

## Representation of Myths: A Reading of Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

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### Abstract

Indians have always given importance for our culture and tradition. It is the same in the case of myths and folklore. We feel that these are the essence of our Indianness. We always try to promote such kind of works even in this 21st century. It might be of surprise that these works get such importance now. But this is the truth. We should consider the encouragement contemporary writer Amish Tripathi gained and this is the sole reason for coming up with a trilogy which is written around few years. Myths and ideas represented through these novels must have greatly influenced Indian society. This paper is a rough reading through the Shiva Trilogy by Amish Tripathi and the representations of myths in it.

**Key Words:** *Shiva Trilogy, Shiva, Myth, Neelkanth, Nagas, Somras, Vayuputras, Vedic Literature, Indian Philosophy, Beliefs, Rituals.*

### Introduction

Myths have deeply influenced our minds since the day we came in contact with folktales and grandmothers' stories. Also, we are deeply indebted to writers who have done a lot to spread myths and beliefs through their works. Myths are important not only as they highlight the origin or the particular world view of a society but also as they relate to literature and life in general. Myth in contemporary Indian Literature reflects these inquiries as seen through the scholars. These inquiries reveal the many diverse interpretations of even the sacred texts such as *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* which form an integral discourse.

### Myth, Indian Culture and Tripathi

Myths have always fascinated the creative mind of writers and challenged their critical faculty. In creating a new myth, an author puts own intention to work through the myth visualized, whereas in the case of re-construction of extant myths, the palpable functions embodied within the original myth are questioned, challenged, substituted, negated, reversed or re-focused. Myths continue to inspire or provoke the contemporary writer's creative impulse and pose for them the challenge of analyzing, questioning, countering or subverting their apparent and concealed ideology by re-working or re-visioning the myths in

question. It is of no doubt that we really enjoy them because the best example is here through the works of GirishKarnad.

Amish Tripathi is an Indian author, known for his novels, *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas*, *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, *Scion of Ikshvaku* and *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*. The first three books collectively comprise the *Shiva Trilogy*. *The Immortals of Meluha*, Tripathi's first mashup novel and the first in the *Shiva trilogy*, was published in February 2010. The second and the third in the series were published in 2011 and 2013 respectively.

Tripathi's novels have been translated into a number of languages. The reason that it has been translated into a number of local languages is because the author believes that west-focused Indian publishing as a whole is gradually being embedded into the Indian cultural sensibilities. All of Tripathi's books are on religious topics since he is a devoted worshiper of Lord Shiva. Amish had turned into an atheist in his youth but returned to faith while writing his first book. His grandfather was a Sanskrit scholar and a Pandit in Benares. Tripathi says that he gathered most of his knowledge of Hindu theology and his very religious parents. He believes that religiosity and liberalism go hand-in-hand in India.

### When Myth Alters

Amish introduces the story of Mahadev as an ordinary man. Meluha or the Legend of Meluha really existed in another name in "Indus valley" during 1900 BC.

The Meluhans believe that Shiva is their fabled saviour Neelkanth. Shiva decides to help the Meluhans in their war against the Chandravanshis, who had joined forces with cursed Nagas; however, during his journey and the flight that ensues, Shiva learns how his choices actually reflect who he aspires to be and how they lead to dire consequences.

*The Secret of the Nagas* is the second novel of the Shiva Trilogy series. *The Immortals of Meluha* have left off with Shiva trying to save Sati from the invading Naga. Later Shiva takes his troop of soldiers and travels far east to the land of Branga, where he wishes to find a clue to reach the Naga people. Shiva also learns that Sati's first child is still alive as well as her twin sister. His journey ultimately leads him to the Naga capital of Panchavati, where he finds a surprise waiting for him. There in a classroom, Shiva finds Brahaspati, perfectly alive and teaching a class.

In *The Oath of Vayuputras*, starting from where the previous novel left off, Shiva discovers that somras is the true evil. Shiva then declares a holy war on those who seek to continue to use it, mainly the Emperors Daksha and Dilipa, who are being controlled by the sage Bhrigu. The battle rages on and Shiva travels to the land of Pariha to consult with Vayuputras, a legendary tribe. By the time he returns, he war has ended with sati, his wife, being murdered. An enraged Shiva destroys the capital of Meluha and Somras is wiped out of history. The story concludes with Shiva and his associates being popularized as Gods for their deeds and accomplishments.

In *Shiva Trilogy*, Tripathi carefully lays out locales that are picture-perfects as in children literature. Rewriting myth also takes the shape of a conspiracy novel that re-reads a long-established set of codes, unlocking it with a new cryptographic-historic key, unearthing the "truth" from a complicated web of lies and truth. The descriptions of the concepts like "somras" and "blue throat" appeals to the rational reader. Romance and thrill are the main subjects and there is abundant application of action, suspense, humour, twists, betrayal, tragedy, and agony. The writer has employed common, everyday English with too much Americanism and expressions like 'bloody hell', 'damn it', 'bullshit', 'holy lake', etc in order to make Shiva look more human.

### Concepts that Revisit

A number of scientists in the name of rishis, their knowledge of Somras and divyastras is so scientifically explained in the novels that modern scientists may wonder. Manufacturing the Somras is not without its fair share of difficulties. It requires various ingredients that are not easily available. For example, the Sanjeevani trees. In the concept of Neelkanth, the blue colour

symbolizes slow poison or negative thoughts. The same in the neck indicates that the poison is neither to be drunk nor to be spitted out but to be kept in the throat temporarily so that it can be neutralized at appropriate time. The well described slow poisons are attachments, anger, greed, desires and ego. This way, Amish points out science at every step in the Shiva Trilogy. In the production of Somras, hygiene, civilized way of house construction, the concept of Neelkanth, deformities of people whom we today worship as Gods with extraordinary power. All the miracles are seen with scientific objectivity.

The Naga concept is another main feature of Shiva Trilogy. The concept of Om as three snakes symbolizing three rivers is something interesting. Later in *The Secret of Nagas* it is revealed that the lady with extra hands (one of with such deformity) among the Nagas is Kali. Wide ears and long nosed child are Ganesh.

Amish believes, 'Myths are nothing but jumbled memories of a true past. A past buried under mounds of earth and ignorance.' Myths like history are a way of looking at the past. A novelist takes themes from history and tradition and writes a novel, which forces us to think of the past. In fact, myths regularly exercise a deep influence on our lives even as they are shaped by the way we live. Amish have also taken themes from Puranas and history. Several Indian writers have turned to myths for their work. They have gone deep into it and interpreted them according to the contemporary situation giving the myth a new direction. By using myth in literature, the Indian writers are in a way embodying their texts both with the past and the present. Using myth and history, Amish have gone to the past and found the possibilities which the future seems to hold. Myths are preserved in the four Vedas, the Upanishads, the Mahabharat, the Ramayana and the Purana and their values have survived through centuries and their remains very appealing in the present time.

One of the objectives of myths is that it explains exemption as derived from the primitive traditions and rituals. Shiva is fair but in their image sculpture or linguistics is shown blue. This mystery explains to us clearly the myth of the churning ocean. They received nectar because of the churning of the sea. The conflict began in the ocean by God and Devil for nectar. It has also led to the emergence of nectar as well as poison. Shiva kept it in throat unintended. It describes the form of Neelkanth Shiva. Other hand, this event proves the Shivatwa of Shiva. Infinity mystery and myths to explain natural phenomena are found in a number of ways. The second aim of the myth is to recognize ancient beliefs and rituals. There are several rights, rituals and beliefs in each race that are not intelligible. Myth would justify them. Like literature,

myth has the ability to express feelings. The myths are conceptual forms of religious rituals. As the people find shelter from the fear of mourning and disease by the rituals similarly, reciting Puranas and hearing them they get freedom from feelings of compassion and terror. Besides this, some of the Greater objectives accomplished by the myth, the basic premise is 5 of all schools of Indian philosophy of Vedic literature, a big part of it, is myth oriented. In terms of philosophy, myth is a fiction, which is a euphemism for a special consideration of life and universe.

The idea for the story and philosophy lies in its separate existence, of which, there is mutual respect of meaning and its expression. Later two different streams from myths had originated. One of the philosophies and another, mythological literature (as Puranas) developed from myths. There are some great accomplishments of the objectives of the myths. They are the Symbols of the integrity of humanity, on the other side they show the fundamental unity of human nature. Human mythology is the effective means to motivate humans from darkness to light, from death to immortality and from the Unreal to truth. The myth generates an unbroken flow of eternal life in the present era of human consciousness and relations. Knowledge of myth breaks the physical limits of life and Orients towards charity. Materialist philosophers can deny its significance by saying that the myths are mystic thinking the stream of medieval Ideas. The relation of this argument is correct or subjectivist consciousness, still has not been decided.

### Conclusions

Sociological study can be made in the perspective of time and space. The use of Myth in literature since the primitive times is to analyze different forms of literature and forms of languages and linguistic basis of myths has been assumed. The review of mythical literature has emerged as an independent Mode, criticism. Reviving and establishing the ancient mythology in the modern age is not possible nor desirable. This can be used only as a tool or material. The contribution of mythology is accepted in the unity of humankind, unbroken flow of life and great power to generate a sense of faith and primitive culture, Civilization and development of diverse forms. For psychology, Anthropology philosophy, history, rhetoric etc. Method- process is mandatory. The use of myth in literature Myth in Literature has been used since ancient times. It has been said that Indian literature has been beginning from the Myth. It can be said that the form of literature originally was a myth. The basis of Vedic literature was the Dev-AsurSangram. Myth presents the struggle of the forces of creation and destruction in the physical nature. In the same way in humans there is a continuous

struggle between ontological and vengeful passion and represents the struggle of trends.

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