

MODERNISING MYTH: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AMISH TRIPATHI'S *SHIVA TRILOGY*

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Abstract

The different oral traditions, folklore, and folktales that make up each society and culture around the world can be used to identify their ideological belief that construct them. A certain race has made significant efforts to produce, preserve, and pass them along from generation to generation—both consciously and unconsciously. These stories and myths have become more significant as a topic of study for academics in a range of disciplines, including literature. Over the ages, myths have always provided authors with inspiration. Myths influence literature's meaning to the full depth and breadth of its collective meaning. Myths and legends provide a wide range of inspiration and opportunities to a literary artist. A writer may choose sections of the myth and use them if they believe it to be true. Popular Indian novelist Amish Tripathi writes in English and explains mythical tales so that modern audiences might believe them. The Shiva Trilogy is a set of three books by the author titled *The Immortals* of (2010), *The Secret of Nagas* (2012), and *The Oath of Vayuputras* (2013). The Shiva trilogy by Amish Tripathi, in which he fused mythology with contemporary issues, is the subject of the study. It entails reading the text carefully and analysing the storylines and situations that blend mythology and contemporary.

Key Words: Myths, modernity, Shiva, Meluha, Trilogy, Epic

Myths have been the central of every civilisation of the world. There is no country that have been void of history, mysteries, legends, Stories and all of these lead a nation to build his own myths. Myths works as the bedrock of any culture and thus important in the formation of social, cultural, psychological and moral sub- structure of that society. Both eastern and western world are different in terms of Myths. Most of the western literature are based on the mythologies of Greek and Roman. The Gods and, Goddesses, are personified and Considered important in the existence of the nature as wells as for humans. It is uncertain that how myths were created. From thousands of years, these myths has been passed through the mode of oral tradition and by the mean of storytelling. Many variations have been seen in these mythologies from generation to generation. Myths are used for shaping the lives of people to teach the moral lessons and shape the conduct of human beings. As M.H. Abraham says in this context: ...a system of which hereditary stories of ancient origin were once believed to be true by a particular group, and which served to explain why the world as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives.(22)

Study of myth are important in understanding and civilization.in Understanding any civilisation. We can better understand ideological belief of a culture deeply by knowing its mythologies, legends and folktales. The study of Myths, as literary trends, has developed in the 18th Century Western literary tradition. Much of its content has taken from the Greek and Roman classics. Study of Greek and Roman classics. The word myth derives from the Greek word mythos, "which has a range, from "word," through "saying" and "story," to "fiction"; the unquestioned validity of mythos can be contrasted with logos, the word whose validity or truth can be argued and demonstrated (Buxton, web)." Literary writers have borrowed their content from these classics and rejuvenate them in their own way. Not only literature but other forms of art have also employed these classics in their work. The ancient Roman poet Ovid's recounting of Greek tales *Metamorphoses* laid great influence on later writers and painters Ovid's influence as a poet can also be seen on the Latin poet Dante and Petrarch in Italy and Chaucer in English. The French poet La Fontaine based many of his tales on Aesop's Fables. For many century later, James Joyce's master work *Ulysses* was written as contemporary version to Homer's *Odyssey*. Shakespeare, Greek and Roman myths are found enough place in the works of Shakespeare. In the works of 18th and 19th century Greek mythological stories and character served as an inspiration in the works of John Keats, William Butler Yeats and, PB Shelley.

If we taken into account the mythological framework of India, we found that it has a rich variety of folktales, legends, stories. The pious land of India has always been very rich in its culture and civilisation. Among all the literature of the world, Vedic literature is thought to be one of the finest calibre. Veda, Puranas, and the Upanishads are parts of Indian literature, rich in mythological themes. The God, Goddesses, demi-gods and demons are presented in such manner in these Scriptures that they endow a vast range of Subject matter for a literary artist. Two great epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, have always been influential when an artist has to deal with Indian Mythologies. Their plots, sub plots and their characters and their portrayal has a strong resonance with contemporary Indian society. Indian mythologies and their super human characters have laid charismatic influence on the readers of all over the world. Mythical themes in English Indian literature has bind the readers.

Reinventing Mythical theme in India English Literature has become a popular trend in Literature. Indian English. The author portrays these Indian classics in such an engaging manner without losing its authenticity that modern readers get enthralled by such representation. Mythology as a new literary genre offering several writers with a new horizon. Dr. Pradnyashailee Sawai in *The Context* states that "pure myth can be retold in any language, any style and in any medium without losing its identity...it is

his understanding that the reinterpretation of the tales is the way in which the writers tell us what they exactly feel about that particular story or the narrative” (qtd. in Kulkarni 714).

Contemporary writers like Devdutt Pattanaik, Ashok Banker, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Ashwin Sanghi, Anand Neelakantan, Kavita Kane and, Amish Tripathi have chosen Indian Mythology as their subject matter and embellish them with their fantasy. They present these myths and their characters in such an innovative manner that draws attention of the modern readers... Asha Krishna says in this context that there new form of mythological writings, “appealed to mass readers who can now enjoy a story that is at once familiar yet compelling. (Web)

The paper focuses on Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*. His workings on myth and how he infused myths and modernity to give his writings a pleasant twist. *Shiva Trilogy* comprises *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010), *The Secret of Nagas* (2011), *The Oath of Vayuputras* (2013). Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* has recognised as one of selling book of Indian publishing. It has been translated in national and international languages. Amish Tripathi is best known alumnus of prestigious Indian Institute of Management IIM, Calcutta. He has been working as banking professional before turning to writing. Amish Tripathi's writings revolutionised the literary world in the initial days of his career. Over 6 million copies have been sold of his writings all over the world. At present, He is working as a govt. official in United Kingdom and the Director of Nehru Centre, Moreover, He has also hosted a show, *Legends of the Ramayana*, on Discovery T.V. He has written many fictional and non-fictional works including *Shiva Trilogy*, *Ram Chandra Series Immortal India* (2017), *Dharma* (2020) and *Legends of Suheldev* (2020). Young generation of readers are in love with the way he presents our glorious history and myths in vibrant manner: “The young Indian of today is generally not very aware of her rich heritage of mythology. She has a very vague, often hazy idea of her own mythology. On the other hand, western myth and legends abound in the short stories, poems and novels that children read while growing up. So young readers of today...may not be fully cognizant with stories from the Mahabharata and Ramayana (Sinha,132).” Thus the humanising form of Shiva, Sita's incarnation as warrior, Ravana as possesses some virtues, Rama as ideal human, fascinate the modern generation.

In this Trilogy, Shiva is depicting as a human body flesh and blood, who by their action elevates himself as a godlike saviour. Here Amish Tripathi, blended history, myth and Science to create a new form of narrative. Modern day civilisation, cultural values, kinship has also been find in his narratives. It is crucial to critically analyse how these themes are used throughout the work. In Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*, Indian Gods and mythology is combined with modernity. According to *The Statesman* reviewer Gaurav Vasudev, “the book is a gripping mythological story written in modern style” (Wikipedia). Specific examples will show how these two things interact. Shiva is not portrayed as a deity in the book; rather, he is portrayed as a strong, moral man whose battles and efforts to create an equitable society have rendered him immortal. *The Immortals of Meluha*, published in 2010, begins with a lovely description of the terrain that introduces the main character, Shiva: “Shiva gazed at the orange sky. The clouds hovering above Mansarovar had just parted to reveal the setting sun. The brilliant giver of life was calling it a day once again...” (Meluha, 01).

Amish Tripathi's method of combining myth and fiction featured Hindu gods. He aided Shiva in assuming the position of Guna tribe leader. Shiva is referred regarded as the destroyer in Hindu mythology. In stories, Shiva also represents the power that subdues evil. Despite changes to the story, the novel's core remains the same. We come to know about a fresh plot about how Shiva got to be known as Neelkantha in the book's first chapter. Neelkantha will manifest and save the Meluhans from evil, according to the story's central tenet. According to folklore, “the Neelkantha will be a foreigner. He cannot be from Sapt-Sindhu. And that his throat will turn blue when he drinks the Somras” (Meluha, 119).

Some academics claim that the trilogy includes the Meluha and Swadeep story by Amish Tripathi. The trilogy covers the entire region of the Indian subcontinent's North West, from Gujarat in the south to Kashmir and Afghanistan in the north, Punjab in the east, and Sindh in the west, all of which are described in Meluha. Meluha includes all of Pakistan as well as the Indian states of Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. Additionally, eastern Afghanistan is covered. As a result, the description from the book seems to apply to Indus Valley. The first volume of the trilogy focuses on a great deal of information on the Indus Valley civilization. As we go through the book, we discover information about the city's well-planned layout and functional drainage system, personal restrooms, ideal governance, and stringent hygiene practices to ward off diseases. Shiva is amazed by the city's cutting-edge amenities when he arrives with his gunas: Each room had an attach bathroom with a sloping floor that enabled the water to flow naturally to a hole which inculcated in a large hole. The side walls have some kind of device, which when turned allowed water to flow through (Meluha, 14).

The book also describes another case where the tribe was transferred to contemporary assisted quarters where they encountered a number of brand-new and opulent objects that were unfathomable to the Guna tribe, including furniture, clean linen bed sheets, towels, and mirrors. The smoothness of the beds that were made available to them captivated them. Shiva even enquired about the information from the appointed orientation executive: “a bewildered Shiva asked, what is this material? Chitraangadh replied enthusiastically, its Cotton Shiva. The plant is grown in our lands and fashioned into the cloth that you hold” (Meluha, 14). Modern items like soap and the bathroom's built-in tap have been added to novels like these: “he turned the magical device on the wall to increase the flow of water. He used the strange cake-like substance that the Meluhans said was a soap to rub the body clean” (Meluha, 22). The table's decorations and accessories give off a more contemporary vibe. Although lavish, the tableware and food give the impression that the meeting is taking place in a palace while still capturing the essence of the present. Shiva thought it was a wonderful arrangement because, being from a primitive upbringing, everything was beyond his comprehension:

Sati looked over the arrangements. A formal table and chairs for breakfast rather than the preferred low table and floor cushions that Meluhans normally sat upon to eat. The beloved banana tree leaf had been replaced by gold plates. The taste enhancing kullads or mud cups, had been replaced by refined silver glasses. (Meluha, 147)

The novel's mentioned words show how some new arrangements affected every traditional formality. The mythology of the Nagas will be detailed when Brahaspati analyses the full situation with Shiva and Nagas in the third book of the series. His thorough investigation has demonstrated how the Somras impacts both the residents of Baranga and the broader region. Amish Tripathi calls attention to the catastrophic effects of technological and scientific progress that lead to the depletion of natural resources. Here Brahaspati asserts, "When Somras was being made for just a few thousand, the amount of Saraswati water used didn't matter. But when we started mass producing Somras for eight million people the dynamics changed. The waters started getting depleted slowly by the giant manufacturing facility at Mount Mandar" (Nagas, 17). Those who have been drinking that Somras for a long time see some changes in their bodies as a result of its use. The residents of Baranga are currently dealing with a horrific disease in which their children perish due to the disposal of Somras' waste in the river Tsangpo, which flows into and meets the Branga water, adding to the depletion of the Saraswati River. Shiva hears Brahaspati's thorough explanation of this: "Nagas were born with deformities as a result of the Somras. The Somras randomly has this impact on a few babies when in the womb, if the parents have been consuming it for a long period" (Nagas, 14). Following this, Brahaspati deals with how the body's Somras mechanism functions. He explains: "we use to believe the Somras blessed one with a long life by removing poisonous oxidants from one's body. But that is not the only way it works" (Nagas, 15). He wishes to contrast the current situation or state of the rivers flowing in India by discussing the scenario of the rivers Saraswati and Somras.

The way Amish has portrayed the women in the book is fantastic, and he has mesmerizingly combined the ideas of mythology and contemporary. And finally, he is impartial when it comes to the female characters in the book. According to Osho, "women can be a huge help in creating an organic society; they are different from men but not equal; they are as equal to men as any other man" (9). In the *Shiva Trilogy*, women have equal opportunities everywhere, not only in the classroom. Nine female characters total—Ayurvati, Sati, Kali, Anandamayi, Kritika, Uma, Tara, and Veerini—are featured in the trilogy. They take their own positions and have a big part in the story. They are all equally compatible with their male spouses and skilled in self-defense. Kshatriya princess Sati was born into a royal family. Sati is famed for her Kshatriya dharma, just as Kshatriyas are renowned for their military might; her first appearance is depicted as being atop a chariot, "guiding the horses expertly into the courtyard while a lady champion by her side held on the railings" (Meluha, 48).

The *Shiva Trilogy* also depicts mythical astras and weapons by drawing comparisons to contemporary military technology. From the very beginning of the chapter to its conclusion, there are several clashes and disputes in the novels. Numerous other conflicts, such as those between Shiva and the Nagas and the Gunas and Parakritiks, have also been mentioned. In the novels, specific names of astras like Brahmastra and Pashupatinath Astra are mentioned that are also employed in Hindu epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* to destroy any evil on the battlefield:

Most daivi astras only kill men. But there are some, like the Brahmastra, that can destroy any city if not kingdom...the Brahmastra is the weapon of absolute destruction, my friend; a destroyer of cities and a mass killer. When fired on some terrain a giant mushroom cloud will rise, high enough to touch the sky. Everyone and everything in the targeted places would be instantly vaporized. Beyond the inner circle of destruction will be those who are unfortunate enough to survive, for they will suffer for generation. The water of the land will be poisoned for the decades. The land will be unusable for centuries: no crops will grow on it. The weapon will not kill once it kills again and again, for centuries after it has been used. (Oath, 342-343)

It is obvious from the following description that Amish Tripathi is making reference to the atomic bomb incident that took place during the Second World War.

In this way, we can see how history and myth are intertwined, mirroring our contemporary society with its newly rising diseases and environmental concerns. The novel's journey starts with the search for evil in others, but as it progresses, it seems that there isn't any evil in others—rather, it's inside of us. Amish Tripathi has tackled the current political, social, and environmental discourse in a much more engrossing way that holds the reader's attention from start to finish.

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