

# Social Awakening through Myth: a rereading of Amish Tripathy's *The Meluhan Series*

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Imagination is essential and it comes first, for without imagination we are aimless

- Kalil Gibran

Amish Tripathy's trilogy *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of Nagas* and *The Oath of Vayuputhras* is a simplistic imagination on Lord Shiva. The trilogy draws heavily from stories and legends of Hindu mythology. The trio is the journey of an extraordinary man who explores his energy and gives new meaning to the concept of religion. In an interview the author says, It began as a pure philosophical thesis. A thesis on what is evil and that got converted into an adventure to convey that philosophy. And if you have to write an adventure to convey a philosophy on evil, well then the best hero is the destroyer of evil himself, Lord Shiva. Mythologies have proved their never ending relevance and resourcefulness in the hands of Amish Tripathy.

Myth Criticism is a critical theory that interprets a text by focusing on recurring myths. Myth forms the matrix out of which literature emerges historically and psychologically. Amish Tripathy in *The Meluhan Series* recreates the myth of Shiva through his thorough study of Indian culture and Indian Literature. He also makes it appealing to the modern minds. Amish has also demystified many myths with concise but great insights. He takes the myth of Neelkanth and contemporizes it, raising questions about all that we hold true and familiar.

The story is centered on the somras, the magic potion which is introduced as the elixir of life. The somras with its magical property is believed to cure, keep one young, energetic, and increase the longevity of the human life. With the help of the somras Meluhans, the

Chandravanashis are blessed with a long life. But the novel also unfolds the truth that the Suryavanashis outnumber the Chandravanashis. The reason behind the little population of Chandravanashis is the somras, which is considered to be the elixir but that fails to give life. Still birth and people born with deformities are common among the Meluhans. One can very well relate the somras with the energy boosting soft drinks of the day. The nation widely believes in the soft drinks, statistics says; among one third of the population prefer soft drinks for water. Research has confirmed that the continuous use of soft drinks can result in impotency. The author thus by using the myth of somras subtly hint upon the widely marketed, fast growing soft drinks culture of the day.

Shiva, in the novel is made to believe the Nagas are evil but later Shiva through his wisdom learns the Nagas are not evil, it is the somras. Nagas, are the tribes who are born with deformities or with cancerous growth. Shiva is informed about Nagas as, “They are born with hideous deformities because of the sins of their previous births. Deformities with extra hands or horribly mishappen faces” (*Meluha* 57-58). The myth about the Nagas is demystified when Shiva learns through, the lady with extra hands –Kali, and the long nosed child Ganesh, that the deformities are not because of the sins of the previous birth rather it is the sin caused by the meluhans, the sin caused by the somras. Shiva learns that the excessive or regular use of somras lead to sterility in some Meluhans and produces children with abnormal cancerous growths. The realization of this fact leads Shiva against the evil, the somras. This can also be very much associated with the so called soft drinks of the day. The Victorian Cancer Council, states that, the sugary drinks including soft drinks, already known to be the cause of obesity and sterility, also greatly increases the risk of thirteen types of cancer.

The Brangas, in the story are victims of polluted water caused by the production of somras. At kashi, Shiva ventures into that the fact that the water contaminated by the production of somras has left the life of hundreds of children at risk. Shiva is shell shocked to see a large number of children in their deathbed. Moved by a woman who begs for the life of her child, he comprehends the truth, the well hidden truth about the somras. The waste from the

production of somras makes an entire kingdom sick and the Meluhans tactfully drain the waste in the other state. The production of the somras not only pollutes the river beds which are the source of drinking water but it also drains the water bodies. In the novel once a proud empire is facing a severe crisis as its primary river saraswathi, is slowly drying up and headed towards extinction. The Extinction of rivers in India is a well-known issue and the author hints upon it. Also it is evident that the companies like coca- cola and pepsu are the down pat reason for the extinction of the river bodies in India. In the Novel, the production of the somras takes place near the water source for two reasons, one is the availability of water and the other is the essential ingredients grow only in river beds. Amish, has precisely given such details for, Coca- cola says,

“Water is absolutely essential to the coca cola system. It’s the main ingredient in all our drinks. It is used in our manufacturing and it is vital to grow many of the ingredients we use”

The effort to join the rivers or the thought to change the flow of rivers in the novel also is applicable to the current scenario. Bhagirath says, “But when my great grandfather lost the battle to the Suryavanashis the dam was built on the Yamuna to turn the flow towards Meluha”-  
The Secret of Nagas( 33)

The extinction of the rivers has given the modern leaders the speculation of constructing dams and changing the course of the rivers. Amish radiantly has made use of every myth to suit the everyday reality of life.

The Chandravanashis consider themselves, disciplined and superior to the Suryavanashis. They consider the somras as their strength, and power. They enjoy the benefits of the somras though they are well aware of the ill effects of it too. The government and the people are completely aware of the ill effects of the soft drinks. Yet they keep manufacturing, marketing and consuming the soft drinks. Amish highlights that we live in a make believe society.

Myths are always a source of inspiration for the writers; the book gives an insight into the reality than the one we have been fed through the myth. A lot of unquestionable information has

been drilled into our minds and we have been forbidden to question the same. But Amish makes use of the myth of Shiva and interrogates the social injustice. Amish in an interview to The Hindu says, “We need to narrate our own stories of the real India in a confident manner”. He has taken the mythical framework in its complete form to verbalize the current social issues. Amish writes for a social cause. Though it appears to be a mythical work reading between the lines, one can find Amish retelling the story of somras and Shiva, he retells it with a relevant cause. Literature can be holistic only when it serves the society. After all, Literature reflects Life.

The logo is a shield-shaped emblem. At the top, it says 'Works cited'. In the center, the word 'JETIR' is written in large, bold, grey letters. Below the text is a colorful flower with six petals in shades of red, yellow, green, blue, and purple. The flower is surrounded by a grey laurel wreath. The entire logo is semi-transparent and serves as a watermark for the journal.

#### Works cited

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