

hel  
global network player authority PewDiePie with god Let's Play andael Undead wti nentic m. uatiz on Skill pvt contest  
game rule system representation The Last of Us death resurrection funeral SOUL dia to acc bo ty fig m. op epe income PS4 discussion digital  
religion gamer analysis simulation technology narrative



Novigrad in the evening sun. *The Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt* (CD Project Red 2015)

netwc nlay r authority while e air bc Lei s Pla insel ndead wfti none m... pu  
2. w rep se ta in te oure o ip O du o la in ep ienre wt se nr m S r di  
in at p fh L. r U death su ct n heral es m m Y... gr ni -1a  
aH:

Special Issue

**Gamevironments of the Past.**

by

Derek Fewster and Ylva Grufstedt



“Who Really Said What?” – Mobile Historical Situated Documentary as Liminal Learning Space.

by Owen Gottlieb, 237

**report**

The Indian Indie Game Development Scene - History and Cultural Heritage as Game Themes.

by Xenia Zeiler, 258

**interview**

Interview with Mike Laidlaw and David Gaider at *BioWare*.

by Cecilia Trenter, 264

# The Indian Indie Game Development Scene – History and Cultural Heritage as Game Themes

Xenia Zeiler

## Abstract

While the Indian indie game development scene is still relatively young, it has already lived through big changes. Like in many regions worldwide, indie game developers in India have to negotiate between practical issues, for example regarding market requirements and expectations, and committed ambitions, for example regarding creative aspirations in art design and game content. On the one hand and in order to persist in the ever extending industry, they need to acknowledge mainstream wants and practical demands from especially (though not exclusively) the Indian game market which at present is characterized by an overall dominance of mobile card and casino games. On the other hand, we see that especially Indian indie developers increasingly reflect on the role of Indian cultural heritage (including elements from history, architecture, music, etc.) for India produced games. This turn to own roots, to implement Indian cultural and historical heritage in games, is now visible in a number of games which have been recently Greenlit on Steam and are in the final production phases, such as *Asura* (2017 forthc.), *Antariksha Sanchar* (2017 forthc.), and others.

**Keywords:** Indian games, Indian game developers, cultural heritage, *Asura*, *Antariksha Sanchar*, *Sky Sutra*

**To cite this article:** Zeiler, X., 2016. The Indian Indie Game Development Scene – History and Cultural Heritage as Game Themes. *gamevironments* 5, 258-263. Available at <http://www.gameenvironments.uni-bremen.de>.





development phase. *Asura* (forthc. 2017), as explained by the developer from the Hyderabad based Ogre Head Studio, <http://ogrehead.com/>, is “loosely inspired from Indian mythology” (Fahadh 2015) and stages the demon like character Asura based on Hindu mythology. *Antariksha Sanchar* (forthc. 2017) combines elements of steampunk and historical facts about the Indian mathematician Ramanujan. Both games make use of Indian cultural heritage and historical elements in both narrative and aesthetics, such as in landscapes, architecture, clothing, jewelry, and music. *Sky Sutra* (forthc. 2017) mainly incorporates Indian architectural landscapes, and partly meditation backgrounds and music. Reasons for Indian game developers to incorporate such Indian themes into their games, not surprisingly, often have to do with the own cultural backgrounds, as the founders and developers of Yellow Monkey Studios in Mumbai, <http://www.yellowmonkeystudios.com/>, respectively Pixel Ape Studios in Palghat (Kerala), <http://www.pixelapestudios.com/> reflect:

“This is imparting a little bit of what we know, of our culture, into our work. It also makes it unique, and it makes it something only we can do. Because we know what Indian instruments exist, we know what an Indian skyline looks like, and we can use those things much better than anyone else. A little bit more identity, I guess.” (Prabhu 2015)

“Being an Indian, I’m actually in the best position to push it out, this kind of stuff. ... For my next game, I’m thinking more into something really, really Indian.” (Menon 2015)

To sum up: The Indian game development scene rapidly develops, and transforms at present. This is especially true for the indie game developers, who are arguably the more creative (and daring) ones when it comes to exploring new routes. While obviously market wants still dictate large parts of what is being produced, also new creative aspirations in game content and art design become visible. Additionally, to the dominating mobile card, casino and sports games, Indian cultural heritage (including elements from history, architecture, music, etc.) finds its way into India produced games – visible for example in the upcoming *Asura* (2017 forthc.),

*Antariksha Sanchar* (2017 forthcoming), and *Sky Sutra* (2017 forthcoming).

**References**

*Antariksha Sanchar* (2017 forthcoming). [video game] (PC, Mac) Quicksand GamesLab in collaboration with Jayalakshmi Eshwar, UnBox Festival and BLOT!.

*Asura* (2017 forthcoming) [video game] (PC) Ogre Head Studio, Ogre Head Studio.

*Chhota Bheem*, 2008-present. [TV animation serial and movie franchise] Pogo TV, Green Gold Animation.

Fahadh, Z. 2015. *Interview on the Game Asura*. Interviewed by Xenia Zeiler. Thiruvananthapuram, 11 December 2015.

G., A. 2016. *Interview SuperSike*. Interviewed by Xenia Zeiler. New Delhi, 6 July 2016.

Goyal, A. 2016. *Interview on Indian Game Developers*. Interviewed by Xenia Zeiler. New Delhi, 6 July 2016.

*Hanuman: Boy Warrior*, 2009. [video game] (PlayStation 2) Aurna Technologies, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe.

Menon, D. 2015. *Interview on Heritage and Mythology in Indian Indie Games*. Interviewed by Xenia Zeiler. Thiruvananthapuram, 12 December 2015.

Prabhu, S. 2015. *Interview on Heritage and Mythology in Indian Indie Games*. Interviewed by Xenia Zeiler. Thiruvananthapuram, 12 December 2015.

