

Revitalizing the Myth and Social Outlook in Amish Tripathi's *The Immortals of Meluha*

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Abstract: Systems are formed with sociological perspectives. It educates how society is important in molding our daily lives. Myth has been used as a tool to convey and to shape the society. Amish has chosen the right medium to organise the society with his reformatory insights. He selects the peerless God of Hindu Mythology. Lord Shiva as his protagonist in *Shiva's Trilogy*. He portrays Lord Shiva as a leader of a tribal community who later transformed as a godly figure because of his karma. Amish has modernized the myth and retells the story with the sociological perspectives. This paper makes an attempt to explore the reconstruction of myth, societal customs of Meluhans and their oppressed community Vikarnas and also encounters the Maika System.

Keywords : Sociological perspectives, Reformatory, Karma, Reconstruction, Myth.

Introduction

Hindu Mythology is a traditional narrative of Hinduism. It depicts diverse traditions, historical events, cultures, different regions and its interpretations. Amish also experiments Mythology in every aspects. He was born in Mumbai and worked as a banker. But quit his job and decide to write. He thought of writing a book on the philosophy of evil, but his family members dissuaded him. So he tried his hand on a book of Shiva, the multifaceted God of Hindu Mythology. He has started in the form of sequels. His first sequel *The Immortal of Meluhans* followed by *The Secret of the Nagas* and concluded by *The Oath of Vayuputras*.

The first sequel, *The Immortal of Meluha* integrates the world of Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis, the Odyssey of Shiva, love between Shiva and Sati and also inkling about Somras, Vikarnas, the hooded figures and caste system. Amish depicts Shiva as his hero to elevate his idea and he has designed his episodes in an unpredictable way. He portrays the Supreme deity Shiva as an inhabitant of earth in controversy to Hindu Mythology. He begins the story with the alluring description of Shiva's presence in Mansarovar Lake. Shiva is the leader of Guna tribes. His villagers face ambush by the Pakratris. A livid Shiva defeats them with the assistance of the foreigners (emissaries of Meluha). Nandi is one among them. To save their tribes, Shiva has accepted the invitation of Nandi to move Meluha with his tribes and with his bosom friend Bhadra. On their march to Srinagar, Nandi shares the glories of his perfect land. The immigrants stayed in the residential quarters in the immigration camp of Srinagar. The Gunas are grateful to Shiva for their luxurious stay in the camp. Brave warrior and protector of Guna, Shiva, is introduced to Ayurvati, the greatest and the chief of Medicine in the land. Her character is designed from the oldest medicinal treatment named as Ayurveda.

In that camp, the Guna tribes are given some kind of drink. Because Meluhans are under the threat of an unexpected attack from the terrorists. They believe that Neelkanth will transform all and end the Chandravanshi crisis and agonies. To find their Neelkanth, Meluhans have a custom to give a drink named Somras in all the entry level of their Empire. All Meluhans can get the opportunity of consuming Somras. By consuming Somras, the Meluha society attains the immortality and devoid of all diseases. After consuming the drink they will be affected by severe fever. Guna tribes also underwent the same trial. But well prepared Meluhans nursing the sacred patients and noting the details of each patient on a palm-leaf booklet. Ayurvati monitors the affected people and compromises Shiva to be cool. On their walk, Ayurvati directs him to have a bath. As a tribe, initially he hesitates and then he refreshes himself. After his bath, she tracts down that Shiva's throat has turned blue and he is the Savior of Meluhans.

A cry resounded loudly through the silent room as Ayurvati staggered back. Her hand covered her mouth in shock while the palm leaves scattered on the floor. Her knees were too weak to hold her up. She collapsed with her back against the wall, never once taking her eyes off Shiva. Tears broke through her proud eyes. She kept repeating, 'Om Brahmayenamah. Om Brahmayenamah.

You have come! My Lord, You have come!'"(IM 23)

She astonishes herself and Nandi views an eerie iridescent blue throat of Shiva and touches his feet reverentially. Befuddled Shiva moves his hand to hold the freezing neck, he views the polished copper plate in that room and with astonishment he witnesses the reflection of his Neelkanth; his blue throat. Shiva never believes and ready to take the honour of the Neelkanth. He criticizes himself that, 'I don't deserve any destiny. If these people knew my guilt, they would stop this bullshit instantly!' (IM 26). Amish's narration contradicts the myth. In myth, there is yet another conviction about Neelkanth.

He pursues his journey to Meluha along with Nandhi and his beloved friend Bhadra. In contradictory to myth, Amish sketched the characters of Nandi and Bhadra without affecting their relationship with Shiva. On his way to Meluha, he boards at the Temple of Lord Brahma. There he meets Pandit that makes him happy and he rests at the temple steps. Where he satisfies his heart's craving. Shiva's breathing and heartbeats are increased. He realizes that his eyes are no longer in his control. Sati mesmerizes Shiva by her magnetic blue eyes and bronzed skin with her flawless face.

The unforgettable instant that a soul, clinging on to the purest memory of its previous life, longs for. The moment which, in spite of a conspiracy of the gods, only a few lucky men experience. The moment when she enters his life (IM 47)

She visits the temple to resolve her sins. In this story, Sati represents the Vikarna community. Vikarnas are the excluded community in the Meluhan Empire. They are punished in this birth for the sins of their previous birth. They have to

tolerate their sufferings with patience. They are identified with their physical deformities or a woman of a still born child. They are untouchables and should not marry others since their ill-fate contaminates others. They must be away from the outsiders. The Vikarma women have to pray Lord Agni, the purifying Fire God, through a specifically mandated puja every month for forgiveness. If any person touches the Vikarmas, they have to observe Sudhikaran ritual. Nandi explains all these customs to Shiva. He is confused to know these abstruse philosophies. To clarify his doubt, he asks Nandi, "Who decides that the Vikarma people had committed sins in their previous birth?" (IM 93). Nandi replies:

Their own karma, my Lord', said Nandi, his eyes suggesting the obvious. 'For example if a woman gives birth to a still born child, why would she be punished thus unless she had committed some terrible sin in her previous birth? Or if a man suddenly contracts an incurable disease and gets paralysed, why would it happen to him unless the universe was penalising him for the sins of his previous life?' (IM 93)

Hearing the words of Nandi, Shiva replies that a woman may not be cared properly when she was pregnant. Then how could she be responsible for her ill-fate. Nandi is blank to answer him. His love on Sati brings mutiny in his mind. He wants to rescue his beloved Sati and the injustice done to Vikarmas. He proposes his love to King Daksha, father of Sati. Daksha accepts his love. Because he knows him as their Saviour and saves his daughter from her ill-fate. Finally Shiva irons out the troubles faced by the ostracised group.

In the palace of Daksha, Shiva has a discourse with Parvateshwar. He explains the Maika system of Meluha to Shiva. In the south of Meluha they have a great hospital city called Maika. All the pregnant ladies must travel there for their delivery without their relatives. But in noble families husbands and parents of women are exceptionals to travel along with the pregnant woman. Shiva expresses his disagreement with the corruption in Lord Ram's system. Once the woman delivers the baby, she will stay for a few weeks. Then the child moves to the Meluha Gurukul, a massive school. There the child gets well education and all the benefits of Meluha empire without any inequalities. The records of the children are kept secretly by the record keeper of Maika. When the children turn as adolescence, they are given the Somras. At the age of fifteen, they have to take a comprehensive examination. The result of the exam decides which caste or Varna the child will belong to. Again the children are given one more year of caste specific training by wearing this Varna colour bands.

The four basic castes have their Varnas - white for Brahmin, red for Kshatriyas, green for Vaishyas and black for Shudras. At the age of sixteen, they will be adopted by the applicant parents of their caste. For example, if a Vaishya parents have applied for the adoption, they have to pick a randomly chosen student from Maika, who has passed the Vaishya caste exam. Then the child grows with them as his own parents. The brilliance of the system marvels Shiva. He states "Each person is given a position in society based only on his own abilities. The efficiency and fairness of this system is astounding!" (IM 99). Initially Shiva criticizes the system though it is created by Lord Ram. But finally he praises the constitutes of the system. Likewise Shiva encounters many flaws in Meluhan empire and tries to rectify that. He never refuses to applaud for the good customs also.

Conclusion

Myth in present juncture unravels many truths in the form of reconstruction, transformation, reinterpretation and etc. For the past few decades, retelling of mythology is increased with tremendous changes and serving to the expectations of the younger generation and also grabs the eyeballs of the modern readers. The reason behind the writers' interest for selecting mythology is to pattern and to elevate the society into another level. Retelling of mythical stories is a risky task and the writers have to be very much aware of selecting the characters as well as the stories. If it goes wrong, it can make many controversies among the readers. In revisiting Shiva's story, Amish has carefully weaved the plots and casts. In his sequel, he did not misguide or mislead the characteristics of a character. He delves deep into the great myth of India and applies it as a vehicle of a new perspective and interpretation. To him there is great valor in fighting the battle of life and in accepting the trials and tribulations of life with wit. His protagonist Shiva lies in the same greatness. Amish stamps that Gods are the configuration of great humans who have achieved all sorts of struggle and become the legend that people worship them as Gods. Through his work, he conveys that the deeds of every human being will determine their destiny. In recreation *Shiva Trilogy* "acts as a spiritual guide capable of providing enlightenment to modern generation. It teaches modern world to ignore manly obstacles to discover the godly essence within oneself which could enable to establish peace and harmony to the society" (Nair).

Caste system in India has taken too many dimensions. It is designed to nurture the unity and tolerance among the people. It is stated "In Bhagavad Gita, Krishna is made to utter that he is God and he created the caste hierarchy to promote dharma (peace and harmony) in this world" (Velivada.com). In Hindu Mythology, the Varnas are formed from the body of the Brahma, the creator of the Universe. The Brahmins are born from Brahma's head, the Kshatriyas from his hands, the Vaishyas are from his thighs and finally the Shudras from his feet.

In the social historical theory, Aryan invasion plays a vital role in organising the caste system. The first group is formed with warriors and they are called Rajanya, later they have changed their name as Kshatriyas. The second group is formed with the priests and are named as Brahmins. These two groups are rivals to attain their leadership. The third group is the formers and craftsman and they are named as Vaishyas. Shudras are the final group who are the simple workers of the society. Later on different Jatis are emerged in accordance with various professions. The ultimate aim of caste system is to bring out the skills and the efficacy of the people. Lord Ram acknowledges in Gita that "the four categories of occupations were created by me according to people's qualities and activities. Although I am a creator of this system, know me to be the non-doer and eternal" (B.G.4:13). But now it is polluted with more corrupted thoughts.

In India most of the crimes occurs because of casteism. We have segregations like upper caste and lower caste. Though we are civilized still have some restrictions to touch the secluded group in the society. The society is treating them as untouchables. This scenario has to be vanished and everyone in the society must be treated as equals. Every individual has their own potential, their caste shouldn't determine their capacity. People to be educated and enhanced from their tainted mindset. To open the eyes of the blind people, we often need a bringer of light like Shiva in this novel.

Amish brilliantly casts his multifaceted God, Shiva as his hero and communicates his rejuvenating ideas to the readers. Because God is the only way to make people listen and to follow the norms. Like Vikarmas, the society has many isolated communities. They want their rescuer like Shiva. With his luminance Amish makes an attempt to impart some virtues to the

society. Thus, this paper traces the imposing customs of Shiva's Trilogy, and how far it instigates the readers mind to think of existing scenario. And in addition it cognizes the social vista.

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