

The Decoding of Mythology Relevant to the Contemporary Fiction

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Abstract:

Myths are folklores, which introduce the ancient people's culture, lifestyle, and rituals along with their strong belief in particular deities. Every civilization has its mythology. India has a treasure of four Vedas, the Upanishads, the two epics, the eighteen main Puranas, plays, poetry, sculptures, dance, music, and folklore in our mythology. The paper focuses on the use of modern technology by Tripathi in *The Shiva Trilogy*.

This research paper focuses on how Amish Tripathi elaborates "Lord Shiva" known as "Lord of the Lords" worshipped by the Hindus has been narrated as a 'human being' in *The Shiva Trilogy*. One can find theories of post-modern and post-truth in this Trilogy. Amish Tripathi also narrates the philosophical values in Trilogy. The Paper also tries to elaborate on how Tripathi elaborates a science through the Vedic rituals.

The Paper also focuses on the Meluha tribe, how they use medicines and science for long life, using somras proves this example. Shiva Trilogy focuses on Indian history and culture and Amish presents it in a modern way.

Keywords:

Vedic rituals, Karma, Dharma, Folklores, Post-truth

Introduction:

One can find separate mythical stories in every culture. The most ancient is the stories from Greeks and Romans like the Epic of Gilgamesh, Greek stories of Dionysus, of Adonis, and Persephone, the Phoenician Ball. There are no more novels that come out from these ancient sources in a contemporary style. But if we look into our Indian mythology, one can certainly find many novels by many contemporary Indian writers, which have used the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Vedas, Upanishads, Shiva Purana, and many more as their main base or pillar.

Contemporary writers elaborate on different modern issues in their mythical imaginative stories, writers like Ashwin Sanghi, Chitra Banerjee, Kavita Kane, and Amish Tripathi write their stories in the contemporary context. Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy* was the fastest-selling book series in Indian publishing history. Dipak Chopra put remarks in Times of India, that,

“Amish’s mythical imagination mines the past and taps into the possibilities of the future. His book series, archetypal and stirring, unfold the deepest recesses of the soul as well as our collective unconsciousness.”

As Amish devoted worshiper of Lord Shiva, his books are on religious topics. His grandfather was a Sanskrit scholar and a pandit in Benares. Tripathi says that he gathered most of his knowledge of Hindu theology and religion from his grandfather and very religious parents. He believes that religiosity and liberalism go hand-in-hand in India. Amish Tripathi re-narrates the myth of Shiva, Ganesh, Sati, and Kali by the study of Indian ancient literature.

Important characters in The Shiva Trilogy:

- 1: Shiva: The head of the Guna tribe and Protagonist of the Trilogy.
- 2: Sati: Daughter of King Daksha. Perform a role as ‘Vikarma’ in Trilogy, later falls in love with Shiva.
- 3: Veerbhadra (Bhadra): A close fellow compatriot of Shiva.
- 4: Kanakhala: The main rector of Daksha’s distinguished court, she is a great degree educated and astute lady.
- 5: Parvateshvar: Head of Meluhan armed force, faithful to the Meluhan emperor Daksha.
- 6: Ayurvati: The head of the prescription. She is a smart and dexterous specialist. A first lady, who sees Shiva’s blue neck and believes that Shiva is the ‘Neelkanth’.
- 7: Brahaspati: Chief-scientist of production of Somras for Meluha people.
- 8: Lord Daksha: King of Meluha.
- 9: Nandi: A skipper in the Meluhan armed force.

Discussion:

Amish Tripathi, a well-known mythological fiction writer has been published “*The Shiva Trilogy*”, the first step towards his success. The Shiva Trilogy comprises three novels, ‘The Immortals of Meluha’ (2010), ‘The Secret of the Nagas’ (2011), and ‘The Oath of the Vayuputras’ (2013). He has also published the Ram Chandra Series and one book *Immortal India* (2017) in which he describes his interviews on topics like Religion & Mythology, Social Issues, history, and Musings.

Recently he published his book titled “*Dharma: Decoding the Epics for a Meaningful Life*” in December 2020. Amish Tripathi is the first writer in post-modern mythological fiction, later many other writers followed this direction, including Ashwin Sanghi, Kavita Kane, Annad Neelkantan, Krishna Udayasankar, Vamsee Julari, and Anuja Chandramouli.

Amish have recreated original myth and represent it with many different perspectives. Tripathi chooses a hero to Lord Shiva for his Trilogy. He narrates Shiva as a common man with flesh and blood. He creates a story, in which Shiva is worshipped by people because of his actions. In Trilogy, Shiva represents the destroyer

of evil and protector of the people. People believe him as God because of the blue neck after drink Somras, but Tripathi narrates his actions like a human being.

Ritika Paul describes the character of Shiva as a human being in her article, “Shiva for All Times: A Study of Amish Tripathi’s *“The Immortals of Meluha”* as,

“Indian worship God in four forms-Nirgun (Nirakaar-formless God). Aakar (in a form i.e. Lord Vishnu, etc.). Avatar (incarnation of God i.e. Lord Ram etc.); and a man who becomes God or discovers God within him (Gautama Buddha). Amish Tripathi took the fourth type and portrays Shiva as a human being of flesh and blood, makes him like an ordinary being or common people.” (P. 425-426)

Shiva starts his journey from Mt. Kailash, Tibet to Meluha and Swadweep. Then, he takes a visit to Brangridai and Dandak forest near Narmada. Meluha is a wide kingdom in North India, from Kashmir to Gujarat, Rajasthan, and parts of Uttar Pradesh.

The Immortals of Meluha:

This novel starts with the time of 1900 BC, where Tripathi introduced Shiva as a Guna leader, who always ready to protect his tribes from the attacks of pakratis. Later, once Shiva accepted the invitation to migrate to Meluha by Nandi, representational of Meluha kingdom. Meluha is ruled by King Daksha, who belongs to a race of Suryavanshi. In Meluha, Somras, a drink for postponed death is given by the chief doctor of meluha, Ayurvati to Shiva and his tribe. By drinking the Somras, Shiva’s throat turns into blue color, Ayurvati first noticed it, and later all Meluhan people declared Shiva as “Neelkanth”, their protector from Branga, Naga, etc. from here, Shiva’s journey begins in search of evil. *The Shiva Trilogy*’s main theme is Shiva’s journey to for search an evil as Neelkanth.

Tripathi describes Shiva as a common human being, who enjoys the chillum of marijuana, later as a gifted protector armed with Trishul and snake. Tripathi states that,

“Shiva brought the chillum made of yak-bone to his lips and took in a deep drag. Any other day, the marijuana would have spread its munificence, dulling his troubled mind and letting him find some moments of solace. But not today.” (The Immortals of Meluha, P. 2)

In Meluha when Shiva meets Sati, the daughter of Daksh the king and falls in love with her. Once Sati tells him a reason why she could not attend *yagna*, because she is a Vikarma, further, the captain of Meluha Nandi explains this in detail to Shiva that,

“Vikarma people, my lord are people who have been punished in this birth for the sins of their previous birth. Hence they have to live this life out with dignity and tolerate their present sufferings with grace... they are not allowed to marry since they may poison others with their bad fate. They are not allowed to touch any persons who are not related to them or are not part of their normal duties. If any person touches a *Vikarma*, then he/she has to go through *Sudhikaran* ritual.” (The Immortals of Meluha, P. 93)

Shiva breaks this law and marries Sati. Further, he meets chief scientist Brahaspati at the production center, Mount Mandar, where he learns about the manufacturing of Somras and its advantages. When Shiva and his companions come back, Naga attacks them, in which Sati is injured badly and also destroyed Mount Mandar. Shiva announces battle with evil Swadeep, who are belong to Chandravanshi, Meluha won this battle. Vasudev Pandit challenges Shiva in the temple of Ayodhya to find out what is evil. At the end of the novel, once again here, near the temple, Shiva saw Naga, who was tried to attack Sati.

Amish Tripathi gives a modern touch to Shiva Purana and represents a fictional creation. “The Shiva Trilogy gives a glimpse of myths combining the narrative excess with philosophical debate. It is based on the construction of the existence of the Indian mythical God Shiva as the legendary figure in 1900 BC. It is a literary construction mingled with the pseudo-historical material.” (Pg. 398, Suresh Kumar)

Through *The Immortals of Meluha*, one can find the science and logic behind the mythical folklore. It evaluates the concept of physical science and its effects on a human being. Meluha is the town of the Suryavanshi, ‘somras’ drinks for immortality also prepare in their area. ‘Meluha’ word relate to the Sumerian name of the Indus Valley Civilization. Tripathi elaborates on Meluha in the north-western part of modern India and some parts of contemporary Pakistan. One can find Swadeep in the east and Panchvati and Dandak forest in the South. Tripathi also elaborates a thorough map in his Trilogy. Amish Tripathi presents Shiva as,

“Wearing an orange-colored dhoti. The tiger skin has been taken away to be washed for hygienic reasons... A half-lit chillum lay forlorn on the side-table.” (The Immortals of Meluha, P. 17)

One can see Shiva’s Third eye in ancient tale also, Tripathi recreated new concepts. He also states that,

“What if Lord Shiva was not a figment of a rich imagination, but a person of flesh and blood? Like you and me. A man who rose to become Godlike because of his Karma. This is the premise of the Shiva Trilogy, which interprets the rich mythological heritage of ancient India, blending fiction with historical fact.” (The Immortals of Meluha, P. XV)

Shiva abides with the invitation of Nandi and fights with Sati against the Naga to save her. Tripathi elaborates on Nagas as an evil force in *The Immortals of Meluha*, Nandi states that,

“They are cursed people, my lord... are born with hideous deformities because of the sins of their previous births, Deformities like extra hands or misshapen and skills. The Naga name alone strikes terror in any citizen’s heart. They are not even allowed to live in the Sapt Sindhu,... our land, my lord, the land of seven rivers. The land of Indus, Saraswati, Yamuna, Ganga, Saryu, Brahmaputra, and Narmada. This is where lord Manu mandated that all of us, Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis live.” (The Immortals of Meluha, P. 59)

Shiva meets Vasudeva in the Brahma temple at Meru. Vasudeva helps Shiva to raise self-consciousness in the novel. The Vasudeva reappears in the dream of Shiva. Tripathi elaborates on the concept of “presence” and “absence” of Derridean play. Shiva requires a clear explanation from the Vasudev Pandit, whom he meets at the Mohan Jo Daro temple.

‘Well, Meluha does seem like a wonderful society. And I want to do all I can to protect it from evil.’

‘The problem is that I find some genuinely unfair practices in this nearly perfect society. And this is inconsistent with the ideals that Meluha aspires to.’

‘for example, the way the Vikarma are treated.’

Why is it unfair?

‘How can anyone be sure that these people committed sins in their previous birth? And that their present sufferings are a result of that? It might be sheer bad luck or a random act of nature.’ (The Immortals of Meluha, P. 208)

Vasudev Pandit teaches Shiva elements like solidity and elasticity.

Somras: Immortality or Quest for live:

In the contemporary period, one can believe this immortality as folklore stories, which has examples of our ancient Rishi-Munis, who had lived long & healthy life. So, one can say that there is a quest to live in the Meluha people, who are drinking somras to postpone their death. Lord Brahma, who is known as the creator of the world, Amish also follows this rule and he describes Brahma as the chief scientist for the production of somras, so here we can say that Tripathi also describes Brahma as the creator of life for the Meluha people.

In the novel, Brahma has used the water of River Saraswati and the leaves of the Sanjeevani tree to make the drink somras. Other side Chandravanshi also wants this drink, so they have started a fight against the Suryavanshi. One can relate this fight to an ancient mythical story, of the battle between Devas and Danvas for ‘Amrit’ in *Samudra Manthan*. Somras is prepared on Mount Mandar by chief scientist Brahaspati and his selected other scientist. There is another amazing thing describes by Tripathi is that the water from River Saraswati only able to make Soamras, if anyone uses water from other rivers, it cannot able to postpone death.

The Secret of the Nagas:

This novel starts with the fight between Shiva and Naga. Further, Shiva and Sati start their journey to search for evil in this journey Sati gave birth to a son, named given by Shiva and Sati Kartik. They also meet Naga princess Kali and Sati’s deformed son Ganesh. Kali is Sati’s sister. Kali and Ganesh were abandoned by Daksha because they were born with physical deformities. Later, Shiva knew that Somras is evil. In the end, Shiva gets surprised that he finds Brahaspati alive and teaching in a classroom. Tripathi states on Ganesh and Kartik that,

“A very strong medicine can do good for some and also cause serious damage to others, including making some differently-abled. That was an idea that remained in my mind and helped inspire this idea in my books. And as for Lord Ganesh and Lord Kartik being warriors, well they are great warriors in our traditional myth as well.” (Immortal India, P. 30)

Here, one can say that Vasudeva gives information to Shiva, and later, Shiva investigates that information. The second Vasudeva meets Shiva at Mohan Temple of Mohan Jo Daro at meluha. third Vasudeva

meets Shiva in Ayodhya at Ram Janambhoomi. The Vasudeva of magadh temple teach Shiva, the concept of masculine and feminine, he states,

“Everything needs balance, Neelkanth. The masculine needs the feminine. The energy requires the mass.” (The Secret of the Nagas, P. 113)

At Kashi Vishvanath temple Shiva learns that,

“There is a god in every single one of us. And there is evil in every single one of us. The true battle between good and evil is fought within. And the great evil connects itself to the evil within us. (The Secret of the Nagas, P. 114)

This thought leads Shiva to search for good and evil, after meeting with Branga, Naga, he changes his thought that they are not evil, something else is evil, and again he moves forward to search for evil.

Amish Tripathi portrays Kali’s face as,

“There were small balls of bone which ran from her shoulders down to her stomach, almost like a garland of skulls. On top of her shoulders were two small extra appendages, serving as a third and fourth arm. One was holding a knife... the color was jet black... face was a replica of Sati’s.” (The Secret of the Nagas, P. 223)

Further, Vasudev Pandit, Gopal of Kashi Vishwanath temple, put his views in front of Shiva, that,

“Lord Manu had said it’s not people who are evil. True evil exists beyond them. It attracts people. It confuses its enemies. But evil in itself is too big to be confined to just a few.

Shiva frowned. You make it sound like evil is a power as strong as good. That it doesn’t work by itself, but use people as its medium.

So why evil does exist? Why can’t it be destroyed once and for all?... but evil does rise and will keep rising again and again why?... because evil serves a purpose.

That is what lord Manu believed. And the institution of Mahadev acts as the balance, the control for that purpose to take evil out of the equation at the correct time.” (The Secret of the Nagas, P. 276-77)

One can say that Tripathi has introduced Kali differently, as a deformed woman, queen of the Naga tribe. Further, Kali feels that,

“How different my life has been if fate had blessed me with a man like Shiva. Maybe like didi, all the poison could have been sucked out of my life as well. Perhaps, even I would have found happiness and peace.” (The Secret of the Nagas, P. 311)

So, like this, at the end of the novel, Tripathi introduces the Naga tribe.

The Oath of the Vayuputras:

This novel opens with a beautiful scene, a meeting of Shiva with Brahaspati. Here, Shiva finds out the disadvantages of somras. Brahaspati told Shiva that to make somras; he needs a large quantity of water from the River Saraswati which causes plague for the Branga people. Brahaspati also revealed that the deformities of Nagas also because of this.

Later, Shiva visits the hidden city of Ujjain and meets chief Vasudev Gopal, who tells about Vayuputras- an ancient tribe left by the previous Mahadev. Here, Shiva knows that his uncle Manobhu has trained Shiva from his childhood to become Mahadev and destroy evil. Shiva declares that Somras is evil and wants to destroy it. Shiva uses Pashupatiasra to destroy Devagiri, a manufacturing hub of somras.

In the end, Shiva returns to mount Kailash with his tribe and Nandi, his favorite because he fought bravely to save Sati. In this type, Tripathi narrates a journey of Shiva as a common man to Mahadev.

Importance of Dharma:

Tripathi elaborates on the importance of Dharma here, as he describes the motto of the Meluha people as “Satya, Dharma, Maan; Truth, Duty, Honour” (62), Meluha people, he describes Lord Rama’s teaching about Dharma, as,

“If you have to choose between my people and dharma, choose dharma! If you have to choose between my family and dharma, choose dharma! Even if you choose between me and dharma, always choose dharma!” (The Oath of the Vayuputras, P. 282)

This is how lord Rama define dharma, we can also see his views on dharma, in epic Ramayana, scenes of left to Ayodhya for fourteen years, Agnipariksha of Sita, etc... one can also say that only India is the country, where one can easily find the moral values, how it promoted by every culture, and every religion. All the tribes, Meluha, Swadeep, Branga, and Naga follow Shiva, who performs his Swadharma for the better life of people, called ‘Universal Dharma’. The Meluha Prime Minister Kanakhala put her views on dharma as,

“... dharma is that which is well judged by your mind; think deeply about dharma and your mind will tell you what is right... dharma protects those who protect it.” (The Oath of the Vayuputras, P. 435-36)

Later, Tripathi follows the ancient story and describes ‘Pinaka’, Shiva’s weapon. In Trilogy, Parashuram gifted it to Shiva. Tripathi describes Pinaka as,

“It was ideal for an archer to shoot arrows from while riding a horse or a chariot. Parashuram had named the bow Pinaka, after the fabled great ancient longbow of lord Rudra.” (The Oath of the Vayuputras, P. 541)

To destroy evil somras, Shiva needs a powerful weapon, that’s why Pandit Gopal takes Shiva to the Mithra, chief of Vayuputra, and ask Brahmastra, but Mithra did not give permission to Shiva for use of Brahmastra and gives him Pashupatiasra when Shiva asks about it, Pandit Gopal explained Shiva on Brahmastra that,

“The Brahmastra is the weapon of absolute destruction; a destroyer of cities and a mass-killer of men. When fired on some terrain, a giant mushroom cloud will rise, high enough to touch the heavens. Everyone and everything in the targeted place would be instantly vaporized. Beyond this inner circle of destruction will be those who are unfortunate enough to survive, for they will suffer for generations.” (The Oath of the Vayuputras, P. 343)

Later, Shiva was given Pashupatiasra instead of Brahmastra to destroy Devagiri, the capital of Meluha. One can relate Daiviasra to the modern bomb, which can turn a wide area into ashes. At the end of the Trilogy, Shiva destroys evil somras and fights by using Pashupatiasra, river Ganga carries Saraswati, meets the Yamuna, and reaches Brangas, who worship it as their mother.

Conclusion:

One can say that Amish Tripathi has perfectly elaborated culture, tradition, history, and mythical folklore of India, laws of nature in The Shiva Trilogy. He has deconstructed famous characters like Shiva, Sati, Nandi, and Neelkanth and elaborates on them as human beings instead of ancient mythical Gods or Goddesses. Amish have used modern concepts based on historical, mythical, cultural, philosophical, and imaginative aspects.

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