

**You're listening to Imaginary Worlds, a show about how we create them and why we suspend our disbelief. I'm Eric Molinsky.**

**I have fallen deep into a new realm of fantasy literature – fantasy novels that incorporate elements of Hinduism. These stories are written by Indian writers in the U.S., the UK and Canada. Some were born in the West, others moved here. And the books are aimed at a Western marketplace.**

**Now, I know very little about Hinduism. I don't know what they're adapting or how they're changing these stories. All I know is that it feels very new to me.**

**There are several writers whose work I've really enjoyed. So, I wanted to gather them together for a round table discussion. I was curious to hear about the creative challenges and the publishing challenges of writing Hindu-themed fantasy novels.**

**And the group instantly bonded over their shared experiences. And the conversation, they do mention the names of Hindu gods and sacred texts which I was not familiar with. You may not be either, but I think you understand everything through context. In fact, I was fascinated to hear them talk about the different aspects of Hinduism which continue to inspire them as writers.**

**Shveta Thakrar is the author of the YA novels The Dream Runners and Star Daughter, which is about an Indian American teenage girl who has otherworldly abilities because his father is human and her mother was a deity -- in fact, her mother was the manifestation of a star.**

**SVETA: I definitely grew up with our stories. Like I read them in comic book version Amar Chitra Katha, but I didn't. But when I first started writing without thinking about it, I wrote white characters because that's what I grew up reading. It didn't occur to me until I was in my twenties when I looked around at fantasy, which I loved. And I thought, where are the people who look like me? And so that's when I decided I wanted to write characters using the mythology that I'd grown up with.**

**She mentioned Amar Chitra Katha comics. They're a company based in Mumbai that makes comics to educate kids about Hindu mythology.**

**And speaking of comics, Ram V is a comic book writer. He's worked for Marvel and DC. He incorporated Hindu themes into his original graphic novels. His**

**graphic novel *The Many Deaths of Laila Starr* is about what happens when the goddess of death is forced to live among humans in Mumbai.**

RAM: I grew up in Mumbai to a very progressive family, so I wasn't really, you know, we weren't really too religious or steeped in that mythology kind of thing. But my grandparents in Chennai, um, my grandmother was sort of, uh, the, the local medicine woman, if you will, for, for her community. And so she would regale us every year with these, uh, mythological stories. So I think I grew up with some distance from them, but also, um, obviously have very fond memories of them. And I think that shows in a lot of my work.

ROSHNI: Ram, I love what you've done with graphic novels. It's really exciting, I'm excited that we're all getting to talk together.

**That is Roshani Chokshi. She writes a middle-grade series called *Aru Shah*, which is published by Disney. She's also written a lot of YA novels including the *Star Touched Queen* series. When that series begins, the daughter of one of the women in an emperor's harem is being forced into an arranged marriage. Suddenly, the character is saved by a mysterious god, who brings her to his kingdom in another world. But this world has a lot of dark secrets.**

ROSHNI: You know, similar to Shveta, I also never really saw characters that looked like myself growing up. And so a lot of my first writing was almost self-insert fan fiction. I also almost exclusively wrote white characters, but a lot of what prompted me to play with mythology, which simply asking the question of why or what if, or that's kind of weird. Uh, for example, when my bao was telling me about Ravan, the 10 headed demon, king of Lanka, I knew that I was supposed to be asking like, wow, how could someone be so philosophical and also evil? And he captured Ram's wife and sparked this whole war. But because sometimes I'm a little more than a sentient dumpster, my only question was, how big was this guy's bed? Did he have to floss every single one of his teeth and all 10 heads? Where did he go? How did he get through any sort of hallways? How does this mythology even work? Like, it, it was, it became things that were mostly funny or of just like, huh, that's a lot of dedication to keep cutting off your head. You couldn't offer something else like maybe a thumb or, or something like that. And that's always been my interest in mythology, the things that we accept as like, oh no, that's totally fine. That guy cut off his son's head and now he's got an elephant head, and now he is the god of new beginnings. Ta-da. It's a joke. Is it? What just happened? Am I going to get an elephant head? And that's how my brain usually works.  
*<laugh>*.

**And finally, we have Kritika Rao. Her novel *The Surviving Sky* is going to be part of a trilogy. The novel is science fiction or science fantasy actually. It takes place on a floating city off another planet in the distant future. The main characters are a couple who have technological means to remake their world.**

KRITIKA: For me, like these stories, I always grew up around them, but my real interest came in them when I started to like peel back, you know, the layer and see what these stories really meant. What were they trying to tell us? So for me, my interest really lies more in the philosophical aspect of it, which is why *The Surviving Sky* and the *rage* is trilogy. Like I wouldn't call it like, I never, I never call it based on any kind of mythology. It's very much based on Hindu philosophy. It's, it's got a lot of those philosophical elements in it. So yeah, for me, that's really where my interest sparked I want to say in wanting to put that stuff in my books is that I lived in, breathed those ideas philosophically.

#### **AD BREAK**

**So, I started out by asking Kritika, Shveta, Roshani and Ram about the first Hindu stories they wanted to adapt to literature, and why those stories spoke to them.**

**Shveta talked about an idea in an early story of hers that she liked so much, she brought it back for her novel *The Dream Runners*. And it had to do with a character from an ancient Hindu epic poem.**

SVETA: Because I'd always been fascinated by the story of Prince Ekalavya, who had to, who, uh, wasn't allowed to study archery with guru Drona because he was considered too low caste. So he, he prayed to a statue of Drona and somehow became the best archer ever. Thena was very unhappy about this, especially because his star people then had to take second place. So he went to Ekalavya and said, okay, what you have to pay me your good reduction, the payment for my teaching. And Ekalavya said, anything, whatever you want, you just tell me guru. And so guru Drona told him, cut off your right thumb so that he could never be an archer again. And I always thought, that's really awful and really gruesome. So I had, I had a bar full of, um, of creatures populated by beings from, from Hindu, but the folklore. And they had the, the bleeding thumb sitting there in a jar. And this bar was called Ekalavya's Thumb

ROSHANI: <laugh>.

SHVETA: And so of course I had to save that and use it again in the *Dream Runners* because it was just too, like Rohan was saying, the one of the best things about mythology is how outlandish it's, but, but presented in this completely nonchalant manner,

ROSHANI: <laugh>.

***Roshani. It sounds like this kind of speaks to you.***

ROSHNI: Oh yeah, completely. Well, actually, what I'm, I'm really curious to hear what Kritika's take on this because, um, Kritika, I'm so excited about your debut. It's also one of the most beautiful covers I've seen in a long, long time.

KRITIKA: Thank you.

ROSHNI: And I love that your story has a marriage at its core, because I, again, I just keep coming back to the fact that I'm a sentient dumpster, but I don't know if you guys remember the, the Amar Chitra Katha comic of Shiva and Parvati? If anyone, they were hot. I was like, everybody here looks sexy. Am I allowed to think that? Is that blasphemous? Am I going to get reduced cinders, et cetera? And I would've to say, that's one of my favorite stories because it's so romantic. First, she sets herself on fire, then she comes back in a different life and everybody's like, they need to get together. <laugh>, the god of love just dies. And all this stuff happens. And it's just so romantic and lush and it's about love that transcends over lifetimes. And it's also sacred. One of my favorite images, I mean, a very common image of Lord Shiv is how he has the necklace of skulls around his neck. And I can't remember where I came across this, but there is a story about how Parvati asks him, why do you have this necklace of skulls? Like, what, where does this come from? And he tells her that the necklace of skulls are every single one of her mortal lives, that she has to keep going through life as a human until her knowledge is transcendent enough to redeem or reclaim her godhood once more. And so, it's his version of keeping her close to him. That is so goth and so attractive. I love everything about it. Um, so I would say those are one of the stories that certainly, it sticks with me even now. I mean, it's, to me, it's as akin to why we find Hades and Persephone so deliciously sticky and why we keep retelling it over and over again. Um, so that one's my favorite. I'm great. I'm so Kritika, I'm curious to see how you, you know, why you chose to write about a, a marriage that's so, that's so fascinating to me to write about.

KRITIKA: Thank you. Um, piggybacking off, just not your question, but also your answer. Roshani, I'm fascinated with Shiva and Shakti. Like, that entire philosophy for me, I think is something that is embedded into all of my books, uh, and especially in *Surviving Sky* and the *Rages Trilogy*. And part of that was like to, you know, to show that dichotomy and the dualism between Shiva's character and, um, Parvati's character in some ways. And Iravan and Ahilya, who are the two protagonists and the married protagonist of *Surviving Sky*, I, I like to think that they are corrupted versions of what Shiva and Parvati and Shiva and Shakti, you know, are represented to be, but really more human versions of that and definitely flawed and so full of passion and anger and love and chaos in so many ways. Shiva is embedded in the work. Like it's, he's just, he's all over the place. Like it's the name of the tree, it's the name of those, you know, technological, those engineering beads. Those are called Rudraksha Beads. And you

know, he's just everywhere for people who know to, to, to look for him. In some ways, that is one of the reasons why I even picked like a married couple, because I think that marriage, the relationship of a marriage really shows, uh, that push and pull and the commitment and the love. And it's not like you can just kind of feel like, okay, I'm done. I'm walking out. Like, I'm sure you could, but that's not necessarily the culture that, you know, I'm trying to represent or have been a part of. Shiva and Parvati, and they're constant like, you know, as you said, the birth and rebirth and constantly coming together only to separate, only to come together. Like that star cross thing is very much an, um, a theme of *The Surviving Sky*

***Ram, do you have any thoughts on this?***

RAM: Yeah, um, I, I mean, I, I guess my approach to it was a bit different. I don't really consider storytelling very seriously until I was in, in my mid 20s, uh, late 20s, I suppose. I was always meant to be a chemical engineer. So it wasn't that mythology really was, uh, influential at a time where I started thinking about stories. And so my relationship with kind of mythological stories has always been more sort of focused on, on what it would be like to have that crash into our reality today. So, it's always been that kind of mashup of, um, I, I suppose a more magic realist approach to mythology, if you will. But as a child, it was really, uh, these sort of anecdotes of Shiva that got me interested in learning about, uh, mythology. Certainly, those were the stories I was interested in when my grandmom used to tell them to us, uh, because he was such a, um, odd man out, uh, he didn't really fit in with the rest of the pantheon of gods that we had. He was this god who was also, uh, a demon. He was this great savior who could also destroy things. And so that kind of duality, that kind of, that's the kind of stuff that got me interested into it.

***Hmm. Well, let me ask you, this could actually, uh, piggyback on what you just said. I think a lot of people in the West don't know that Hinduism isn't monolithic, that there's not sort of a singular biblical text that is the one and only story. Have you found that liberating in terms of creating your own spin on it, in developing your characters?***

RAM: Yeah, I mean, um, this question really comes up a lot, particularly because I do a lot of work in, in superhero comics as well. And, and I think it strikes at the heart of how we experience mythologies, not just Hindu mythology, but other pantheon mythologies as well. They're always rife with contradictions. Someone's hero is always somebody else's villain. The relationships are all skewed depending on who wrote it and when. I find that in those contradictions is really where the, the beauty of a story lies.

SHVETA: You know, Hinduism, so to speak as an umbrella covers.

KRITIKA: Yep.

SHVETA: You can be a Hindu atheist and then you can be, you can be, you know, you can be someone who grew up with Krishna. You can be someone who follows Shiv and

Shakti. None of that stuff actually has to contradict each other in a way that we expect in the West for stuff to be very black and white, very binary. That's just not there.

KRITIKA: Yeah. It can be very coexistent, and I like that about that.

ROSHNI: Yeah, I do too. I just echoing off of that, there's, so what we see is, especially writing in children's fiction, there is so much of a desire for moral certainty and the way that we tackle mythology, especially when it's inextricable from a living religion. And it's very interesting to me because I think sometimes the people who are most upset with the way we play with mythology will try to say that you should be ashamed of yourself. When really, what I see it as is an act of devotion.

SHVETA: Yes!

ROSHANI: It is me playfully engaging with something that I love and something that means a lot to me. And I think that that line of where you draw the sacred is individual, it's personal,

RAM: It is in the nature of stories to be mutable, to be constantly changing and to need to be retold. And the problem with sort of that intersection between religion and storytelling is that religion hates it when you change anything. They, they want to stick to one version of everything. And so, I think that is why that sort of inherent conflict between someone going, you know, you should be ashamed, or how dare you change? Or how dare you make fun of this? Whereas that's a religious person talking, whereas a storyteller goes, every time I look at this, I want to tell it a different way.

ROSHNI: Yeah. That's beautiful.

KRITIKA: Yeah. Yeah. I love that because especially I think like Hinduism and storytelling, uh, Hinduism is a religion of stories. Like, wouldn't you say? Like, of course, like, you know, you go read your Upanishads and all of that, and it's very like, you know, mathematical philosophy and it's gorgeous. Like I love that, like I've studied it, but Hinduism in general, like, I think it's, it, it, these philosophies were created, they were given these personifications and these gods and goddesses and you know, whether you believe that they're real or they're just, you know, concepts kind of personified, like all of these were meant to be accessible and stories are accessible and they teach us about ourselves and the universe and our place in it and society and all of those things. And I think Hinduism evolved very much to be that kind of religion. So, so retellings and reinterpretations and looking at things a different way and questioning and being argumentative about it, I think is embedded within the, within the religion. This very much is a, is a religion for stories meant for storytellers to, you know, give their take on it and have that singular subjective way of looking at things be part of a greater truth.

SVETA: Yes, agreed. And, and absolutely as an amateur folklorist, I'd say as well, that stories are going to, they always, if they're going to survive, they have to change. And so what I say when I, when I write, when I use, when I draw on mythologies, that I'm writing loving fanfiction of these myths, and as Roshani says, it's also devotion for only in that, unfortunately in the West, people are not that familiar if at all, what we're working

with. So then there comes in this idea that our work is supposed to be teaching them something.

***Well, you know, all of you grew up with these stories, but was there ever a point where you realized you actually has to start researching your own culture? Oh, yes. Yeah. I mean, what has that been like for you?***

SVETA: Oh, it's really, it's, it's, it's difficult because you can go to a bookstore here in anywhere and, you know, I live in America, so here in America you can go to a bookstore and you can find a zillion books about, I don't Celtic fairy lore. You can find a zillion books about what Christianity supposedly means. But trying to find these stories, and it's again, with that, with that expectation that there's a definitive version of anything, that was very difficult. And so I don't, so it's very frustrating to me. Like I mentioned before, when I, when I see reviews and people are complaining, the book didn't teach them enough, and you don't even know what I made up reader <laugh>.

***I want to shift the conversation to, uh, publishing in a Western marketplace. You know, a lot of publishers, I mean, even people who come from Western cultures, there's a lot of like, uh, recontextualizing what is familiar, uh, dealing with well-established franchises, classic fairytales. What are some of the challenges of writing stories and trying to publish stories in a Western marketplace where many readers, and probably editors and publishers are unfamiliar with the background behind these stories?***

SVETA: Well, for me it was the, again, it's a lot of that idea that we're somehow teaching something, it, we, we get put into this teacher role, even though that's not necessarily what we're doing. And also, the readership is not, doesn't have the same familiarity, let's say with that they might have with Greek mythology that I, I always feel like I have to be careful what I do, because that's going to be taken as gospel if you will, KRITIKA: You know, to, to answer your question, Eric, about like, publishing in the Western landscape in, in the Western sphere, there's a couple of things which I find like interesting and challenging and just, you know, huh, like, I guess that's happening is one is the exoticization of my culture and not that that is not, that, it's not that that's new, that's always been happening, like the exoticization of something, which is so normal for me. And, you know, people going like, ooh, tell us more. Like, you know, but in this very almost slightly patronizing slash condescending way of being like, you know, teach us about this, you know, many, you know, headed god of yours and what does he do and what does he mean? And I'm like, leave me alone <laugh>, you know, I have nothing to teach you <laugh>, but <laugh>. But, um, but it is an opportunity too, right? Like, that's the thing publishing right now. I'm so glad that it's moving in this space right now where it is allowing for these stories to come out and be accessible to the rest of the world. So while there's an element of exoticization, there's also an element of opportunity for creators like us to come out and tell our stories. So for me, it's less about like, my editors not being on board and not having research or, you know, not having that, you

know, groundwork to work off of. But because I work with like some wonderful people in the industry, it's more about readers being comfortable with not necessarily understanding everything, but I'm like, maybe that's the point. Like, you don't necessarily need to understand every single thing. Like maybe a narrative is going a certain way and you just have to like trust that that's going to happen. But I think like today, sometimes as readers, I feel that we don't necessarily engage with art in that way. We expect it to do something for us. And that, in many ways is a sad commentary on late stage capitalism in itself where everything must have a purpose.

RAM: Yeah, I mean, certainly in, in comics and graphic novels, which is kind of where I've done most of my work when I started out, it, it is kind of funny. I was publishing books about Indian stories, Indian characters, um, from the very beginning. And when I started out, I used to get this kind of, ah, it's set in India. I'm not sure we can sell it in this market. I'm not sure who wants to read it. I had to Kickstart my own, my, my first ever book. It was self-published, it did very well. And, and about three years on now, I talk to publishers, I pitch them a sci-fi story, and they're like, yeah, but do you have anything set in India with the Indian fantasy maybe? Uh, and, and it's kind of funny to see how that's turned around. The other thing is when editors or publishers will read a story and then view it with a framework of a very sort of Western Judeo-Christian morality. In Hindu mythology, Ravan was the villain of one of the epics, but was an incredibly devout, incredibly educated, incredibly loyal person as well. There isn't really that sort of black and white good guy, bad guy, uh, approach. And, and sometimes I feel like publishing can take a, a while to sort of wrap their head around that. And then lastly, I think publishers are very afraid to publish stories that don't take gods seriously, that make fun of them, that want to interrogate them, maybe say that, well, this is nonsensical, and we shouldn't think of gods this way. And when that happens, because India's such a massive country and has such a massive sway in terms of how a book does, uh, it becomes a very concerning publishing decision when they come back and say, we are afraid this will have backlash in India.

ROSHNI: To the question of publishing, I, ugh. My first book *The Star Touch Queen* came out in 2016, and I don't think that I was prepared for how to engage with mythology and that the, by writing it, I was automatically always on the defensive, always having to explain why I did something as opposed to Kritika what you said, just leaving it out there for interpretation, allowing people to come to it and to leave with whatever they want from the story. I think one of the difficult things and very humbling, uh, aspects of being pioneers in our field, because I think that's exactly what all of us are. We are pioneers. We're doing the thing that we haven't seen before because we haven't seen it before. And what happens with that is you run into a lot of people's wounded feelings, a lot of people who are desperate to see themselves reflected in art to be portrayed as beautiful, intelligent, and as main characters. And when they don't see themselves specifically cast the way that they want to in art, it becomes very

personal for them. Disney has been very kind to me, but one of the things that, was a big cause for alarm when Aru came out was this one guy in India, mansplained the hell out of my books, and he sent an email to everybody in Disney, and he was just trolling me. He was trolling me with his opinion, that's fine. But he scared a lot of the higher ups in publishing who then wanted me to make a statement about the things that I did wrong, the things that I should have done differently. And when I said, this is a troll, they were like, are you sure? We don't know. We need to watch our backs. And I understand that fear for publishers that when they go out and they support a different kind of voice and they put their support behind a different kind of mythos that they have no knowledge of, they're scared. And I say this with no hatred towards that experience, it's just what happens when there's no precedent for stories that have appeared like yours. ***You know, it's interesting, something that keeps coming up, but the word that keeps popping in my mind is diaspora because I mean, I, I was thinking about publishing in a Western marketplace, but of course you're, you're getting reactions from India too, so it puts you in a very unique position being between these two people who know a lot about what you're writing about and have very strong opinions, and then people who know very little and are, don't even know how to trust their own instincts. So, you really have to kind of navigate this field yourselves.***

ROSHNI: Yeah,

SHVETA: Yeah. And there is, unfortunately, as Roshani and I have both run into the idea that diaspora doesn't have the right to tell our stories.

ROSHNI: Oh, yeah.

KRITIKA: Yeah. It, I think that's the thing, right? Like you were mentioning that people who have a lot of knowledge and people who have some knowledge but a different kind of knowledge. I think, I think it's a disservice to say that any one person is an expert of something as large as this like religion and this way of thinking, which has been going on for thousands of years. Like there is no one like expert, like that does not exist. It didn't exist back in like, ancient times. because you had like different, like ashrams and different like sages, like arguing the heck out of things. Like it does not exist right now.

RAM: See, I find, I find this like super fascinating because the exact same sort of problems and, and, and, and, uh, obstacles we're facing. It's also faced by people writing like Star Wars novels, because there's some guy who has watched every Star Wars movie like 75 times going, actually, I think you will find in film number four, this happened. And so, I really think it comes back to that question of like, I think fantasy is the key word. Like we're writing stories, we're not writing religion, we're not, and I think some people want to view it as religion, and even if they don't put in those terms, they're, they're wired to view this thing as this kind of canonical one, singular monolithic truth that that can never be veered away from. And, and the best response to that is to go like, yeah, I still did it my way. I'm good. <laugh>.

**We'll hear the rest of our conversation after this.**

## **AD BREAK**

***Are there any stories from Indian mythology that you'd love to adapt, you know, but you just haven't figured out how to do it yet? It's one, it's on your list of someday when I, when I, when I kind of crack the code of figuring out exactly how I want to adapt this fascinating thing into my work?***

SVETA: Sorry Eric, I already did it. <laugh>

***Well, <laugh>***

SVETA: I, I love the story of Princess Savitri and Prince Satyavan. I won't tell the whole story because we don't have time, but basically, she ends up cheating Lord Yama, depending on what version you're hearing. Sometimes Yama just thinks, okay, you're cool, I'm just going to let you have your husband back. But in other stories, the one I like, Savitri manages to win her dead husband's life back from Lord Yama. And it's, it's, I just love it so much. And I actually already adopted it in a short story in an anthology, but that would've been my answer.

KRITIKA: I'm fascinated with the character of Duryodhana and then Karna, like their relationship in Mahabharata like that, you know, toxic friendship bromance type thing that they've got going on. And I'd love to one day adapt that there've been so many, like different adaptations of it and done gorgeously, but I, I want to see what I can do with those characters or even just that, you know, archetype really, and explore that relationship. I think there's a, there's a lot of room in fantasy right now, especially to explore. We, we have some great stories about feminism and a lot of different characters, you know, women characters and I myself write those. But I think there's also space to explore what toxic masculinity has done to the world in so many ways, and that's a different, like, interpretation of feminism in itself. And I just, I, I think that that would be really cool.

ROSHNI: I love that. I cannot wait for you to write that <laugh>.

KRITIKA: Thank you <laugh>.

ROSHNI: I so excited about it. I mean, I think that for me, I'm very, very interested in relationships and the gaps of just the gaps in them. Like for example, there's this story in the Ramayana about when Lakshmana goes with Rama and Sita, and they go into exile, he decides that he won't sleep at all so that he can watch over his brother and his wife. The goddess of sleep tells him, you know, you can't do that. You have to, you have to rest. You owe me that rest. And so, as a sacrifice, Lakshmana's wife, Urmila takes the sleep for him and she sleeps for 14 years or something like that. And it's such a small, quiet throwaway line. And I wonder all the time, what were her dreams like? What happened when she woke up? I think a lot about, you know, Kritika, you mentioned

toxic masculinity. It's curious when you consider the, a avatar of a deity and how they compare to our standards of partners and men and women today, for example, I don't think that Ram is a good husband, you know, his wife, after she comes back, gets accused of -- Ram is in the background, like....

***I was going to say, we're for the record, we're not talking about the Ram in this call! <laugh>***

ROSHNI: You know, he, she comes back, he forces her to perform this Agni Pariksha like this, this trial by fire to prove that she's pure. And even though she proves the sanctity of herself that she was not unfaithful when she was in captivity, he still leaves behind his pregnant wife in the forest and is just like, bye. Like that is so messed up. And yet it's those complexities. I'm so curious what those conversations would look like between them.

KRITIKA: It's, it's nice that there is no, you know, perfect man, perfect woman or, you know, perfect human or character within, within Hinduism. I think each of them can be, you know, you can interrogate them. And that's what I really like about working in this, in this field.

RAM: Just to, just to sort of add onto that conversation without disagreeing with any you of it, despite my name being attached to this, clearly....

ROSHNI: We maligned you!

RAM: Much, much maligned individual <laugh>. Um, I find it super interesting that within the same sort of mythology, there is another example of Shiva who is, who's one of his forms is Ardhanarishvara which is half man, half woman, and is all about finding power through being in touch with your femininity, which is such a progressive idea for its time, considering everything around it is steeped in this sort of greatest amongst all men kind of thing. I'm currently obsessed with my reading of the Kalki Purana, which is, uh, sort of the equivalent of the Hindu eschatology end of the world myth. I am in love with this idea that throughout Hindu mythology, there have been figures who were bestowed with immortality of some sort. And, uh, the, the Kalki myth says that they must still be, uh, on, on our mortal plane until this last avatar of, of God arrives to, to fight whatever final battle at the end of end of this terrible age. I just love the idea that these gods as immortals are still here somewhere among us hidden maybe. Uh, and I think that's a fascinating angle to approach. You know, what's it like, what would they think of, uh, to make it sort of almost a little bit metafictional? What would they think of Hinduism today? What would they think of their own stories today? Uh, I think that's, that's a really interesting thing for me to explore.

KRITIKA: Good Omens but make it Hindu, right?

ROSHNI: I was just thinking that! I love that!

RAM: Done. Logline taken.

**The Hindu Good Omens may not be written yet, but I highly recommend all the books they have written. I have links to everyone's work in the show notes.**

**That's it for this week. Thank you for listening.**

**Special thanks to Ram V, Roshani Chokshi, Kritika Rao and Shveta Thakrar who helped me a lot in putting this episode together.**

**If you liked this episode, you should check out my episode Faith in Fantasy from 2018 where I talked about religion in fantasy worlds with leaders in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. You might also like my 2021 episode The Zen of Sci-Fi, which looked at the influence of Buddhist philosophy on different sci-fi worlds.**

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