

GLORIFIED OR REJECTED: INDIA AS PORTRAYED IN WORKS OF AMISH TRIPATHI

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ABSTRACT

Amish Tripathi, the famous author of the Shiva Trilogy and the Ramachandra Series has expressed his concerns about Indian society in his non-fiction work Immortal India. In this work he has made his intentions very clear. While on one hand he debunks many myths of the left-liberals about ancient India and its impact on modern society, he also expresses what he sees as legitimate concerns of the protestors.

KEYWORDS: Immortal India, India Glorified, Amish Tripathi

Amish is wary of those who have a pseudo-liberal mindset and who keep hating everything that is ancient and Indian. He calls this mindset as that of India rejectors. Such people hate and reject everything ancient and everything about India. This group hates India's ancient religion, its society, its customs and every other cultural artefact. They blindly support the complete westernization of India with a western ideology called Communism or Marxism.

For this brand of India rejectors, nothing good about India is original and everything bad is indigenous. For example, in order to prove that India is a 'palimpsest', or a land of the invaded, this group supports Aryan Invasion Theory, a colonial and racist theory which was concocted by the British to prove their claim on India.¹

Aryan Invasion Theory states that the North Indians of today are foreigners in India who came as 'Aryans' from outside and while invading destroyed the native culture and drove the remnant population to the south. Hence, in this version India is divided between two races, Aryan and Dravidian and in which Aryans are foreigners and Dravidians are natives.

This theory has led to much bloodshed in modern India after independence as a lot of politicians in South have tried to portray the north Indians as nothing better than invaders. It is also a false theory as it has no archaeological evidence to back it. There is no sign of any invasion in ancient India which obliterated the native cultures. There are no mass graves. In

fact, one grave which was touted as the proof of Aryan Invasion Theory has been proved to be a grave of people who died from diseases and who never were in any kind of war.

These racist theories dictated that the world was divided into superior and inferior races and obviously the European white race was considered the most superior of all and every other civilization was considered barbaric and worse than animals. It was ‘white man’s burden’ to civilize them by colonizing them and bringing them the benefits of Christianity. Hence, when they discovered that other people had built great cities and civilizations in the past without any input from Europe they were shocked. After the first initial shock they incorporated the new data in their old theory and in the case of India they declared that this civilization was created by the European Aryans who invaded India from the West and Harappa is the sign of this civilizational invasion.²

However, Amish debunks this theory in his novels as well as in his non-fiction work Immortal India. He does this on the basis of scholarly work that has debunked the Aryan Invasion theory which is racist in origin. This is how Amish counters the theory based on the evidence from archaeology:

“Archaeology examines history through site excavations and analysis of artefacts/physical remains. Invaders tend to leave a trail of destruction; so if there was an invasion, there has to be archaeological evidence of it. Unfortunately, for the proponents of AIT, there is little credible archaeological evidence of a violent invasion 3,500 years ago. Seeing the sands shift beneath their irresolute feet, some proponents of AIT pirouetted and propounded a new Aryan Migration Theory (AMT) i.e., the so-called Aryans peacefully sauntered into India and most of the so-called Dravidians of the heavily-populated Indus civilisation moved south voluntarily. Unfortunately for the (now) AMT proponents, genetic science disproves this hypothesis. Most major papers on Indian genetics published in scientific journals like Nature and the American Journal of Human Genetics over the last few years agree on one thing: there was no significant addition to the Indian gene pool 3,500 years ago!”³

Even in the face of such overwhelming evidence, those with vested interests in Aryan Invasion/ Migration Theory are not bowing down and keep up with their theory in spite of the absence of any evidence which proves them right. Amish goes on and further disproves the theory by quoting the great Frawley paradox.⁴

The Aryan invasionists claim that the Aryans were a band of nomadic Central Asian invaders like the Huns, the Mongols and the Turks. These were nomadic people from central Asia

who were warrior clans and they knew how to ride a horse and had chariots but pretty much knew nothing else. These Aryans were portrayed as barbaric clansmen who were not civilized. On the other hand, Dravidians who are claimed to be the natives of India are considered to be peaceful and cultured and who were the victim of the marauding Aryan invaders. However, this presents them with a curious paradox.

The same invasionists claim that the Aryans had a huge body of literature as Sanskrit is also portrayed as the language of the Aryan invaders and not a native language. As most of ancient texts in India were in Sanskrit this presents them with a great paradox. The barbaric invading Aryans with no culture and civilization had the greatest body of literature in ancient world and on the other hand, the civilized and peaceful Dravidians who an entire civilization at their disposal, had none!

The word 'Aryan' too is used in the Vedas only very sparingly and only in the sense of a nobleman and certainly not a race. People of different regions are clearly described in the Vedas and Aryans are not one of them. However, India rejectors keep up their defence of the Aryan Invasion Theory and thus are maintaining a lie which is certain to fall down in future in the face of a overwhelming amount of evidence against it. He warns his readers about these India rejectors who do not see anything good in the one of the oldest and most continuous civilization on earth. However, he also warns us on the religious right who have come up as a reaction to these India rejectors. He names them India glorifiers who have their own prejudices.

The group of India glorifiers is not original and has been born in retaliation or opposition of India rejectors. These India glorifiers claim that ancient India was a heaven in which everything was grand. Every invention and discovery was made in ancient India and that everything that is worth knowing is in the Vedas or ancient Indian texts. This group also goes to the extreme in claiming glory for ancient India. Surely, ancient India was the most advanced civilization of its time but we should not trans-impose today's technology on ancient India. The Vedas are a stupendous human achievement but this does not mean that there is nothing to be known outside the Vedas. Every modern invention would become useless in this view.

These India glorifiers are fond of claiming absurd achievements for ancient India like the atom bomb and an aeroplane. Pushpak Vimana is said to be an aeroplane and it is claimed

that ancient India had the technology requisite to make such planes. Some others claim that ancient India also had the atom bomb. Amish reminds us in *Immortal India* that these technologies do not exist in isolation. They need an entire culture which is necessary to support such a civilization which can not only fund these technologies, but scientifically and technologically sustain such projects till their completion.

This team of India glorifiers also have closed mentality like India rejectors. On one hand, India rejectors think that India should learn everything from the West, including its ideology and political system. On the other hand the India glorifiers think that nothing has ever existed outside India and thus everything foreign is anathema to them and should be rejected by new India.

Amish considers both of these extreme points of view as not advisable and something to be wary of. He recommends taking a middle path between them like the Buddha. He says that we should not be ashamed of proclaiming what is great about India but on the other hand we should also readily accept whatever is good in the foreign civilizations. It helps us to keep an open mind which Amish thinks is another feature of ancient India. He quotes many scholarly debates recorded in Indian scriptures like the debate between Gargi and Yajnavalkya in which a woman is asking questions in a court full of men, to a great sage. Another example which could be cited from ancient India is of Shankaracharya debating with Mandan Mishra, a great scholar. The judge was none other than the wife of Mandan Mishra. The sheer fact that she was thought to be capable of judging a debate in which Shankaracharya is involved shows the high status of women in ancient India and the result of the debate seals the conclusion. She declared Shankaracharya as the winner and not her husband. It shows an independent woman who is intellectual enough to judge a debate of this stature.

CONCLUSION

Amish recommends this openness of mind and freedom of expression and his novels reflect this. The *Scion of Iskhvaku* and *the Shiva Trilogy* show women characters as well as people from what are considered as low castes to be great intellectuals. His novels are above the debate between India rejectors and India glorifiers. He recommends that his readers should also rise above this petty debate.

REFERENCES

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