

Gods and goddesses



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Myths: Gods and Goddesses A myth is often simply a story about gods or goddesses and their activities portrayed as if they were human beings.

Myths answers to mysteries often people ask, like how the earth was formed or how a particular place got its name etc. and explains the reasons behind practicing certain customs and traditions. Greek scholar named Euhemerus (cited in Littleton, 2005) puts forward one of the earliest theories about the nature and origin of myths. He holds the view that Gods and Goddesses in the myths were based on historical events and the exaggeration of the exploits of kings and queens over the time placed them in myths (p. 10).

There are many similarities found in comparing the various mythologies. A study into the Greek Mythology throws light in the civilizations of the Ancient Greek. Greek mythology is one of the largest collections of mythical stories in the world which lays vastly from representational arts like vase-painting to epics and poems. Greek god Zeus is depicted in many of the mythological stories. Iliad and Odyssey, the oldest epic poems of Homer involve the myths based on the events around the Trojan War. The evidence of the origin of Indian Mythology can be traced out from the period of 2000-1000 B. C. The Aryan history and their celebration about the nature are depicted in the hymns of Rig Veda, written in those days. They had special respect for air, earth water and converted them and worshiped them as their Vedic Gods like Agni, Vayu and Surya. The epics or called the two Itihasas the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, written in the Vedic period speak about the heroes of Vedic period who gradually turned out to be Gods. The characters in them reflected the enmities between Gods and demons and the struggles between good and evil principles. Coming to the Chinese myths, they were passed down from ancestors orally or written which involve huge collection of

folktales, cultural history, and religions. A myth on Chinese god named Pangu reveals the history of how the earth came into existence. The God named Pangu, born inside the egg, broke into two halves; the upper half became the sky and the lower half became the earth. The topmost function of all myths is to establish models for behavior. By telling the mythical stories to their children the old people of the traditional societies got detached from the present world and moved closer to the divine. According to John Campbell's theory, generally the myths regarding any religion or tradition serve four functions, they are; (i) The Mystical Prospect: - The myths are intended to build a powerful feeling of the divine among people (ii) The Cosmological Prospect: - This function of myths serves to make aware of the cosmology of the universe, like the formation of earth, space, time, etc (iii) Social Prospect: - It helps in valuing the social life and maintaining an established order in everything, and (iv) The Psychological Sphere: - This aspect deals in rendering stories representing the importance of an individual's life. It is intended to harmonize and concentrate his behaviors. The myths, in spite of relating to any nation or religion serve as device for human integrity and social welfare. (Source: Joseph Campbell's Four Functions of Mythology). References ' Joseph Campbell's Four Functions of Mythology'. Retrieved from <http://drake.marin.k12.ca.us/staff/doherty/fourfunctionsmythology.html> Littleton, C. S. (2005). Gods, Goddesses, and Mythology, Volume 11. New York: Marshall Cavendish.