

Color, Shape, and Symbolism in Indian Video Game Characters: A Semiotic Study

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Abstract—Around the world, the game market is continuously evolving, and video games are no longer just powerful visual-cultural systems but are also systems that can communicate identities, ideologies, mythology and emotion through interactive experiences. Character design is one of the most influential aspects of communication in digital storytelling and game communication in this regard. As the gaming industry is rapidly growing in India, the native mythology, traditional visual system, folk iconography and cultural symbolism have begun to seep into the designs of the game characters. While the production of Indian games has increased, studying semiotic aspects of Indian video game characters is quite limited. Visual communication and symbolic representation of game characters in Indian games is a highly under-researched area, and the focus of the scholarship on Indian gaming is largely on technological development, market expansion, esports, monetization and gaming behavior.

The present study is an exploratory qualitative semiotic analysis of how the concept of color, shape language and symbolism are utilized in designing the characters in Indian video games. The paper summarizes the theories of Roland Barthes (1977), Ferdinand de Saussure (1983), Kress and van Leeuwen (2021), and Indian aesthetics philosophy, the rasa theory of Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra, and how the visual signs communicate culture, emotion, morality, power hierarchy and the functional aspect of gameplay. Selected Indian and India-inspired games, such as Raji: An Ancient Epic, Indus Battle Royale, Asura and FAU-G are analyzed comparatively using the visual-semiotic analysis technique.

The findings suggest that the Indian game characters have several symbolic levels that communicate spiritual and emotional messages through their color; psychological messages through the shape language; cultural positioning and stories through the mythological symbols. The study also reveals that Indian mythology is rich of a visual grammar that can be utilized in designing the interactive elements without a decorative appearance on the surface of the element.

A semiotic design matrix for game design of characters is proposed in Indian context based on color systems, geometric shape language, mythology, story-based archetypes, ease of comprehension by the player and the production feasibility. The study suggests that the use of culturally grounded semiotic perspectives may be helpful to create world recognizable but culturally distinct visual identities of Indian games.

Index Terms—Indian video games, semiotics, color symbolism, shape language, mythology, game character design, visual communication, Indian aesthetics, AVGC-XR, cultural representation

I. INTRODUCTION

The modern video game industry is no longer only an entertainment one but is a global cultural phenomenon that affects perception, identity construction, socialization and story use. What video games are today is not only a technology, but an image-based visual system, in which the player interacts with a world that is created through image, sound, movement, symbols and mechanics of the game. Character design is a vital aspect of these systems as characters function not only as visual icons, but also as narrative protagonists, emotional connections, game mechanics and player substitutions. As a result, game characters can no longer only perform a decorative function but can also act as communicative forms to influence a player's perception and his/her cultural understanding.

The game industry in the world has always depended on visual systems that have been culturally shaped to create memorable characters and worlds. Anime writing often features characters and settings from Shinto mythology, samurai culture, yokai stories, and other Japanese folk elements. Titled Persona and Ōkami, these games take the mythology of Japan and

turn it into worldwide digital aestheticisms. In turn, Western game makers have taken on Greek and Roman mythology, Norse traditions, medieval fantasy, film realism, comic book style, and more to create characters for God of War, Hades, and The Witcher. Successes have been achieved in the transformation of local culture systems in these sectors into universal visual languages, using structured character design methodologies.

India has one of the world's most rich visual and mythological traditions. Indian mythology has highly developed systems of symbolism relating to color, gesture, iconography, costume, bodily representation, posture, ornamentation and emotional theory. The Hindu epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, temple sculptures, miniature paintings, folk traditions, ritual performance, and classical aesthetics are all an immense visual repository that can be tapped for character design today. Nonetheless, though, game design in India is still relatively under-theorized when it comes to academic conversations.

Indian games with mythological themes are generally very shallow, using everyday items like tridents, crowns, saffron clothing, temple pieces or godly weapons instead of the more complex and profound symbolic components. This is a symptom of the overall problem of the mythological aspects of contemporary digital representation, which often consist not of visual language, but of decorative spectacle.

This becomes significant especially in the context of the fast-growing gaming sector in India. The Press Information Bureau Government of India states that the online gaming industry in India is estimated to be around ₹232 billion in 2024 and expected to grow to ₹316 billion by 2027. The report also highlights that gaming is one of the most important areas of the digital economy in India (Press Information Bureau, 2026). At the same time, the Government of India's AVGC-XR Promotion Task Force highlighted the importance of culturally unique IPs that can propel India into the forefront of the creative economy.



Figure 1: Growth projection of the Indian online gaming industry from 2024–2027 based on Government of India data

(<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=2228572&utm®=3&lang=2>)

In this industrial environment, it is more important to create culturally based game character designs. Indian mythology does not just provide story and deities but

also has some very skilled visual grammars which include symbolic color systems, emotion-based rasa, geometric compositions, archetypal identities and

performative body language. They have great potential for modern games as games are largely based on quick visual communication, symbolic interpretability and emotional presence.

This paper thus explores the following as a main research question:

What are the roles of color, shape and symbolism as semiotic systems in the design of characters in Indian video games?

The study claims that the Indian video game characters used interconnected visual languages to create emotional and spiritual significance using color, geometric elements to affect psychological reading, and mythological elements to create cultural identity and narrative structure. The paper analyzes the selected Indian and India-inspired games through a semiotic perspective to explore how traditional Indian visual systems are rendered within new media interactive media.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aims to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To explore how color symbolism can be seen in the character design of Indian video games.
2. To analyze the language of shape and construction of silhouette in Indian game characters.
3. To investigate the adaptation of mythological and cultural symbols in the contemporary Indian games.
4. To investigate correlation between Visual Semiotics and the Readability of Gameplay.
5. To comprehend how Indian games deal with cultural authenticity and global visual accessibility.
6. Propose Semiotic Design Matrix for Indian game character development which is culturally oriented.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions are:

1. How does a symbolic and emotional system of color work in game character design for India?
2. How does shape language contribute to the communication of morality, personality and function of the game play?

3. How is mythology conveyed in digital characters in the present times in India?
4. How does Indian game designers reconcile on the one hand the cultural specificity and on the other hand the readability worldwide?
5. What semiotic theory will be helpful in the future Indian game character design?

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Semiotics and Visual Communication

Semiotics is the discipline of signs and of systems of signification. Ferdinand de Saussure suggested that meaning comes from the connection between the signifier (that which is seen) and the signified (that which is conceived or known) (Saussure, 1983). Later, Roland Barthes was able to elaborate on the semiotic theory, adding denotation and connotation. Denotation is an image's 'literal meaning', and connotation is an image's 'ideological (or emotional or cultural) meanings' (Barthes, 1977).

Semiotics are particularly significant in the field of game character design, as players can quickly read the signs shown to them while interacting with the game. A weapon can be used to signify a tool for fighting, but also power, aggression, spiritualism, or heroism. Costume, posture and color, likewise, relay social rank, moral values and personality before the exposition of narrative.

In addition, Kress and van Leeuwen (2021) proposed that visual communication follows "organized grammars" – these are grammars of color, framing, salience, composition, gaze, and perspective. This is extremely applicable to games since game characters need to convey information about themselves immediately and then easily while they are moving, fighting, and interacting.

Game characters are not static objects but move around. Their semiotics are therefore not limited to appearance but also to animation, combat structure, sound design and interactive feedback structure.

4.2 Indian Visual Culture and Mythological Representation

Indian visual culture has always existed within a multitude of interrelated forms, such as temple sculpture, miniature painting, mural art, ritual performance, folk theatre, classical dance or devotional art works and manuscripts. From these

traditions, a highly codified form of visual communication has developed, one that passes on philosophical or emotional content using color, posture, gesture, ornaments or symbolic objects.

In India, a mythological representation gives fewer concerns on anatomical detail. Rather, representation often focuses upon symbolic, metaphoric modes of communication. Multiple arms represent "power in multiplication" not in a biologically realistic sense. The color blue represents transcendence of the world and divinity. Enlarged eyes means spiritual awareness and Divine sight.

This symbolic richness is significant in Indian mythology especially in the field of game designing as games heavily rely on the ability to pick up symbolic recognition and visual shorthand. Players must identify the character morality, role, the emotional tone and the combat style, as soon as possible, using the visual clues. There are already advanced systems available in Indian mythology that can support these functions.

4.3 Color Symbolism in Indian Aesthetics

Color is highly symbolic in the Indian visual field. Colors often convey spiritual and emotional, ritualistic and philosophical messages - messages which are not purely decorative.

Color	Symbolic Meaning
Red	Power, energy, sacrifice, marriage
Blue	Divinity, infinity, cosmic consciousness
Saffron	Spirituality, renunciation, sacredness
White	Purity, peace, mourning
Black	Mystery, destruction, primordial force
Gold	Divine authority, prosperity

For instance, Krishna's blue skin represents the beyond and the vastness of the Cosmic. The third one is dark Kali who represents destruction and primitive energy. The red clothes of Durga convey śakti divine feminine power. These color systems can be seen in current Indian popular visual media such as cinema, comic, film animation and the games.

4.4 Shape Language and Psychological Readability

Shape language is a method of using shapes to express emotions and psychology. Shape psychology is largely used in animation and game designing due to the fact that people naturally pair shapes with certain properties.

Shape	Psychological Association
Circle	Friendly, innocent, soft
Square	Stable, reliable, strong
Triangle	Dangerous, aggressive, unstable

Triangles and sharp angles are used by villains to look dangerous, and by heroic characters to mix power and empathy in a square/circle embrace.

The shape systems are also used symbolically in Indian mythology. Symmetrical compositions, which are often outcomes of an endeavor to achieve cosmic order and balance, are driven by divine figures, and asymmetric compositions, which are often outcomes of an endeavor creating chaos and moral imbalance, are driven by the demonic forms.

V. METHODOLOGY

The qualitative analysis in this research is an interpretive approach based on visual semiotic analysis. The research is not a survey or a quantitative experimentation type since its purpose is not one of obtaining statistical generalization but rather of interpretive analysis.

5.1 Research Design

This study consists of qualitative research with an interpretive approach that utilizes visual semiotics, visual culture analysis, and comparative analysis of game characters. The research design specifically has been devised to analyze the communicative role of color, shape and symbols that work as system of communication in Indian character designs of video games. The study primarily aims to find out meaning, representation, symbolism and cultural interpretation rather than measurable behavioral outcomes, a qualitative methodology seems to be most appropriate. Qualitative studies are especially relevant to the research of visual communication, aesthetics, symbolism and cultural representations as it opens possibilities for deeper interpretive engagement to images, forms and symbolic structures. Taking the insight of Creswell 2014, the emphasis of qualitative research is on generating an understanding of how people and cultures create meanings through their social and visual systems. This study is not impersonal and treats game characters not only as tools to provide entertainment but also as cultural texts that have meanings embedded in them.

The research also uses visual analysis that is a semiotic approach, which is based on the theory of signs by Saussure 1983 and the theory of codes by Barthes 1977. Semiotics has been termed the process of signifying and the study of signs. Signs in a visual media operate through an association that conveys cultural and emotional significance and can mean much more than what is shown. Barthes separated the following in his 1977:

- Denotation: indicating the literal or direct meaning of an image is the definition most used.
- Connotation: what cultural, ideological and emotional associations a picture has.

For instance, a trishul could refer to a weapon as well as to divine strength, annihilation of evil, Shaivite mythology, and heroic power in the characters of Indian video games. Likewise, blue skin can be used to refer to color, as well as representing 'transcendence' of the cosmos, Krishna symbolism and infinity in the field of spiritual consciousness. Hence, the study is conducted at a deep level of the characters' cultural and symbolic meanings in addition to the superficial (visual) level.

In addition, the research design includes the visual grammar theory suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen 2021. Their theory investigates the process of visual communication using an organized systems approach dealing with color, framing, salience, composition, perspective, gaze and hierarchy. This theory has tremendous relevance to the analysis of game characters, as game characters need to communicate to the player their character, morality, emotional tone and role in the game as quickly and effectively as possible during the communicating process. Readability and symbolic expressiveness are particularly significant for game figures, as they can be either animate or inanimate and always move and are active in an interactive environment.

The study also incorporates the Indian aesthetic philosophy (also known as the philosophy of art) such as the philosophy of rasa as propounded by Bharata in Nāṭyaśāstra. Rasa theory is an emotion-aesthetic approach to the study of how the visual form creates the experience of emotion in the mind of the viewers/player. Shape language, gesture, color palettes and costume often play a role in Indian character design of game that helps invoke a certain amount of rasa like:

Rasa	Emotional Essence
Vīra	Heroism
Raudra	Anger
Adbhuta	Wonder
Bhayānaka	Fear
Karuṇa	Compassion
Śānta	Peace

It is a framework especially valuable when considering translations of the mythological Indian visual systems to the modern, digital avatar and gameplay dynamics.

In addition, the research design is also comparative. The visual patterns, symbolic structures and cultural strategies are discussed with select Indian and India inspired games and the commonalities are pointed out. Comparative analysis helps the study to show similarities and differences in the Indian visual identity, mythology and the ease of comprehending their gameplay by different studios.

The study does not attempt to (quantitatively) survey player responses nor undertake statistical experiments, nor assemble questionnaires, since the goal is not to find numerical player response interpretation of symbolic structures within the character design is an inescapable part of the design itself. Rather the research investigates the game characters as 'visual-cultural artifacts' which can be deconstructed and critically reflected upon via an interpretive lens. This principle is considered in line with the theory of visual culture studies, which see media images in the present day as a kind of ideology and culture which create perception and identity, Mirzoeff (1999).

The research design thus involves a mixture of:

Research Component	Purpose
Visual Semiotic Analysis	To interpret signs, symbols, and meanings
Comparative Visual Analysis	To compare character design strategies
Visual Grammar Analysis	To study composition, colour, and readability
Cultural Interpretation	To connect mythology and symbolism
Aesthetic Analysis	To examine rasa and emotional communication

The selected games are analyzed through five interconnected analytical categories:

1. Color Symbolism — emotional, spiritual, and cultural meanings of color usage

2. Shape Language — geometric construction, silhouette, and psychological readability
3. Mythological Symbolism — adaptation of Indian cultural signs and iconography
4. Gameplay Readability — effectiveness of visual communication during interaction
5. Visual Identity — negotiation between Indian cultural authenticity and global accessibility

This multi-layered qualitative design enables the study to comprehensively examine how Indian mythology and visual culture are translated into contemporary game character design systems.

5.2 Selection of Case Studies

The purpose of this study is to understand the use of the various elements of colour, shape and symbolism that are used in the creation of video game characters for the Indian context, and for this a purposive selection of case studies is adopted. Qualitative visual and cultural research tends to use purposive sampling, a sampling technique that enables the researcher to choose information-rich cases that are specifically relevant to the research questions put forth by the researcher Creswell, 2014. The chosen games are neither statistically representative nor necessarily the most popular, but instead ones that are culturally pertinent, with a strong visual concept, mythological aspects and a contribution to the discussion of Indian game design.

Case studies chosen for this study are:

- Raji. An ancient epic
- Indus Battle Royale
- Asura
- FAU-G

These games together stand as various examples of the portrayals of Indian culture in present gaming. The choice enables a study of how mythological characters have been directly adapted, reinterpreted in an Indo-futuristic fashion, made in-line with symbolic nationalism, or manifested as stylized cultural fantasy in Indian game characters.

The rated games are also quite distinct in terms of type, looks, and mechanism of gameplay, their audience, and so on. This diversity enhances the analytical breadth of the study as it attests to the working of semiotic systems in various game design settings. These case studies cover action-adventure and battle

royale shooters, roguelike combat systems, and military-focused mobile games. Thus, the research can focus on the adaptation of color, shape and symbolism depending on the demands of the game and production strategies.

Based on the above the following were used as the criteria for case selection:

Selection Criteria	Purpose
Indian Cultural Representation	Presence of Indian mythology, aesthetics, or symbolism
Strong Character Design Identity	Distinctive visual design systems
Availability of Visual Material	Access to official artwork, gameplay footage, and promotional content
Industry Recognition	Relevance within Indian gaming discourse
Diversity of Visual Approaches	Inclusion of mythological, futuristic, and realistic styles

The chosen games evoke Indian visual imagery in its entirety, spawning from mythology to futuristic Indian cultural re-imaginings.

Raji is an ancient epic, or oral narrative.

It was decided that Raji: An Ancient Epic was to be chosen because it is one of the most critically acclaimed attempts of incorporating Indian mythology in a game that is being marketed internationally. The game was designed by Nodding Heads Games, and heavily influenced by Indian myths and stories, temple architecture, miniature painting and folk aesthetics. What makes the game important is the fact that the visual aesthetics of the game is clearly based on Indian culture and not on Western fantasy aesthetics. Mythological symbolism pervades aspects of character, setting, weaponry and plot. Throughout the game, the protagonist Raji exemplifies a combination of heroic rasa, sacred symbolism and readability in agility.

The game also offers a wealth of semiotic data owing to its employment of:

- Mythological weapons like trishul, the chakra etc.
- Traditional color systems are those based mostly on shades of red, gold and earthy colors.
- Temple-inspired environmental design
- Mandala-based visual structures
- Costumes as symbols and inspired by Indian aesthetic concepts.

Moreover, the official artwork, gameplay footage, developer interviews and promotional materials are all publicly available, and thus available for visual analysis.

5.2.2 Indus Battle Royale

The choice was made of an Indo-futuristic creation of Indian visual culture in the form of Indus Battle Royale. The game was built by developers Super Gaming doesn't aim to recreate mythology but rather recap and reimagine Indian cultural elements or motifs into futuristic Science Fiction.

As it is an unusual case that extends beyond the mythological portrayals of Indian symbolism to a speculative image of the future digital India, it is of special significance as a study. The game explores a fictional history and an alternate technology in which Indian culture progresses throughout time and space. Hence, there is a mixture of game-related Hindi signifiers and Indian coders in its signs.

It is valuable for semiotic analysis aspects that the game offers throughout:

- Sanskrit-inspired terminology and naming systems
- Metaphoric use of the peacock and Indo-futuristic decoration
- Hybrid looks with science fiction and Indian designs
- Neon color systems are incorporated with traditional gold and earth-colored schemes.
- Asian reinterpretations that are futuristic in Indian Architecture and Costume elements

Indus is different than Raji as it accepts the mythical style without even having to adopt the mythology itself. The comparative contrast enhances the depth of analysis in the study.

5.2.3 Asura

The reason for choosing Asura built by Ogre Head Studio was its well fusion of Indian mythology with stylized combat looks. The game is loosely based on the rebirth, karma, rage and mythological violence themes from Indian philosophy and mythology.

Among the different styles Asura style can be particularly relevant to this research as it has been noticed that the shape language and color symbolism in Asura are highly expressive. The characters often wear dark clothing, have sharp edges, and have

demonic and aggressive features. This game offers valuable information on Semiotic Systems' aspects of conveying danger, conflict and emotion.

The study can also analyze; during the game:

- Raudra rasa Anger and Furies to design the character
- The use of color palette in a symbolic manner, dark red and black set of colours.
- Angles of 45 and 60 degrees that are regularly repeated
- Indie-stylized reinterpretation of mythical beings

It has a visual style, which is different from the realism oriented or cinematic approach of mainstream games worldwide, thus adding to the grounds of comparison of the study.

5.2.4 FAU-G

nCore Games's FAU-G was chosen as it is a different form of nationalism, military identity and patriotic realism Indian visual symbolism - it is not the mythology displayed in most Indian films.

FAU-G does not depend on the realism of military imagery and is not based on the symbolism of national identity and heroism as in previous case studies. The game gained cultural importance as it came at a time when digital nationalism, local game production and Indian alternatives to foreign mobile games were at the forefront of the debate.

The incorporation of FAU-G expands the scope of analysis of the study by proof of the fact that Indian visual semiotics in games are not only limited to mythology alone. Contemporary Indian game character design is also influenced by elements like nationalism, military symbolism and patriotism.

The game offers valuable information for analysis:

- Military color symbolism like olive green, brown and black.
- Square & rectangular form systems conveying strength & discipline
- The environment of nationalistic and patriotic sentiments.
- In a game design, there is realistic masculine body construction.

VI. COMPARATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CASE STUDIES

Together, these four case studies create a broad analytical framework for understanding Indian game character design.

Game	Primary Visual Identity	Semiotic Focus
Raji	Mythological fantasy	Sacred symbolism and rasa
Indus	Indo-futurism	Cultural futurism and hybrid identity
Asura	Mythological violence	Rage, aggression, and stylization
FAU-G	Military realism	National identity and masculinity

Error analysis is one way of finding the recurring visual strategies in the study as well as the significant differences between the different representations of Indian identity in the different types of games. This is to enhance the credibility of the research and to avoid emphasizing one kind of style and/or mythological idea.

Therefore, through the selected case studies, a solid foundation for analysis of semiotic dimension of Indian video game characters design based on color, shape and symbolism is provided.

The AVGC-XR context in the eyes of the Indian Gaming Industry.

In the last ten years, the Indian gaming business has surged immensely and has really changed the cultural and financial panorama of digital entertainment in India. Whilst once considered as a niche technological activity, now it has become an important part of India's creative economy, digital culture and youth-centric media culture. With the access of smart phones, cheap internet connection, digital payment units and social media integration has helped the gaming market reach a greater variety of demographics. To sum up, in India, gaming is not just about playing but about creating, experiencing, seeing, and innovating something of culture.

In this fast-evolving world, character design plays a key role as characters serve as the players' foremost visual interaction point with the world of the game. Character design in games has been a means of expressing national identity, mythology, culture, ideology and symbolic ideology across successful

adaptive reworkings of games to international markets since then. The Japanese games, for instance, have accomplished a successful-Japanese-globalization of the aesthetics of anime, yokai folklore, samurai tradition, and Shinto symbolism. Likewise, the medieval fantasy/knight's quest, the Norse mythology, the motion-picture realism, the comic-book image system has all become acceptable in Western games. India also has established cultural and mythological references but game development in India is yet to develop its own unique and global identity about visuals. Thus, the Indian gaming industry's evolution opens an intriguing possibility towards the development of mythologically, symbolically and visually grounded game design that draws from indigenous culture.

6.1 Growth of Indian Gaming Industry.

India is one of the fastest expanding gaming markets all over the globe. This growth comes from a range of related technological and socio-economic reasons, such as:

Rapid smartphone penetration

The key driver of the trends is easy and cheap access to mobile internet services.

- Expansion of digital payment systems
- Further development of esports and streaming culture
- Higher percentage of teenagers playing games
- A trend of home-grown game development studios has emerged.
- Acceptance of AVGC-XR industries by government officers and local residents.

The Press Information Bureau Government of India estimates that the Indian online gaming industry was valued at around ₹232 billion in 2024 and is expected to balloon to ₹316 billion by 2027. This expansion reflects India's rising status of gaming as a significant part of the Digital Economy of the country.

Table 6.1 Indian Gaming Industry Growth Projection

Year	Estimated Market Size
2024	₹232 billion
2025	₹260 billion
2026	₹288 billion
2027	₹316 billion

Source: Press Information Bureau Government of India, (2026).

The rapid expansion of the gaming market has also increased demand for culturally distinctive intellectual property (IP). Indian audiences are increasingly engaging with games that reflect local stories, mythology, language, and visual identity. As a result, Indian game developers have begun exploring indigenous themes as alternatives to dominant Western fantasy conventions.

However, despite industrial growth, many Indian games continue to imitate foreign visual styles. This creates a significant need for research examining how Indian mythology and visual culture can inform original game design methodologies.

6.2 AVGC-XR Sector and Government Initiatives

The gaming market has grown quickly and there is an expanded requirement for culturally unique intellectual property (IP). Indian people are increasingly playing games that tell Indian stories, mythology in the local language and are hence visual to the Indian identity. Thus, Indian game developers have started to work on indigenous theme-data as ways to deviate from the prevailing western fantasy. But there are still a lot of games in India which are conspicuously mimicking the design of their foreign counterparts even with the advancement in industries. This puts a notable demand for the study of approaches between Indian mythology and creation of original game design methodologies and Indian visual culture. The sector and government initiatives are outlined below. Below are the sector and government initiatives.

The Government of India has officially acknowledged AVGC-XR (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics and Extended Reality) as a key creative industry that can play a crucial role in job creation, technological advancement, and cultural export.

The Government of India (2025) has issued a statement highlighting the importance of India establishing itself as a global leader in animation and gaming content creation, a vision upheld by the AVGC Promotion Task Force. The report emphasised the need for:

[After Indian IP, Indian IP at the intersection of Food, Indian IP for food industry, Indian IP and food security]

- Promotion of culturally rooted content.

- Strengthening gaming education
- Building global competitiveness
- Encouraging domestic studios
- Raising the awareness of the new opportunities that digital storytelling offers

Moreover, mythology and the art of storytelling were concluded as being a part of Indian culture which can be used for developing original games.

Gaming is an accepted culture and economic industry by the government which has implications in terms of character design research. While Indian studios try to make their games more market friendly abroad, building culturally different visual identities to their games has become a must. Character design thus becomes not just an art but also a strategic tool of national creative production mark.



Figure 2: Government of India AVGC-XR framework highlighting animation, gaming, and culturally rooted intellectual property development

(<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/indias-missing-animation-creative-policy-call-action-kodavanti-vmlvc/>)

6.3 Emergence of Indian Mythology and Indian Cultural Themes in Games

The growing use of Indian mythology in games is part of the Indian digital culture. As evidenced by the movies and the large number of streaming platforms, comics, animation and games, audiences in India have been eager to watch content that resonates with its cultural sensibilities. Partly, this is due to aspirations for local representation in a global media sector.

The government's recognition of gaming as a cultural and economic sector has important implications for character design research. As Indian studios

increasingly seek to create globally marketable games, the development of culturally distinct visual identities becomes essential. Character design therefore emerges not only as an artistic practice but also as a strategic component of national creative branding.

Indian mythology offers game designers several advantages:

Mythological Component	Game Design Potential
Divine weapons	Combat mechanics
Epic heroes	Character archetypes
Demonic entities	Enemy design
Sacred architecture	Environmental world-building
Rasa theory	Emotional atmosphere
Symbolic colors	Visual identity systems

Mythology can serve as the basis for an entire visual language, not just a decorative edge, in games like *Raji: An Ancient Epic*. Likewise, *Indus Battle Royale* adopts and reworks Indian culture in the speculative science fiction style, what can be called “Indo-futurism.”

This progression indicates a transition away from India's imitation of established Western conventions for portraying fantasy towards more culturally specific world-building.

6.4 Semiotics and Cultural Identity in Indian Games

The development of Indian games with cultural basis also brings up key issues of semiotics of the visual and representation. The Game characters are not just pictures: their symbolic and ideological character implies an ideology and the denial of ideology, morality, identity, power lines.

In Indian mythology, visual identity is built using interdependencies amongst symbolic systems, including:

- Color symbolism
- Shape language
- Weapons and iconography
- Costume and ornamentation
- Gesture and posture
- Divine or heroic archetypes"

Certain of these symbolic systems have a high semiotic potential for character design in games, since the game needs to be readable at a quick glance. Oncoming characters need to be known as soon as possible if heroic, dangerous, divine, comic, or

antagonist. Already, Indian mythology offers well defined pictorial schemes right for such communication.

For example:

Symbol	Associated Meaning
Trishul	Divine authority and destruction of evil
Chakra	Cosmic order and divine power
Peacock feather	Krishna symbolism and beauty
Lion	Courage and royal authority
Blue skin	Divinity and transcendence

Such symbols function simultaneously at denotative and connotative levels (Barthes, 1977). A chakra may literally appear as a weapon while culturally signifying cosmic balance and divine authority.

Therefore, Indian mythology provides game designers with an extensive symbolic vocabulary capable of enriching narrative depth, gameplay identity, and visual storytelling.

6.5 Challenges in Indian Game Character Design

Despite industrial growth and cultural potential, Indian game design still faces several major challenges.

Challenge	Explanation
Western Visual Dependence	Excessive imitation of foreign fantasy aesthetics
Decorative Mythology	Superficial use of symbols without deeper integration
Gameplay Readability Issues	Overly detailed ornamentation affecting clarity
Technical Constraints	Budget and production limitations
Limited Research Frameworks	Lack of structured design methodologies

Many Indian games attempt to appear culturally authentic through costume or ornamentation alone while neglecting deeper systems such as shape language, emotional design, or symbolic consistency. As a result, mythological representation sometimes becomes visually crowded or narratively disconnected from gameplay systems.

This demonstrates the importance of structured semiotic frameworks capable of integrating mythology, gameplay readability, visual communication, and technical feasibility.

6.6. Meaning of the present study

In this large industrial and cultural world, the present research is highly pertinent. It is only more significant that the development of culturally diverse visual identities for games will be of vital importance as India tries to rise as a major gaming hub in the world.

This study makes its contribution to this debate by analyzing the role of color, shape and symbolism as semiotic systems in Indian game character design. The current research, in contrast to gaming research focusing on the market-oriented, views games as a visual-culturally attuned, mythologized and symbolically communicative artifact.

The study therefore contributes towards:

- Indian game studies
- Visual communication research
- Semiotic analysis of digital media
- Mythology and interactive storytelling
- Character design methodologies
- Cultural representation in games

The study proposes a Semiotic Design Matrix for Indian game characters which would facilitate many designers, studios, animation practitioners, educators and researchers in the field of culturally informed game production.

VII. CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

The section to be discussed here, delves into selected Indian and some Indian inspired games and visual semiotics associated to them, to have a closer look at how colors, shapes and symbolism is used in contemporary Indian games character design. The selected case-studies were selected as it reflected different approaches towards cultural representation in the Indian context of digital gaming. Some games make direct use of mythology and epic traditions and others find ways of reconfiguring Indian identity by using futuristic, militaristic and/or stylized visual systems.

The analysis is ordered following the semiotic dimensions below:

Analytical Dimension	Focus of Analysis
Colour Symbolism	Emotional, spiritual, and cultural meanings
Shape Language	Psychological readability and silhouette construction

Symbolic Structures	Mythological, national, and cultural references
Gameplay Readability	Visual communication during gameplay
Narrative Identity	Character positioning within narrative systems
Cultural Translation	Adaptation of Indian aesthetics into digital media

The purpose of the case study analysis is not merely descriptive but interpretive. The section examines how visual signs function ideologically, emotionally, and culturally within game character construction. Through comparative analysis, the study identifies recurring visual strategies as well as significant differences in the representation of Indian identity across genres and production styles.

7.1 Raji: An Ancient Epic

With Nodding Heads Games seeking to put Indian mythology on the world map by imbibing it with game elements, Raji: An Ancient Epic is one of its more notable works. The game, which was launched in 2020, is an action-adventure game with elements of Indian mythology, miniature painting tradition, temple architecture, folk visual culture, and epic storytelling. Raji builds a clear Indian visual identity something not intrinsic to many fantasy games, which are more geared towards western medieval style than most. The game's aesthetics, scenery, character fits, weaponry and symbolic architecture are integral to Indian mythology and devout arts. As a result, the game can be seen as a most fruitful case study of the semiotics of Indian game character design.



Figure 3: Official character artwork from Raji: An Ancient Epic illustrating mythological visual language and culturally rooted character design. (<https://www.rajithgame.com/?utm>)

The use of color is central in the creation of emotional atmosphere and mythological identity in Raji. This game is mostly coloured in warm colors such as red, saffron, orange, gold and earthy browns. All these colours strongly point towards devotional and mythological iconography of India. To this day, the color red and of course saffron are considered sacred as a power source. Red and saffron colours make significant features of Raji's costume. Red is associated with śakti divine feminine power, sacrifice, courage, fertility, spiritual energy in the Indian visual culture. Traditionally, "Saffron" represents asceticism, sacredness, spiritual devotion and ritual purity. The colors evoke the heroism of a warrior and the sacredness of a responsibility carried by the protagonist. These colours are not only beautiful but symbolic. Barthes (1977) states that visual signs are connotative meanings that are determined by cultural systems. In this way, Raji's colour palette contributes to her role in the mythology before the narrative exposition. God is Gold! Throughout the game gold is seen in abundance in ornaments, weapons, temple building and divine iconography. In the Indian visual tradition gold represents prosperity, divinity, cosmic energy, and spiritual dominance. Its ambience of gold usage has a sacred, mythological atmosphere and does not seem to be historically realistic as it is repeated as many times as there are gold coins. Environmental Color Systems Emotions are also heavily communicated through the environment. Battle scenes bring out warm oranges and reds, and elate and evoke vīra heroic and raudra aggressive rasas. In contrast, the cooler blue-green colors are found in spaces for mystical or contemplative experiences, creating experiences of adbhuta wonder and śānta peace. Therefore, the color scheme of Raji is an emotional and symbolic system which is strongly related to Indian aesthesis.

7.1.2 Shape Language and Silhouette Construction

One of the most crucial features of gameplay readability is shape language, through which players have to be able to identify character identity quickly when moving around and engaging in combat. The silhouette of the protagonist in Raji is a composition that merges triangular, circular, and vertical elements, all delicately balanced. Lower Body composed by triangles. Роеп легкий тенісист часто виглядає, як трикутник під серповидною сукнею, і перш ніж

оцінювати тенісиста, можна вгадати, що він одягне останній вихід. Triangles symbolize dynamism, movement, danger and agility, and these cone shapes are generally considered to be significant in the field of animation and game design theory. This helps to aid in her acrobatic combat and quick movement systems. Subcultures in a Postmodern World: Gem Innovations, Circular Ornamentation and Humanity Circular motifs are used in jewelry, armlets and bangles. Circles convey softness, empathy, humanity. These elements help to counteract the impression of the triangular combat silhouette American fashionista, so the character doesn't come across as too militaristic and threatening, but more balanced. The texture of verticality and Heroic Presence. Its posture and shape denote dignity, courage and heroism. In Indian mythological sculpture, the ubiquitous use of the vertical composition is often used to convey the sense of spiritual upth muslimans and divine powers. Hence, Raji's pose compliments with both playing games readability and traditional visualization systems.

7.1.3 Mythological Symbolism

Indian mythological accounts play a significant role in the symbolic framework in which Raji exists. The game's mythology is not superficial like some media adaptations but is used throughout the whole game in story, settings, gameplay and even in the visual aesthetics. Deified weapons can serve as a symbol of trishul. The trishul is alive with both a mechanical and mythological significance. Litically, it is used for combat. In a symbolic sense, it implies godly power, Shaivite symbolism, obliteration of evil and homeostasis in the cosmos. Temple Architecture and Sacred Space Elements of the temple, the mandala-like composition and mural aesthetics based on miniature painting in India permeate the environments. They're environmental systems that give the game a sacred visual style and underpin the mythologizing aspect of the game. Divine Narrative Structure The game tells the story of the chosen heroine Raji, guided by divine forces. Parts of this storyline match that of the Indian mythological epics, in which the heroes are often agents of cosmic order dharma.

7.1.4 Gameplay Readability and Cultural Translation Perhaps one of the biggest successes of Raji is the way it manages to balance a cultural feel with ease of play. Any over-ornamented design is prone to be visually overcrowded and many mythological designs are at risk of this. But, Raji masters the hierarchy of the images skillfully. Primary silhouettes are legible in battle, and secondary decoration is not so obtrusive that it obscures the fun of the game. This is a proof of successful translation of Indian aesthetics to interactive systems. The game is thus a significant illustration of Indian mythology used as a formal vis-à-vis language, not just as embellishment.

7.2 Indus Battle Royale But, what SuperGaming has created is one completely new way of looking at the Indian visual identity in the form of Indus Battle Royale. Instead of mythological reproduction, Indus creates an Indo-futuristic aesthetic; that is, an aesthetic of how Indian culture can be thought to evolve into a technologic, speculative future. The game depicts an invented mythological world Virlok, influenced by Indian mythology, architecture, language and visual culture. This futuristic reinterpretation affords India the opportunity to be both a science-fiction and an esports aesthetic, at once.

7.2.1 Colour Systems in Indus Indus' palette unfolds futuristic, neon inspired tones but not as overpowering as Raji which has a strong earthy and mythological aspect. Neon Blue and purple Technological environments, futuristic interfaces involve blue and purple neon colors. Blue is also a sign for cosmic transcendence and divinity in Indian visual culture. In Indus, this symbolism manifests itself with futuristic tech energy. Artist principal: Culture's Downstream Gold Accents and Cultural Luxury Gold is also routinely used in costume for characters and structures on the environment. Gold remains a symbol of prestige, power, and cultural continuity, even in futuristic environments. Earth Tones and Cultural Memory The use of brown and sandstone-inspired colors embodies the essence of Indian landscapes and architectural styles. These tones establish familiarity in the futuristic landscape in the landscape of Indian cultural memory.

7.2.2 Shape Language & Esports Readability In a game that demands competitive multiplayer, it means

that you need very high visual readability. So, Indus features more angular and higher contrast cuts than what Raji has. Angular Combat Forms Often characters use triangular and geometric armors as defense mechanisms due to aggression, swiftness and tactical fighting. These forms increase readability in multiplayer where games are played quickly. Hybrid Curvature Although this game's game design is futuristic, rounded ornate architecture is used, which forms a part of Indian architecture as well as jewellery and cloth designs. With this hybridisation, we have a unique Indo-futuristic visual identity.

7.2.3 Indo - Futurism as the Semiotics of Culture Use of Indo-futurism is one of most significant features of Indus. The game does not depict an ancient or mythical India but rather a technological civilization inspired by Indian aesthetics. This is important since it has always been a world of science-fiction media dominated by Western or Japanese futurisms. Thus, Indus is an attempt to develop future Indian aesthetics that are distinctively Indian.

The game's semiotic systems include:

Symbolic Element	Semiotic Meaning
Sanskrit-inspired names	Cultural continuity
Peacock motifs	Beauty and mythology
Gold ornamentation	Prestige and sacred identity
Futuristic mandalas	Hybrid spirituality and technology

Thus, Indus expands Indian visual representation beyond historical mythology into speculative digital futures.

7.3 Asura

Asura developed by Ogre Head Studio offers a darker and more aggressive interpretation of Indian mythology.

Unlike Raji, which emphasizes sacred heroism, Asura focuses heavily on rage, violence, destruction, and mythological conflict. Consequently, the game provides important insights into the visual semiotics of aggression and demonic representation.

7.3.1 Color and Emotional Aggression

The game predominantly utilizes dark reds, blacks, and shadow-heavy environments.



Figure 4: Official artwork from Asura illustrating aggressive shape language and dark mythological symbolism

(<https://www.ogreheadstudio.com/services#dataItem-jq58xepm>)

Color	Emotional Meaning
Dark Red	Violence and rage
Black	Death, destruction, mystery
Grey	Ruin and decay

These colors strongly evoke raudra anger and bhayānaka fear rasas.

7.3.2 Aggressive Shape Language

The characters frequently employ:

- Sharp angular silhouettes
- Oversized weapons
- Distorted body proportions
- Jagged armor structures

These forms psychologically communicate instability, danger, and aggression.

7.3.3 Mythological Violence and Semiotics

Asura demonstrates how Indian mythology can support darker and more violent aesthetic systems like Western dark fantasy genres while retaining cultural specificity.

The game therefore expands the representational possibilities of Indian mythology beyond devotional or heroic imagery.

7.4 FAU-G

FAU-G developed by nCore Games differs significantly from the previous case studies because it emphasizes military nationalism rather than mythology.

The game became culturally important within discussions of digital nationalism and local alternatives to foreign mobile games.

7.4.1 Military Color Symbolism

The game predominantly uses:

- Olive green
- Brown
- Black
- Grey

These colors communicate discipline, realism, masculinity, and military seriousness.

7.4.2 Square Shape Language and Masculinity

Unlike the agile silhouettes of Raji or the futuristic forms of Indus, FAU-G employs broad rectangular body structures associated with strength, reliability, and military discipline.

Square forms psychologically communicate stability and authority, making them appropriate for soldier-based character design.

7.4.3 Nationalism and Visual Identity

The game construct's Indian identity through patriotic symbolism rather than mythology. This demonstrates that Indian visual semiotics in games are not limited solely to religious imagery but also extend into military and national identity systems.

7.5 Comparative Findings

The comparative analysis reveals that Indian game character design operates through multiple semiotic strategies depending on genre, gameplay structure, and cultural intention.

Game	Dominant Semiotic Strategy
Raji	Sacred mythology and rasa
Indus	Indo-futurism and hybrid identity
Asura	Aggressive mythological stylization
FAU-G	Nationalist realism and military symbolism

Together, these case studies demonstrate that Indian mythology and cultural symbolism provide extensive possibilities for contemporary game character design beyond superficial ornamentation.

VIII. DISCUSSION

The present study is an attempt to show that color, shape and symbolism are related semiotic systems in the design of Indian video game characters. With analyses of four Indian games: Raji: An Ancient Epic, Indus Battle Royale, Asura, and FAU-G, this research shows that Indian games have moved away from the imitation of western style of doing fantasy to use more Indian visual language. The results indicate that for the Indian game characters to be successful, the characters, in combination with the game features and visual readability, can be systematically used and incorporate Indian mythology and symbolism.

8.1 Color Emotional and Cultural Semiotics

Among the key conclusions that the study draws is the thought that color is not just an aesthetic but an emotional and cultural signifier. In all case studies, color generates morals, mood, symbolic expression and storytelling.

The predominant association in Raji: An Ancient Epic is with red, saffron, orange and gold as they denote sacred source, heroism and divinity. These colors have profound associations with devotional practices in India, and they strengthen the mythological associations of the protagonist. Likewise, Asura plays with dark reds and blacks that imply aggression, destruction, raudra anger to create an emotional intensity.

Thus, combining swooshing neon blues and purples with gold accents and earth tones, Indus Battle Royale is a celebration of traditional Indian symbolism where they are turned into Indo-futuristic aesthetics. The colors used on FAU-G – military green, brown and black, however, create a sense of realism, masculinity and patriotism.

Thus, the results suggest that there are three aspects of color in Indian games: emotional, cultural and game play.

8.2 Shape Language/Gameplay Readability

The research also shows that; shape language plays an important role in psychological interpretation and the readability of gameplay. Silhouettes (shapes) define the characters so that a quick glance at the silhouette of opponents during the game lets players understand each character's personality, attack method, and moral alignment.

Agile, with ornamental filigree in circles and heroic rectitude, Raji adds a dimension of combat's triangle to the dance forms. Asura, however, expresses aggression and instability through sharp angular lines, oversized weapons and distorted forms.

In an Indo-futuristic hybrid approach, Indus Battle Royale merges angular esports-ready silhouettes with ornamental curved structures that reflect Indian aesthetics. The square and rectangular shapes typical of military power, authority and discipline form, on the other hand, the main structural elements of FAU-G.

We conclude that Indian game design is an application of universal shape psychology in terms of culturally variegated visual systems.

8.3 The Symbolism of Myths and Cultural Translation

This study shows that the mythology of India is a complex symbolic system which can be used on many different digital levels. But for various purposes, different games use mythology.

In this way, Raji directly adapts the mythological context by employing the weapons of the gods, temple structures, the use of sacred color palettes and by narrating epics.

Stylizing culture, Indus sees it in the light of the future: an advanced, Indo-futuristic civilization, knowing Indian aesthetics.

Asura deals with darker mythical themes, with violence, rage and destruction.

This illustrates the versatility of Indian mythology to stand firm for other genres and visions. One problem it does consistently note, however, is the same sort of problem that manifests itself throughout the games: mythology can be merely a superficial dressing that lacks any gameplay or much plot involvement.

The results indicate that approach to myth that emphasizes it as a kind of visual language or system of images is more effective than an approach that views it as pleasing decorative.

8.4 Ornamentation vs. Gameplay Clarity

One of the biggest issues that the study found is that of balancing cultural richness with gameplay readability. Indian visual traditions are sometimes extremely elaborate and decorative, and the more elaborate a detail, the less apparent its combat relevance and visual identification during game play.

Raji so far, of the analyzed games, has the best balance between ornamentation & readable. The game does

not sacrifice the clear silhouette but clearly has culturally rich decorations. In much the same way, Indus also does the same for the primary forms with details sparingly used so that it does not take too long to read the esports form.

The results show that overweening decorative details are not as important as controlled stylization and visual hierarchy in the design of successful Indian characters for games.

8.5 Cultural Identity and Global Accessibility

The study also shows that Indian game developers are dealing with the challenge of making their games "culturally relevant but globally accessible". Although global gaming culture is still dominated by western fantasy and Japanese anime imagery, the games analyzed show growing self-confidence in Indian visual identity.

Raj is straightforward in its appropriation of Indian mythology, Indus fashion Ishes Indo-futuristic aesthetics, Asura stylizes the myths of Indian violence, and FAU-G builds Indian military populism. These in isolation point to a slowly evolving visual lexicon of Indian gaming.

8.6 Semiotic Design Matrix – Indian Game Characters

A Semiotic Design Matrix is formed from the findings that gives an idea to the Indian game character development:

Semiotic Component	Design Function
Color	Emotional and symbolic communication
Shape	Personality and gameplay readability
Symbolism	Cultural identity and mythology
Gesture	Behavioral and emotional coding
Costume	Historical and aesthetic grounding
Weaponry	Power symbolism and combat identity

The matrix suggests that successful Indian game character design requires integrated planning of visual symbolism, gameplay functionality, and cultural representation.

IX. CONCLUSION

In the current study, the role of color, shape and symbolism as semiotic systems in the video game character design of India is being explored. The qualitative visual semiotic analysis of some games selected for Indian and India-inspired contexts was used to find out how mythology, nationalism,

futurism, and cultural identity are represented in the contemporary interactive media.

The discoveries show that Indian game character design is slowly moving out from just a mythological look and towards more organized, culturally systematic visual systems. Color as an emotional and symbolic language, shape language for psychological interpretation and readability of game play, mythological symbolism for cultural identity and game depth.

The study also shows that Indian mythology offers an extremely evolved pictorial code system that embraces color symbolism, deity iconography, emotion matrices rasas, archetypes, sacred geometry and symbol weaponry. These elements may assist not just mythological fantasy games but likewise future, activity and multiplayer games.

Concurrently, the study reveals some issues with this excessive ornamentation, dependence on western visual conventions and superficial use of mythology. Thus, it is suggested that in the future Indian game industry must take more structured methodologies with a blend of mythology, gaming readability, emotional communication as well as technical feasibility.

To achieve this aim, the current study proposes a Semiotic Design Matrix for culturally driven development of character in the Indian context of games. The research is acclaimed both by the academic community in the field of Indian games as well as a contribution to visual communication research, semiotics and interactive storytelling.

The study highlights that in the context of the growing AVGC-XR industry and India's gaming industry, Indian mythology and visual culture have a lot to offer in the making of well-recognized worldly yet Indian characters.

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