrastructural ontology. It maintains cosmological functionality of the original myth but removes the anthropocentric aspects. Critical evaluation of the reimagining demonstrates that identity of a myth remains intact even with radical reinterpretations. The results suggest that retelling functions as cultural production, and not distortion. Mythic identity uncovers underlying potential meanings when reinterpreted with coherent cosmologies. In fact, reinterpretation does not undermine tradition; it emphasises the depth and strength of mythic systems.

**Index Terms** - Myth Retelling, Cultural Evolution, Ontology, Cultural Function, Cultural Production, Cosmology, Iconography, Texts, Eldritch Horror, Cosmic Horror

### I. INTRODUCTION

Myths are often treated as stable, narratives handed down, preserved, and protected from alteration. In devotional discourse, change is framed as dilution or distortion. Within scholarship, variation is acknowledged but often described as divergence from an original text. Yet mythic traditions across cultures demonstrate a different pattern: they persist precisely because they change.

This study begins from a central question:

- Does retelling myth add to culture, or merely repeat it?

The study approaches this question with an investigation of two specific traditions within the Indic mythic corpus: the Ramayana narrative tradition and the Varaha avatar of Vishnu. The case studies provide complementary perspectives in the following ways. the Ramayana illustrates the plurality of narratives that vary based on region, traditions of performing arts, and ideological reinterpretations (Ramanujan, 1987;

Guha, 2025). The Varaha avatar on the other hand, illustrates the variability in ontology, iconography, and cosmology of the avatar (Benin, 2019; Rekha H.G., 2018; Rao, 2021).

The Ramayana demonstrates that the multiplicity of narratives is historical and not anything new. The various forms of the Ramayana, in Sanskrit, vernacular, tribal, devotional, and performative modes, transform the figure of Rama from ideal human to divine avatar, with the story itself modifying with new social and theological needs (Guha, 2025).

The Varaha avatar, though less extensive in scope, is equally versatile in the divine forms and cosmic roles it assumes in the Puranas (Rao, 2021; Benin, 2019) and iconographic art (Rekha H.G., 2018; Kumar, 2021). Beneath the devotional commentary, the story carries a cosmology of planetary disruption and restoration. The avatar intervenes as a moral agent and also as a corrective force within a larger cosmic framework.

Drawing from A.K. Ramanujan's concept of mythic "tellings" (Ramanujan, 1987), this study treats retelling as production rather than just variation. Myth is not understood as a singular authoritative text, but as a discursive system that is sustained by rearticulation and reiteration. Ontological flexibility and narrative plurality are approached as characteristics of mythic continuity.

To test the limits of this flexibility, the study introduces a controlled reinterpretation of the Varaha avatar, titled *The Deep Foundation*. This reinterpretation extrapolates from Varaha's structural logic - descent, stabilization, correction - and extends it into a higher-dimensional infrastructural ontology. It is not meant for the modernization or theological revision of the myth. The reimagined Varaha functions as a planetary foundation that acts continuously and not occasionally. The reimagining removes anthropomorphic compassion, and emphasises cosmological maintenance.

The speculative component operates as an experiment. By intensifying ontological abstraction and removing emotional reassurance, the reinterpretation tests three foundational claims derived from the classical corpus:

1. Divine form is ontologically fluid.
2. The avatar has as a cultural function.
3. Myth functions as a meaning system capable of expansion.

Through comparative analysis and critical evaluation, the study argues that mythic identity depends on structural continuity, and not fixed form or consistency. Retelling, which is architecturally coherent, does not erode tradition. It reveals undiscovered possibilities embedded within mythic systems.

This dissertation, therefore, advances two interrelated claims. First, myth evolves through retelling as a mechanism of cultural production. Second, speculative reinterpretation, when methodologically grounded, can function as an analytical tool.

Chapter 5 establishes the textual and cosmological bases of the Varaha narrative. Chapter 6 provides an analytical reimagining. Chapter 7 examines fidelity and theological implications. Chapter 8 places the reinterpretation in the context of traditions of retelling myths. Chapter 9 examines the reinterpretation on the foundational bases. Chapter 10 presents the reimagining fully with the description of the world, the history of the fictional world, the cult, their rituals, their belief system, their behaviour, the entity that is based on the Varaha avatar, its manifestations, its artistic depictions, etc. The conclusion considers the implications of the reinterpretation for the flexibility of myths and cultures, along with the future prospects in relation with this study.

The study isn't concerned with assessing theological truth or changing devotional tradition. Instead, it seeks to illuminate the process by which myth endures, evolves, and flourishes by retelling.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Myth, Retelling, and Cultural Production

Modern myth scholarship increasingly rejects the assumption that myths originate from a single source that is diluted over time. Instead, myths are understood as dynamic traditions that survive through continued retelling. This position first appears in A.K. Ramanujan's *Three Hundred Ramayanas*, where he replaces the language of "versions" with "tellings," thereby removing hierarchical assumptions about authenticity (Ramanujan, 1987). In this framework, no telling is secondary; each is a culturally significant act.

Ramanujan makes the distinction between structure and discourse, proposing that the narrative structure remains fairly unchanged, whereas the ethical, theological, and symbolic content varies with context. The retelling of the myth is, in fact, an act of reinterpretation, and meaning is recreated in accordance with each particular cultural context. Scholarly research on tribal, regional, and vernacular Ramayanas shows that variation is neither peripheral, nor modern, but central to the Ramayana tradition (Guha, 2025). Modern scholarship indicates that myths are in a state of constant flow, realigning themselves with changing political, ritual, and ethical needs. The retelling, in fact, indicates the survival of the mythic material.

## 2.2 The Ramayana: Narrative Plurality and Cultural Transformation

### 2.2.1 Narrative Plurality

Scholarly work has proven that the Ramayana exists in multiple forms embedded in culture. According to Ramanujan, the Sanskrit, Tamil, Jain, Buddhist, and Southeast Asian versions, have significant variations in structure and morals that act as a basis to characterization and theology (Ramanujan, 1987).

Guha's study has proven that there are tribal, regional, and subaltern forms of the Ramayana, wherein the characterization of Rama's morality, divinity, and centrality differ, including cases where the hero may not even be Rama (Guha, 2025a; 2025b). This plurality is not a modern deviation. It has a historical lineage.

### 2.2.2 Divinization and Ideological Reframing

Rama's essence changes from an exemplary human to an incarnation of Vishnu and becomes an absolute moral character in later interpolations (Bora & Nath, 2019). This transformation happened gradually over time in response to changing theological and societal needs.

Moreover, historical studies also indicate that Rama's image has been used for political, and cultural purposes (Bora & Nath, 2019; Guha, 2025a). There is a historical construct of Rama's divinity.

Contemporary studies on Rama reflect a symbolic and critical approach to the epic from a feminist perspective (Munna, 2024). The retelling of Rama's story is a site of negotiation rather than preservation.

### 2.2.3 Retelling Across Media and Context

Performance traditions demonstrate that retelling transforms meaning. Comparative studies of Ramlila, Wayang Kulit, and other traditions illustrate that medium and culture, influence what moral, character, or ideology is highlighted (Venugopal, 2024). The adaptability of Ramayana in different cultures and media indicates that the key to Ramayana's success lies in its capacity to be retold. Ramayana studies offer three main principles: plurality of narratives, historical divinization, and retelling as cultural production.

## 2.3. Varaha: Ontological Fluidity and Transformative Representation

While Ramayana scholarship revolves around narrative plurality, research on the Varaha avatar reveals the transformation of ontology.

### 2.3.1 Iconographic and Textual Multiplicity

From iconographic and literary sources, it is evident that there have been multiple representations of Varaha in different forms over time. Iconographically, the representations of Varaha vary from fully zoomorphic boars to anthropomorphic boars, and so on, without any particular form being prominent (Rekha, 2018). Similarly, in literature, the Varaha forms of Lord Vishnu, which include Yajna Varaha, Bhu Varaha, and Pralaya Varaha, have unique roles in the cosmos (Rao, 2020). In some cases, this may suggest that the salvation of the Earth could have been brought about by other gods.

### 2.3.2 Cultic Evolution and Political Appropriation

History reveals the rise and decline in the worship of Varaha. Varaha is the symbol of royalty, power, cosmic restoration, and ritual legitimacy, particularly under some dynasties or kingdoms (Benin, 2019). Attitudes towards animal symbolism contributed to the prominence of the deity. The decline of the deity is linked to the rising negative connotations attached to the boar.

### 2.3.3 Interpretive Synthesis and Symbolic Translation

Varaha represents a symbolic connection between cosmology, rituals, kingship, and metaphysics (Rao, 2021). There is significant ambiguity between the textual description and artistic forms, even in representations that are loyal to the canon (Kumar, 2021). This enables the idea of interpretation and synthesis rather than compliance.

## 2.4. Synthesis of Ramayana and Varaha Scholarship

In both streams of mythology, research has proven:

1. Myths are not singular, but a collection of narrative pieces (Ramanujan, 1987; Guha, 2025a).
2. Legends influence society just as much as they are shaped by society (Bora & Nath, 2019).
3. The narrative and ontological forms are fluid, depending on political and cultural influences (Benin, 2019; Rao, 2020).

4. The act of retelling is a cultural creation, not simply a reproduction (Venugopal, 2024; Munna, 2024).

Ramayana research has centred on the evolution of the narratives and the ideologies, whereas the research on Varaha has centred on the evolution of the ontology and the iconography. Together, they establish that the continuity of a myth depends on its flexibility.

## 2.5. The Research Gap

While the literature has demonstrated that myths are capable of evolution, researchers have traditionally had a retrospective approach to this. Scholars have examined how myths have changed over time, but the practice of retelling has not been utilised as a methodological tool for the same. (Ramanujan, 1987; Guha, 2025a; Bora & Nath, 2019; Benin, 2019; Rao, 2021).

While the literature has demonstrated plurality, divinization, and ideological reframing, it has not proven whether active speculative retelling can be used to examine cultural phenomena. This work utilises narrative plurality and ontological fluidity to determine if active speculative retelling can be used to test cultural evolution. In this work, the concept of the Varaha avatar has been imagined as an eldritch cosmic entity.

## III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1. Myth as a Plural and Discursive System

This study understands myth as a dynamic discursive practice rather than an artifact. Myth lives through multiple tellings, each telling re-articulates meaning in new cultural contexts. It draws upon A.K. Ramanujan's notion of the Ramayana not having versions, but tellings, which rejects the idea of hierarchies between original and derived narrative pieces, defining myth as multiple and interpretive (Ramanujan, 1987).

Myth does not survive unchanged over time. It is re-performed, re-framed, and re-embedded constantly in fresh ideological, ritual, and aesthetic contexts. Diversity does not indicate degeneration. It is vital for the myth's survival.

### 3.2. Retelling as Interpretive Act

In this study, retelling refers to the process of rearticulating an existing myth in a new discursive context. It doesn't just recount events; it is a process that includes a shift in emphasis, ontology, morality, and symbolism. Retelling is an integral part of cultural continuity. Every retelling of a culturally significant narrative is an interpretation. Ramanujan's observation of the distinction between story and discourse, implies that, the theological, moral, and ontological framework of a myth changes with every retelling. This emphasises the point that retelling is not secondary to the process of creating a myth; it is the way that a myth survives (Ramanujan, 1987).

### 3.3. Ontology and Mythic Being

For this study, ontology refers to the nature of being attributed to mythic figures - whether human, divine, hybrid, symbolic, or cosmological.

The Ramayana and the Varaha avatar illustrate the fluidity of mythic ontology. Rama changes from an ideal man to a divine incarnation through reinterpretation (Bora & Nath, 2019; Ramanujan, 1987), and Varaha varies from animal to anthropomorphic god, and a symbol of ritual, and political power (Rekha H.G., 2018; Benin, 2019; Rao, 2021). The fluidity of ontology is central to determine the extent of reinterpretation.

### 3.4. Myth and Cultural Production

In this study, myth will be considered as part of cultural production. Cultural production refers to how culture creates its own symbolic forms. Mythic retellings are useful for this purpose because they reinterpret myths in light of new conditions. The changes seen in the Ramayana's ideological content, ranging from regional to devotional to modern ideologies, demonstrate the power of narrative plurality to produce new meanings (Ramanujan, 1987; Guha, 2025a; Munna, 2024). Similarly, changes seen in the iconography and role of Varaha demonstrate that mythic forms are produced to suit political and ritual needs (Benin, 2019; Rekha H.G., 2018; Rao, 2021). The process is a feedback loop. Culture conditions mythic retelling, and retellings, in turn, condition culture.

## IV. METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. Comparative Myth Analysis

The present research employs a qualitative method to study mythic traditions. Two cases have been chosen for the research: the narrative tradition of the Ramayana epic, and the Varaha avatar in Vaishnava mythology. While not seeking to compare the two, the research seeks similar patterns of transformation.

The Ramayana demonstrates narrative plurality, interpretive variation, and theological evolution (Ramanujan, 1987; Guha, 2025a). Similarly, the Varaha avatar demonstrates changes in iconography, theology, ritualistic symbolism, and ontology (Rekha H.G., 2018; Benin, 2019; Rao, 2021). These two epics demonstrate the concept of mythic evolution.

The research has revealed similar elements in the two traditions: plurality, fluidity of divine figures, and adaptability to social and cultural conditions.

### 4.2. Conceptual Modelling of Mythic Evolution

From the comparative analysis, this study lays down a conceptual model of mythic evolution. It treats myth as a dynamic system operating within cultural feedback loops.

Three principles are derived from the literature:

1. Ontological elasticity: mythic figures transform status, embodiment of ideas, and scale (Ramanujan, 1987; Bora & Nath, 2019; Rekha H.G., 2018).
2. Functional adaptability: myths shift meaning in response to ritual, political, ethical, and social conditions (Guha, 2025a; Benin, 2019).
3. Discursive reconfiguration: retellings generate new interpretations by re-mapping significance and symbols rather than merely repeating narrative content (Ramanujan, 1987; Rao, 2021).

These principles are inferred from documented historical and textual variations in both Ramayana and Varaha traditions. The model, therefore, emerges inductively from the literature review.

This conceptual modelling allows the study to move from just a description of plurality to an analytical explanation.

### 4.3. Speculative Reinterpretation as Analytical Experiment

The study, having demonstrated the evolution of mythic traditions through retelling, continues to apply the concept of mythic evolution through a speculative reinterpretation of the Varaha avatar. As a conceptual thought experiment, the current study identifies the ontological elasticity and the process of symbolic re-mapping as a part of the concept of Varaha. It examines how much these concepts can be stretched without losing their recognizable form. While the idea of reimagining the concept of Varaha as an eldritch, non-anthropocentric, and cosmic entity might be interpreted as a form of theological or literary embellishment, it must instead be understood as a form of analytical and methodological extension to the Varaha myth.

### 4.4. Scope and Limitations

The study belongs to the category of interpretive cultural analysis. It is not concerned with documenting a history of events and figures of mythic kind, nor with controversies over authority and practice. Even though the speculative reinterpretation of Varaha is offered, it is not a replacement or criticism of existing traditions. It is an analytical tool in an exploration of cultural evolution. It is not measuring cultural impact; it focuses on symbolic structures and mechanisms. In doing so, the study establishes its boundaries to maintain coherence with the broader category of humanities-based myth analysis.

## V. VARAHA - TEXTUAL AND ICONOGRAPHIC FOUNDATIONS

### 5.1. Narrative Grounding

The Varaha Avatar is found in various Puranas, such as Vishnu, Bhagavata, and Agni, with a focus on cosmology and theology. The story revolves around the first chaotic event in the universe, in which Bhudevi (Earth) is submerged in the waters of space, most often because of the asura Hiranyaksha (Rao, 2021).

Vishnu assumes the form of a boar, named Varaha, and dives into the waters, overcomes Hiranyaksha, locates the Earth, and raises it to its proper position. Thus, the story concludes.

Across textual traditions, there are three constant aspects:

1. Destabilisation: The Earth is displaced from stability.

2. Descent: The divine enters the destabilised domain.
3. Elevation and Repositioning: The Earth is restored to balance.

While later devotional traditions emphasise the compassion and love of God, the story essentially revolves around cosmology, and not emotion. Varaha's actions are portrayed as correcting a structure, not saving souls. The Earth is restored to its proper place in the universe, instead of being saved from a sin. The demon is eliminated instead of being converted, viewed only as a disrupting force.

The boar form conforms to this pattern: as a digger, burrower, and lifter, it represents breaking in hard ground and lifting something. The form prioritises function over aesthetics. The tusks always remain central in even humanised forms to function as tools of lifting (Rekha H.G., 2018; Kumar, 2021).

The iconography and texts differ in depiction: zoomorphic, hybrid, multi-armed, or cosmic. But in all cases, the cosmological pattern remains the same: destabilization, descent, correction, restoration (Benin, 2019; Rao, 2021). Therefore, the myth contains a pattern when it comes to the function of Varaha, beneath its theological content.

Three foundational claims emerge from this:

- Claim 1 - Ontological Fluidity in Varaha's Forms: Varaha is depicted in multiple forms across textual and iconographic traditions: full animal, half human hybrid, and expansive cosmic presence. No single form interferes with the avatar's ontological identity. Each form adapts to its function.
- Claim 2 – The Avatar has a Cultural Function: Varaha's transformations are driven by cultural needs rather than loyalty to a particular source material. Every retelling responds to a cultural need, and does not prioritise preservation.
- Claim 3 - Myth as Structural Meaning System: Retellings do not just transmit meaning, they actively produce new meanings by combining ambiguity, contradiction, and interpretation.

These claims establish the conceptual foundation for subsequent reinterpretation.

## 5.2. Thematic Deconstruction

After establishing the narrative structure, the Varaha myth can now be deconstructed into its conceptual components. We shift from describing the narrative to analysing the structural elements within the myth.

### 5.2.1. Descent is Intervention

In the Varaha narrative, descent signifies entry into destabilised depth. The Earth's proper position has been compromised deep within the cosmic waters (Rao, 2021).

Descent thus functions as an infrastructural intervention. The divine tackles the instability at its source. The movement downward is correction of a structural imbalance. The cosmological axis is restored through vertical intervention.

### 5.2.2. Earth as Entity vs. Earth as Object

Bhudevi is often personified as a goddess within devotional traditions. Yet the Earth functions both as a live entity and as a planetary body. For the sake of the narrative, she is a being. But when it comes to the cosmology, she operates as a mass requiring repositioning. The myth allows simultaneous interpretation of the Earth as a living entity and a cosmological body within a structured universe.

### 5.2.3 Animal Form as Functional Embodiment

The selection of the boar form is important for the myth's demands. The boar is associated with uprooting, digging, and the displacement of earth. Its tusks serve as instruments to lift and support mass (Rekha H.G., 2018).

This embodiment is not about familiarity, rather it is about being task-oriented. Even when in hybrid or multi-armed form, the boar's anatomical features remain centered around the act of elevation. Therefore, the divine form in this myth is designed to be a tool, not to just be familiar.

### 5.2.4 Violence as Correction, Not Vengeance

The slaying of Hiranyaksha operates within the same logic. The asura is not a personal antagonist to Varaha. He just represents destabilization. His defeat restores equilibrium rather than avenging any moral offense (Rao, 2021).

Violence here functions as recalibration. It is used to remove a structural disturbance to restore the Earth's original position. The narrative does not revolve around a psychological transformation of the demon or to persuade him. It only seeks to resolve instability.

### 5.2.5 Reframing Varaha as Cosmological Structure

When the devotional and theological ornamentations are set aside, the role left for Varaha to play is that of a stabilizing force in cosmological architecture. The avatar is less about salvation and more as a response mechanism in a planetary system.

Ontological flexibility, functional embodiment, vertical intervention, and corrective violence collectively define the myth's theme. This concludes that the Varaha narrative describes a system that is fundamentally concerned with equilibrium.

This clarity on the myth's structure provides the analytical foundation necessary for the subsequent reimagining. The next chapter uses this established architecture and expands it to test the limits of its ontological elasticity.

## VI. THE REIMAGINING - THE DEEP FOUNDATION

### 6.1 Conceptual Framework of the Reimagining

The reimagined Varaha, titled *The Deep Foundation*, is created as a symbolic extrapolation from the structure identified in Chapter 5. It takes the mechanics embedded in the classical narrative (Rao, 2021) and translates them into an infrastructural set up.

In the traditional myth, Varaha descends, confronts the destabilizing force, and restores balance. In the reimagining, the divine entity does not descend occasionally but is already embedded in the planet. The intervention is not a single event of rescue but a continuous maintenance.

The reimagined tradition centers on what is termed the "Subterranean Stabilization Cult," whose followers refer to the entity as "The Foundation". There is an archaeological motif displayed in the form of downward excavation into the ground, twin arc structures emerging out of the surface, large circular holes or depressions replace textual scripture. Knowledge is transmitted orally or through architecture rather than through text.

Several core transformations define this framework:

1. The Earth is not lifted from water but mounted upon a vast structure.
2. The entity is not anthropomorphic but a higher-dimensional being that is projecting itself into three-dimensional space.
3. The being's visible forms (tusks, pillars, arcs) are partial geometric projections from a higher dimension rather than anatomical parts.
4. Love for humanity is completely replaced with maintenance of a structural balance.
5. The followers perform rituals that center around alignment and connection with the entity and not on salvation.

This shift is not a reinterpretation of Varaha as a modern allegory. It transforms the logic of descent and stabilization into a continuous infrastructural ontology. The avatar transforms into a permanent structural presence from an episodic rescuer.

The result is more about expanding the ontology of the avatar and just about creating an innovative narrative.

### 6.2 Structural Transformation Mapping

We will now compare the reimagining with the traditional narrative with their corresponding aspects.

#### 6.2.1 From a Boar Avatar to a Higher-Dimensional Projection

In the classical narrative, the boar form functions as a tool-oriented embodiment suited to lifting and excavation. In the retelling, what were once tusks are now projections of a four-dimensional entity. The divine body is now an infrastructure instead of an organism.

The anthropomorphic form is removed. The avatar's form is no longer familiar and is a geometric projection into tangible space.

### 6.2.2 From Lifting the Earth to Load Redistribution

Traditionally, Varaha elevates the submerged Earth to restore cosmic balance (Rao, 2021). In the reimagining, the Earth is not just lifted but fully supported. Stability is maintained by redistributing the load of the planet. Catastrophic events such as earthquakes, landslides, eruptions, etc., are framed as recalibration rather than punishment. The Varaha avatar's restoration becomes a continuous process rather than a singular event.

### 6.2.3 From a Villainous Demon to a Natural Instability Event

In the classical narrative the destabilizing agent is Hiranyaksha, the demon (Rao, 2021). In the reimagining, destabilization is impersonal. There is no moral antagonist. Instead, instability manifests from naturally occurring phenomena like earthquakes, volcano eruptions, tsunamis, landslides, etc., driven by tectonic imbalances. The removal of an amoral evil agent transforms confrontational violence into an impersonal correction.

### 6.2.4 From Devotion to Alignment

Traditional devotion centers on prayer, reverence, and gratitude toward a compassionate deity. In the reimagined system, devotion is shown as alignment. Ritual practices mentioned in the reimagining like ear-to-ground listening, downward excavation, acceptance during catastrophe, etc., imply voluntary attunement rather than praying. The worshipper does not ask for rescue but seeks synchronization with the entity.

### 6.2.5 From Divine Compassion to Indifference

The most significant transformation is the removal of emotional reassurance for the humans. In the reimagining, the being does not love humanity. It only maintains planetary stability. Preservation of the Earth is the main purpose. Humanity is treated like a byproduct without any compassion. Intervention is not framed as mercy on humanity but as an indifferent system to protect the earth.

This demonstrates that each transformation extends an already existing element in the classical structure. Nothing entirely foreign is introduced, just the emotional reassurance is removed.

## 6.3 Aesthetic Shift: Devotional Myth to Cosmic Horror

The retelling is an aesthetic shift from devotional reassurance to cosmic horror. This horror stems from an indifferent infrastructure and does not emerge from chaos or malevolence.

Several elements contribute to this transformation:

1. **Incompleteness of Depiction:** In the reimagining, no artwork depicts the full being, but only fragments of it - pillars, arcs, cavities. This displays the higher-dimensional premise, that observers perceive only cross-sections of a larger structure.
2. **Fragmented Archives and Suppression:** In the reimagined world, knowledge circulates through partial journals, encrypted files, personal blog posts, and suppressed academic records. There is an absence of a central canonical scripture.
3. **"Stability is not mercy":** The entity does not consider individual survival of human beings when taking corrective action. The horror arises from indifferent higher power rather than a hostile one.
4. **Acceptance of Annihilation:** Followers do not resist a catastrophic event. A ritualistic posture during an event of collapse signifies that the followers are not afraid of their own destruction while correction is in process, but actively welcome it. Their devotion for the entity and its role, persists even if it means their own destruction.

These transformations clearly state that the horror emerges from the expendability of humanity. It does not arise from chaotic events. It arises from the fact that human lives are not considered when maintaining the stability of the planet.

## 6.4 Ritual Architecture as Theology

In the reimagined system, the structural manifestation of the entity and the architecture built around them represent the doctrine. Sacred spaces like descending spiral corridors, depressions in the ground, chambers with twin central pillars reminiscent of tusks etc., are constructed downward.

These architectural choices are a physically display cosmology in the following ways:

1. The followers digging downward shows their belief in the presence of the entity in the Earth's foundation.
2. Spiral downward descent displays efforts to physically connect with the entity.
3. Ear-to-ground rituals displays the interpretation of seismic vibration as divine resonance.
4. Acceptance and inaction during a catastrophe display alignment.

Ritual postures, such as lying flat on the ground listening, remaining still during collapse, etc., display a commitment to the divine. In this sense, the space becomes an expression of belief.

### 6.5. Closing Position

The reimagined Varaha does not negate the classical structure identified in Chapter 5. It extrapolates its architectural logic, by turning a single action of descent into a permanent embedding, lifting into continuous support, violence into recalibration, devotion into morbid alignment. The avatar transforms from an episodic rescuer into a permanent infrastructural presence.

This concludes the examination of Deep Foundation. This leaves us with an intensified version of cosmological mechanics that make up the traditional narrative (Rao, 2021; Rekha H.G., 2018). This analytical presentation prepares the ground for critical evaluation. The next chapter shifts to evaluation, asking whether this reconfiguration aligns with the structural claims established earlier.

## VII. CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE REIMAGINING

### 7.1. Fidelity and Deviation

First, the structural fidelity of The Deep Foundation's Varaha must be evaluated. Here, the main focus is not aesthetics, but whether it remains recognizable in its continuity with the structural logic of the classical narrative from Chapter 5, i.e., submergence, descent, correction, and restoration (Rao, 2021; Rekha H.G., 2018).

#### 7.1.1. Continuities

Several core elements remain intact:

1. **Cosmological Instability:** The traditional submergence of Earth into a cosmic ocean is reframed as tectonic and seismic activity. In both cases, planetary stability is disrupted.
2. **Vertical Axis:** The theme of downward descent remains central. Varaha's classic downward plunge into cosmic waters to retrieve the Earth is turned into Varaha's permanent presence in the foundation underground.
3. **Corrective Intervention:** In both cases the actions of the divine are corrective. Just Hiranyaksha as a destabilizing force is replaced with impersonal instability events, such as seismic activity, structural pressure, and tectonic movement. Moral triumph is replaced with dispassionate correction.
4. **Earth's Centrality:** The Earth continues to be the central focus. The reimagining extends this by distinguishing between Earth as a primary planetary body and humanity as a secondary surface anomaly. These continuities indicate that the reimagining does not stray from the core cosmological mechanics of Varaha.

#### 7.1.2. Amplifications

The reinterpretation intensifies certain latent dimensions:

1. **Ontological Scale:** The traditional form of an awe-inspiring mythic being in an animal or hybrid form is replaced with a higher-dimensional infrastructural entity that projects itself in three-dimensional space.
2. **Functional Emphasis:** A single event intervention is turned into a continuous system. This replaces episodic rescue with maintenance. The moral and inspirational purpose of the rescue is removed, but the corrective intent of the myth still applies.
3. **Non-Anthropocentrism:** Devotional emotions such as compassion and protection, are replaced with an indifference towards humanity.

With these amplifications the myth's core functions are highlighted while its emotional layers are reduced.

### 7.1.3. Deliberate Destabilizations

Even as the original structures are retained in the reimagining, there are significant changes in the emotions and values in the story:

1. Removal of anthropocentric compassion
2. Absence of the distinction between demon and deity, or good and evil
3. Transformation of the demon into naturally occurring instability events
4. Acceptance of catastrophe as correction

These modifications alter the emotional landscape of the myth. The avatar ceases to be a deity with a personal connection with its followers, and becomes a mechanism of correction.

The retelling does not insert foreign systems; it extracts structural aspects already embedded within the cosmological logic of the original narrative. By removing anthropocentric reassurance, it uncovers the infrastructural dimension of the myth.

## 7.2 Theological Consequences

The theological implications of this shift are substantial.

### 7.2.1. Earth-Centric Devotion

In the classical tradition, devotion is directed toward Varaha, primarily because of him being an avatar of Vishnu (Rao, 2021). In the reimagining, devotion is toward Varaha as a structural body, primarily in relation to the Earth's stability. The focus is shifted from a divine personality to the divine's role, which is keeping the Earth stable.

### 7.2.2. Removal of Moral Dualism

Traditional myth places Hiranyaksha as an amoral antagonistic figure (Rao, 2021). The reimagining defines destabilization as a structural imbalance. Good and evil are completely removed. Any divine action taken is now for correction not for judgment.

### 7.2.3. Non-Anthropocentric Divine Love

The theological doctrine within the reimagined cult, that the being loves Earth but not humanity, completely shifts the focus and purpose of divine action. The entity does consider humanity central and does not protect. It only prioritises Earth.

### 7.2.4. Intervention Without Compassion

The most significant theological shift lies in removing compassion from intervention. In the classical tradition, divine action stems from a sense of protection and righteousness.

In the reimagining, intervention is indifferent to humanity. Structural correction may require annihilation of humans. The followers accept every catastrophe, claiming it as recalibration.

This transformation redefines the concept of avatar. The avatar has emerged out of necessity to a structure and is no longer an agent of salvation.

## 7.3. Environmental and Structural Subtext

Without projecting any contemporary ideology onto the myth, the retelling highlights structural subtexts already present in the classical narrative.

### 7.3.1. Earth as the Central Structural Body and Humans as Surface Anomaly

In both traditions, the Earth is destabilised and then restabilised (Rao, 2021). In the reimagining Earth is not a goddess who needs saving. It is a structural mass mounted upon foundational support.

The reinterpretation removes human centrality, by establishing Earth as the primary focus, and humanity as incidental. There are no longer any instructions for humans. The myth puts humans within planetary mechanics without any guidance.

### 7.3.2. Catastrophe as Correction

The reimagining reframes divine violence as natural disasters. Every naturally occurring catastrophe becomes a recalibration by the divine. The horror does not arise from chaos of these disasters. It arises from a higher order operating at scales indifferent to the individual survival.

#### 7.4. Closing Position

The critical evaluation demonstrates that the retelling maintains the structure of the classical myth. It amplifies the functional role of the avatar and removes its anthropocentric comfort.

The reinterpretation does not abandon the foundational claims established in Chapter 5. Instead, it tests their elasticity:

1. **Ontological fluidity:** Varaha continues to exist across different forms, but these forms become more abstract and less human-like. This changes how the avatar is understood. Even so, the identity of Varaha does not collapse. The retelling shows that the original ontology can hold even at a much larger and more unfamiliar scale.
2. **Cultural function:** The retelling responds to a different cultural need concerned with scale, instability, and the limits of human understanding. The retelling produces a sense that stability is maintained by processes that exceed complete human understanding or control. This shows that retellings respond to varying societal needs that read and experience myths differently.
3. **Mythic meaning:** The reinterpretation creates new meanings by introducing ambiguity, contradiction, and distance from the original narrative form. Familiar elements are transformed, and made to signify something different. Here meaning is not duplicated; it is generated through the process of reinterpretation itself.

The next chapter places this reinterpretation within broader traditions of mythic retelling, positioning it among devotional, modern, and global retellings.

### VIII. COMPARATIVE RETELLING FRAMEWORK

#### 8.1 Devotional Retellings

Throughout the ages, the Varaha avatar is depicted devotionally, highlighting the compassion, protection, and reassurance of the divine. Bhakti focuses on the emotional relationship between the devotee and the divine. They focus on the divinity and grace, and the compassionate actions the divine takes to protect dharma (Rao, 2021).

In these traditions:

1. The avatar is accessible and relatable to the devotee.
2. The Earth is personified as a goddess (Rekha H.G., 2018).
3. The demon embodies a morally wrong character.
4. The narrative resolves with the affirmation of divine benevolence.

Religious adaptations depict Varaha in various forms, whether full boar form, or hybrid form. They focus on the face and other features like multiple limbs, being expressive, in various positions and mudras, which are reassuring in nature (Rekha H.G., 2018).

Moralistic retellings further simplify cosmology. The myth becomes a story about good winning over evil, and righteous action restoring order.

In contrast, the reimagining removes any emotional reassurance, compassion, simplified morality, and replaces the approachable deity with an impersonal cosmic order indifferent to individual survival.

In devotional retellings there is an emphasis on reciprocity between the divine and the devotee. In this reimagined version, however, this reciprocity is completely removed. This suggests that there are layers in the classical myth that allow for both intimate and impersonal constructions of theology.

#### 8.2 Modern Myth Reinterpretations

Contemporary reinterpretations of myths are generally psychological, political, or nationalistic. In psychological interpretations, the struggle of the gods and the demons is used as a parallel to the struggle of the human mind. The political and nationalist retellings focus on the themes of civilization, national pride, and morality. Fantasy interpretations, create new fictional worlds inspired from the myth and enhance the heroic themes and character driven elements.

All these reinterpretations, with all their differences, share certain characteristics of being hero centric, focusing on character motivations, agency of the protagonists, moral stakes, and preservation and well-being of human civilisation. Even when modern retellings are critical or revisionist, many of them remain anthropocentric.

The Deep Foundation departs from this pattern. Heroism is removed. Moral comfort is destabilised. The narrative, though told from the human perspective, does not elevate human agency.

Rather than reinterpreting Varaha as a metaphor for internal struggle or national symbolism, the Deep Foundation expands the myth to planetary scale. A scale at which humanity is peripheral and not central. The divine figure is now a physical structure, and not an exemplar or champion.

### 8.3 Cosmic Reframing in Global Myth Adaptation

Across global myth traditions, there is a tendency to reinterpret ancient deities as incomprehensible cosmic forces. Gods once humanised are reframed as vast, indifferent, and alien. This often occurs in genres of cosmic horror or speculative metaphysics, where gods are unaffected by human morality.

Within such retellings:

1. Divinity outside of human perception or comprehension.
2. Fragmented elements replace cohesive, familiar elements.
3. The significance of humans is minimised.
4. Stability and annihilation outside the human understanding of morality or ethics.

The Deep Foundation is a part of this broader trend. It amplifies elements that are already present in the original Varaha myth without adding anything new. It does so by continuing the structure of the myth rather than just changing aesthetics. The classical myth already contains elements that permit such reframing:

1. Descent: going and immersing into depth, and engaging with the unknown.
2. Planetary mechanics: Placing the Earth back in its proper position.
3. Stabilization: emphasis on stability instead of moralistic teachings.
4. Animal embodiment: being partly beyond the bounds of anthropocentric understanding.

The classical Varaha is already inclined toward cosmological intervention rather than purely ethical instruction. This offers the best opportunity for ontological expansion of a deity into an incomprehensible entity. A shift to this scale does not disrupt the story. Instead, it enhances the original themes. Therefore, this reimagining fits in with the world's current trends in cosmic reframing in a way that is loyal to the structure of the original myth.

The reinterpretation, therefore, is not about the devotional, the psychological, the aesthetic, and the like. It is about expanding the ontology of the deity, and the role it plays. Having cleared the ground, the final stage of the study is to subject the original ideas to a test.

## IX. THE TEST - LIMITS OF MYTHIC TRANSFORMATION

This chapter evaluates whether the reimagined Varaha hold up under scrutiny through the three foundational claims established in Chapter 5. The purpose is to test its structural integrity as mythic transformation.

Each section aligns directly with one of the three claims.

### 9.1 Testing Ontological Fluidity (Aligned with Claim 1: Ontological Fluidity of Divine Form)

The first claim argued that Varaha's form is not fixed. It translates from tradition to tradition without losing its identity. This section tests that flexibility: how far can form change before the myth is no longer recognizable as Varaha?

The reimagining pushes the traditional form into abstraction. The familiar deity is turned into a structural presence. The anthropomorphic depiction of Varaha is replaced by scattered fragments. At first, this can appear to be moving beyond the limits of traditional representation. However, the classical tradition has always included significant variation in form, such as full animal form, hybrid form and even abstract form (Rekha H.G., 2018; Rao, 2021). The reinterpretation does not create anything new; it only adds to an already fluid image.

The question remains of recognizability. Does the Varaha myth still remain when form is abstract?

Continuity is maintained through three structural anchors:

- stabilization of the planet,
- descending vertically into unknown depths, and,
- corrective intervention in moments of imbalance.

These elements remain regardless of whether the figure is anthropomorphic or not. Identity is tied to its function and not form.

The test shows that Varaha is ontologically fluid even to the point of abstraction. The myth remains Varaha because the identity is based on its function. It would cease to be Varah if the function of stabilization is removed. Form can dissolve, but identity persists through what the avatar does, not what it looks like.

## 9.2 Testing Cultural Function (Aligned with Claim 2: Avatar as Cultural Function)

The second claim argued that transformations in the avatar are driven by cultural needs rather than fidelity to a fixed source. This is a test of whether a non-anthropocentric, cosmic horror retelling can produce cultural meaning or not. More importantly, it asks why would such a form emerge at all.

The reimagining removes familiar elements. It removes moral binaries, compassion, and reassurance to humans. It replaces it with a system built on alignment and acceptance of structural correction. Stability is maintained constantly, not just by a single act.

Within the narrative world, this system is coherent. Followers have shared rituals and perspective. Structural forms repeat across space. Indoctrination is done through architecture and not story. The followers form a community around a shared understanding of how their world holds together. For them, loyalty is not asking for assistance or rescue, it is simply aligning with the inevitable.

However, the cultural function of the retelling lies outside the narrative. This retelling emerges in a context where stability is perceived as provisional and temporary. Systems appear to be too distant, too interdependent on each other leading to fragility, and too large to be comprehensible. There is a feeling of depending on a system that doesn't provide reassurance and provides stability without the beneficiary fully understanding how it works.

The reinterpretation responds to that need. It plays on these feelings and imagines the Varaha avatar as a similar system, massive in scale, distant, indifferent and incomprehensible. The myth remains functional because it reflects how stability is now understood.

## 9.3 Testing Meaning Production (Aligned with Claim 3: Myth as Structural Meaning System)

The third claim proposed that myth produces meaning through reinterpretation. This section tests whether the retelling generates new symbolic value, or only reworks what is already present.

The reimagining introduces clear shifts in meaning. Divinity is expressed as an infrastructure rather than a familiar embodied form. Stability is prioritised over morality. The Earth becomes central, while the human perspective is ignored. Catastrophe is no longer a disruption to be resolved, but a necessary process of recalibration.

These changes transform the classical structure. The lifting of the Earth is now continuous support. Descent is now permanent embedding into depth. Conflict is now impersonal correction. The underlying logic remains, but its implications have been changed.

This produces new symbolic directions. The scale of the divine and the reduced importance of humans, forces humility on the readers. Reduced Moral clarity forces thinking beyond the concepts of good and evil. Scale expands beyond representation. The indifferent nature of the divine, takes ideas of God into new directions. These are not simply intensifications of existing ideas. They reorganise how the myth can be read and what it can express.

The retelling therefore generates new meaning while remaining structurally continuous. It does not rely on external concepts. It reconfigures internal elements into different combinations. Meaning is not carried forward unchanged. It is produced through the shift in structure, scale, and perspective.

## 9.4 From Avatar to Infrastructure (Synthesis)

The three original claims proposed that Varaha's form is ontologically fluid, that its transformations are driven by cultural function, and that myth operates as a system that produces meaning. The test shows that these claims remain stable even under extreme reinterpretation.

Ontological fluidity gives way to abstraction without any loss of identity. The figure no longer needs to remain familiar or embodied, as long as the function persists. Form can change radically, but what the avatar does keeps the continuity.

Cultural function remains the driving force behind transformation. The reinterpretation does not emerge randomly. It emerges as a response to a context in which stability is understood as continuous and uncertain, and in which large systems exceed direct human comprehension. The myth adapts to the expectations placed on it.

Meaning is not preserved as it is. It expands as the retelling introduces new possibilities by reorganising existing elements into a different structure. Varaha becomes legible not only as a rescuer, but as an ongoing

foundation. The myth starts speaking to the ideas of stability without reassurance, and dependence on a system that is too vast to understand.

This test therefore demonstrates that the reinterpretation does not weaken the myth. It reveals how much transformation the structure can take. This an extension of possibilities, already present within the myth.

## X. CONCLUSION

This study began with a central question:

- Does retelling myth add to culture, or merely repeat it?

Through a comparative analysis of the Ramayana and the Varaha avatar, along with a speculative reinterpretation, the study has argued that myth and their retellings are woven together. Myth is not preserved because of variation, not in spite of it (Ramanujan, 1987). The Ramayana demonstrates that plurality is a historical condition of myths. The narrative has been repeatedly reshaped across different contexts, whether regional, performative, devotional, or ideological. Rama shifts from an exemplary human to a divine figure, and the content itself adapts to changing cultural expectations (Guha, 2025a; Bora & Nath, 2019). Retelling, in this sense, functions as cultural production rather than distortion.

The Varaha corpus reveals a parallel flexibility at the level of ontology. Varaha appears across textual and iconographic traditions as animal, hybrid, cosmic entity, ritual symbol, and political emblem. Despite this variation, a consistent structural logic persists: destabilisation, descent, correction, and restoration. Beneath devotional framing, the avatar operates as a mechanism of planetary recalibration. Identity is maintained not through fixed form, but through function.

From these analyses, three foundational claims were established:

1. Divine form within myth is ontologically fluid.
2. Transformations in the avatar are driven by cultural function rather than fidelity to a fixed form.
3. Myth operates as a structural meaning system that generates new meaning through reinterpretation.

The speculative reimagining of Varaha—*The Deep Foundation*—was constructed as a controlled test of these claims. By extending ontological fluidity into abstraction, reconfiguring function into continuous maintenance, and reorganising meaning through a non-anthropocentric framework, the reinterpretation tested the limits of mythic adaptability.

The results of this test can be stated clearly.

1. First, mythic identity does not collapse under ontological abstraction as long as structural function remains intact. Varaha remains recognisable not because of its form, but because of its role in stabilising the Earth. This confirms that identity in myth is anchored in function rather than representation.
2. Second, cultural cohesion does not depend on human-centred reassurance. The reinterpretation demonstrates that a system built on alignment, repetition, and acceptance of structural processes can sustain collective meaning. This form emerges from a cultural condition in which stability is experienced as continuous and uncertain, and where large systems exceed direct human comprehension. The retelling resonates because it reflects this condition rather than resolving it.
3. Third, reinterpretation generates new symbolic meaning. By prioritising infrastructure instead divinity as, stability instead of morality, and removing human centrality, the retelling reorganises the internal logic of the myth. These shifts produce new possibilities while remaining true to the structure of the original narrative.

Together, these findings support the central argument of the study. Retelling does add to culture. It does so but by reconfiguring its internal elements in response to changing conditions. Reinterpretation is not repetition. It is a process through which new possibilities are discovered and new meanings are produced. At the same time, certain limitations remain. The speculative reinterpretation of the Deep Foundation is a conceptual model not an observed culture. While it demonstrates plausibility, it does not lay out how such a retelling would be received or sustained in practice in a real-world setting. The study also focuses on a single mythic figure within a specific tradition. It does not test whether similar levels of elasticity apply across other deities or myths. Additionally, the emphasis on structural continuity may understate the role of affect, devotion, and lived religious experience, which remain central in many traditions.

Future research could apply this model to other mythic figures and traditions to test its generalisability. Similar comparative studies may also clarify whether the three claims hold up across non-Indic myths. Empirical studies of contemporary reinterpretations like films, books, online narratives, art, etc., could further test if similar retellings can actually have a real cultural reception.

This study does not aim to replace devotional traditions or undermine theological truth. It operates within interpretive humanities analysis, using speculation as a methodological tool. Its contribution is to demonstrate that myth is capable of far greater transformation than is often assumed.

Myth survives through reinterpretation and not in spite of it. Its durability lies in the fact that reinterpretation is already contained within its structure.

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