

Critical Analysis of Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy: Rewriting Myth

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INTRODUCTION

Myth has been studied and explored. Critics and philosophers tried to define myth from time to time in its political, social and cultural contexts. Northrop Frye emphasizes the symbolic weight of certain mythic patterns and topoi. The plot or narrative arises eventually from the metaphorical poetic speech in which myth is represented. In this light, contemporary mythological novels become much similar to Aristotle's mythos, narrative or plot, the moving formal cause which is what Aristotle called the 'soul' of the work and assimilate all details in the realizing of its unity. Apart from literature as 'conscious' from that, in his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Frye de mythology' and further adds that literature creates an autonomous world that gives us an imaginative perspective on the real one. For Claude Lévi-Strauss, myths are the building blocks or governing thought structures of collective human existence. Levi-Strauss clearly claims in his *The Raw and the Cooked* (1970), that it is not men think in terms of myth but it is myth that operates in men's minds without their being aware of the fact.

Myths have been used by the authors as a significant tool to expose some crucial debates of contemporary India. Through myth narratives, authors have found a new way to express and discuss multiple issues like casteism, poverty, men-women relationship, economic inequalities, social injustice, extinction of cultural rituals, the problematic of non-secularism, scientific horrors, politics, diseases, and communal riots, various movements, extinction of cultural heritage, freedom movement and so on. They are linguistic representations of social concerns and deftly explore the prescription of social relations by means of Indian mythology. The brief overview of myth in the novels of prominent Indian English Writers like R K Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and others is discussed which is further developed into the use of myth in other contemporary writers like Shashi Deshpande, Shashi Tharoor, Salman Rushdie and others. The chapter provides the historical

overview of how myths have been used as an important tool to expose above mentioned issues and challenges in Indian English literature. The chapter ends by setting the background of the research by elaborating the rationale; it mentions the objectives and methodology of the research in brief.

Myth has significant role in man's everyday life in the form of rituals, dreams, customs, religious beliefs, etc. It has various facets for various purposes and each facet is unique and realistic to the perceiver who consciously or sub-consciously adopts it or transforms it. Myth dominates and shapes not only the individual psyche but also the whole cultural aspect of the people. Amish Tripathi has adopted the original myth of India and has re-narrated them in his writings. The author's presentation of myth does not alter the belief or faith of the original, but gives an opportunity to reread the myths of Shiva from different perspectives. Shiva Trilogy, published in a series of three books including *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of Nagas* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*. It deals with Lord Shiva, the well-known Indian God, acclaimed as the destroyer of evil. Tripathi has re-created Mahdev as a human with flesh and blood. He has portrayed God Shiva as a man who has been worshipped and becomes immortal not by his name but by his actions. According to Tripathi Shiva elevates himself to the position of Mahadev, the almighty only through his deeds.

In Indian myth Shiva is portrayed as a God of contradictions. He is an ascetic, wears tiger skin, smears his body with ash, takes marijuana, dances in cremation yard but he is praised as the God of Gods. He is acclaimed as Bholenath, an embodiment of innocence and also as a fierce warrior, Rudra. At the same time he is focused as the creator of Vedas. He is an ascetic but his erotic love is symbolized through the phallic symbol, the Linga. He is Adi Yogi, the originator of Yoga that balances the physical and emotional health, yet, he drinks the intoxicating bhang and inhales the marijuana which imbalances the health. He has not only been portrayed as a divine shaman but also as Ardhanareeswara who has been worshipped from the Neolithic age to the contemporary era. His power is symbolical through fire but he adorns himself with a large water body, the river Ganga. Shiva Trilogy focuses on the mythical hero with all these divine contradictions. Shiva has been portrayed not as a magical hero but as a man with limitations. The hero of Tripathi never possesses any magical powers like the mythical Shiva but elevates his position with his generosity, intelligence and determination and acclaimed as a real hero.

The Original Indian myth often describes Lord Shiva, the Destroyer of Evil, as living in Mount Kailash along with his tribe or Ganas. Henrich Zimmer describes the followers of Lord Shiva as, “They probably represent the hosts or ganas of the God, his followers and attendants, who in countenance, figure, attire, and attributes, resemble the divinity himself. Some carry musical instruments, a tambour, a flute...correspond to the five hosts of Shiva’s followers, each host being represented by a single individual. Shiva’s companions are always described as demons and devils who dance in the cremation pyre. But Tripathi has recreated them as human beings with a tribal name Gunas. They are portrayed as human beings with their limitations, who are at times assaulted, humiliated and tortured by their enemies, Pakratis. Gunas accept to be the immigrants of Meluha and later escape from Meluha to Kashi for their survival. Shiva as the leader of Gunas guides them and protects them but never ill treats them. Tripathi expresses the greatness of Shiva as the chief of Gunas as, “This respect for the chief was not just based on convention but also on Shiva’s character. He had led the Gunas to their greatest military victories through his genius and sheer personal bravery” (Immortals of Meluha6).Tripathi has recreated the demons Ganas as the modern Gunas for expressing the greatness of his mythical hero as a leader. Tripathi portrays Shiva as a man, destined to destroy the evil. Therefore, he is courageous and talented as a great warrior. Yet, the circumstances compel him to move from his home land. He has been portrayed with the limitations of any ordinary human being but rises to the level of God through his actions.

Most of the characters in the novel are almost the same as we have read in Indian Mythology. The protagonist, Shiva, who is regarded as one of the three principal deities of the Hindu religion is portrayed as a common man. He is depicted as a fighter against evil and a protector of his country and people. The name “Shiva” literally means "the auspicious one". He is regarded as transcendental in form and a limitless absolute. He has many compassionate and ferocious depictions. The story is based on the construction of the existence of the Indian mythical God Shiva as the legendary figure in 1900 B. C. The readers come to know of a compassionate Shiva who perseveres to guard his people and a ferocious Shiva when he takes part in the battles against Chandravanshis for protecting his people. In modernizing the traditional mythology Amish Tripathi tries to proclaim that all Gods were once human beings. The Immortals of Meluha is set in the geographical area that is called as the Indus Valley Civilization. The novel begins with a Tibetan tribal Shiva who, along with his tribe,

is invited into the Meluha Kingdom which is ruled by the Suryavanshi kings. The Meluhans are at constant war with another nation of the Chandravanshis aided by the group of cursed tribals, the Nagas. After coming to Meluha the first thing Shiva comes to know of is the story of the coming of the saviour, Neelkanth to save the city. Shiva and his people were given Somras (drink of the Gods) to get rid of any impurities. After consuming the healing potion Somras given by Ayurvati, the chief of medicine at Meluha, Shiva gets his Neel Kanth, the blue throat. Amish resurrect the Hindu mythological substance Amrita, the elixir of the life of the Hindu Gods, as a purifying medicine, the Somras. In order to clean the venomous sweat after drinking Somras, Shiva is asked to take bath in a strange place. In contemporary language the strange place is understood to be a restroom. He feels awkward as he turns the magical device for water and uses a strange cake-like substance to rub the body clean. Shiva feels uncomfortable and constricted to be bathing in an enclosed space as he got used to bathe in the chilly Manasarovar Lake. To make the readers understand and blend in with the characters and the story, the writer describes the use of modern devices like tap and soap.

1.1 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The modernization of the Myth begins exactly when the novel begins with the question: What if Lord Shiva was not a creation of a rich imagination, but a person of flesh and blood? Like you and me. The question is answered when Shiva has been depicted as a man of flesh and blood who rises himself up to the level of a god by his deeds and by his Karma. The conventional treatment of the myths has been reshaped through focus on the rational representation of technology, the civilized lifestyle, convincing relations and the journey of a man from a Tibetan tribe towards becoming Lord Shiva. The description of the kingdom of Meluha and the gates of the city were incredible to the modern readers.

1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the author to show Shiva as a human is to attract the reader's attention towards him and he has succeeded in his attempt. Since the people are always curious to probe into the backgrounds of the myths and legends they read and hear, the writer used his blending technique to quench the thirst of his readers. He blended a traditional Indian mythological story of a charismatic

God named Shiva with the modern technology of science and narration. Amish have added a little imagination to certain elements of mythology to make the novel more appealing. The novelist's unique combination of crackling story-telling, religious symbolism and profound philosophies aesthetically appeal to everybody's mind. Amish have made a good effort in portraying a multitude of emotions and distributing them proportionately among characters.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This book captures a different phase of the journey of the protagonist. Since the writers have complete freedom to reinterpret and deconstruct the myths as they want it to be they also have the ability to make the readers accept their works and finally perceive their intention in writing the book. Amish has succeeded in this as writer of blending mythology and fantasy and modernizing it in his own way. Since Mythology and fantasy has no clear cut distinction between them, this obscurity gives freedom to the writer to have his own way of writing. In this regard Amish has carried out a daring venture by projecting Shiva as a human being in spite of the criticisms that will arise. In other words Amish has captured the pulse and imagination of the readers. Though the framework of showing Gods in human forms is common in Myths and Indian Puranas, Amish has modernized this framework by infusing the story of an immigrant Shiva becoming Mahadev. He attributes scientific explanations to the conventional myths. Amish have recast the myths with a refreshing perspective. The ascription of convincing scientific explanations to the symbols – Somras, third eye and blue throat – adds credibility to his narrative skills.

1.4 LIMITATION

- Amish Tripathi has adopted the original myth of India and has re-narrated them in his writings
- The author's presentation of myth does not alter the belief or faith of the original, but gives an opportunity to reread the myths of Shiva from different perspectives.
- Tripathi borrows many characters and incidents from Indian myths, reshapes them with scientific theories, and recreates them as mortals of the world.

- Tripathi has recreated his hero as a modern and rational man who does not accept the myth but seeks logical reasons for the miracles.

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

- The creator skillfully reproduces these characters and depicts them with a unique point of view.
- Shiva actually signifies “The propitious one.”
- Presented story of mahadev as a common man.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

S. Sivaranjini (2018) the basic idea behind rewriting myth might be to establish the concept that all gods were once normal human beings. This concept, when expressed as a rewriting of myth, will automatically create interest in old myths. This concept, which had been considered blasphemous in the years past, is now well received. Both Longfellow and Amish speak the god figures with reverence but succeed in establishing their human sides too. In tracing their evolution, from mere ignorant human beings to gods, both the writers have projected their ascent from the earth to heaven. My paper focuses on analyzing, how as beings ingrained with their human aspects, and there by realize their descent from heaven to earth. A typical paradigm shift takes place when these myths are retold in a new light and deserves a special study which I propose to undertake in this paper.

S. Vijaya Prabavathi (2020) Myths are tales that narrate the life, culture and customs of the ancient people which are often reflected through the deities whom they worship. India is known for its rich and varied cultural heritage throughout the world. Indian myth includes religious and cultural stories which are passed down from generation to generation taking many variants in it. Amish Tripathi, the contemporary Indian novelist in English, has recreated the myth related to Indian God Shiva by mixing it with scientific facts and social fantasies. He has also adopted the mythical characters in his novels so as to create an ideal society. This paper is an attempt to analyze how Tripathi has recreated Indian Myth in Shiva Trilogy.

Sunil Kumar (2018) this paper examines the novel shiva Trilogy including all the three sections



composed by Amish Tripathi. Mythology has been an unavoidable source and subject of concentrate in writing down the ages. The authors since numerous ages have attempted to re-decipher the previous fantasies. The aim here is to give another point of view to the since a long time ago established fantasies of the hundreds of years. Amish Tripathi, as the grandson of a Sanskrit researcher and Pandit in Benaras, revered ladies legendary characters in his Shiva Trilogy. He materializes power and flame from his ladies characters contrasting with male counterparts. The research paper explores Amish Tripathi position in this deep rooted practice in a bigger range and his contribution to Indian Writing in English. Further, it comprises of close textual analysis of Shiva Trilogy with reference to the act of retelling of Indian mythology.

Vikram Singh (2016) Mythology has been an inevitable source and subject of study in literature down the ages. The writers since many ages have tried to re-interpret the previous myths. The intent here is to provide a new perspective to the long-established myths of the centuries. Recently the new breed of writers like Amish Tripathi, Ashok Banker and Ashwin Sanghi are experimenting the mythology genre by blending it with the other modes of writing. These writers have started a new tradition by blending mythology with fantasy mode. With this kind of implementations, these writers are modernizing the Indian myths. The research paper explores Amish Tripathi's stance in this age-old practice in a larger spectrum and his contribution to Indian Writing in English. Further, it comprises of close textual analysis of Shiva Trilogy with reference to the practice of retelling of Indian mythology.

N. ARTHI (2019) the title chooses for this paper is Amish Tripathi's first novel The Immortals of Meluha. The novel starts with introducing the protagonist Shiva. He is an immigrant Tibetan barbarian. He belongs to the fearsome warrior clan who are known as Gunas. The novel background is an imaginary land Meluha. The Meluhans are Suryavanshis who are descendants of the sun believes in a legend that Neelkanth will appear and save them from the terrorist attack. They believe that the terrorist attack is by the evil Chandravanshis who has allied with the Nagas, people with physical deformities with exceptional martial skilled warriors. Shiva accepts his fate which his uncle believes and becomes their saviour and indulges in war with Chandravanshis. After the war is over, he comes to know that even the people of Chandravanshis believe in the legend of Neelkanth. The novel ends with Shiva consider Nagas as evils and swears to find them.

Indrajit Patra (2018) The present study seeks to analyze Amish Tripathi's 'Shiva Trilogy' from Joseph Campbell's theory of Monomyth or more precisely The Heroes' Journey in seventeen stages as described in Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949). The study aims to show how the main framework of Campbell's theory on Hero's Journey can be applied with some subtle modifications even to the analysis of modern and contemporary works like this. The traditional ideas associated with an ideal hero's journey through terrible ordeals, dangerous adventures and final ascension to mythical or god like status all can be interpreted in terms of symbolic / psychological as well as purely physical manner. In fact, the study attempts to show that a work may not always follow in a systematic and meticulous manner to all the stages and sub-stages that a theoretician has laid down as an expression and articulation of his vision regarding the predominant construct that any particular cultural activity might embrace to build its thematic treatment upon. An individual genius, like an author can always choose to introduce his own element of novelty into the fictive narratives or legendary myths which has been handed down by his culture to him, but when one's culture and religion are flexible enough and open, staying true to one's roots can give him more than enough space and desired freedom for exercising his creative power quite fruitfully. Several theories exist even beside that of Campbell's own exposition and though they differ from each other in their way of articulating the specific sub-stages of each and every main stage, but in their essential appeal and final treatment they all seem to point towards some basic and universal idea of a hero's journey.

Abhinaba Chatterjee (2015) the traditional attitude towards mysticism centres round its association with religious sentiments, hence it often seems problematic to associate mysticism with secular literature. However, even in religious literature, we see a humanistic amalgamation of mystic impulses and the (literary) will-to-communicate. Thus, literary articulations of mysticism render it closer to human imagination and the mythologies which develop out of this articulation bring forth the human elements in the divine. Such an instance of humanistic mysticism developed through innovative mythologies is Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy*, based on the reconstruction of several Indian mythical characters and stories drawn from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Shiva Purana. The paper seeks to analyze how the theological arcana of religious mysticism associated with the divine figure of Shiva has been transformed into a humanistic mythography by the author of the trilogy, Amish Tripathi, and seeks to reconsider the conceptual paradigms underpinning the trilogy

by critically synthesizing two prominent modes of theistic philosophy in India: Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism.

NEHA KUMARI (2018) “Phantasy...can become a source of pleasure for the hearers and spectators at the performance of writer’s work.1” expounds Sigmund Freud, in an informal talk given in 1907 which was subsequently published in 1908 under the title *Creative Writers and DayDreaming*. In his discourse, he presented his idea on the relationship between unconscious fantasy and creative art. Notably, he presented this relationship centering the “authors of novels, Romances and short-stories” and not “the authors of epics and tragedies” whom he refers to as “most highly esteemed by the critic”. Thus, he talks about popular literature, literary works that have yet to pass through the test of time to certify its creative sustainability. Fantasy is the nucleus of Popular Literature which according to Freud “[he] (an adult) is expected not to go on playing or Phantasying any longer, but to act in a real world”. It may be the reason why popular fiction or Genre fiction is usually looked down upon by academics (an adult) through the concept of the semi-educated mass reader vs. the highly educated class reader. Popular fiction must connect and satiate the literary appetite of the so called mass reader of popular fiction as opposed to class reader of literary fiction or artistic fiction. In the process of connecting with the readers, it posits itself to deal with either the trivial or the profound popular beliefs of the time. Thus, it triggers the topicality of the period, something that is pre-eminent to make people aware, adept and cope up with social mobilizing. So it has its own particular faculty to serve. The success of popular literature is prominently scaled by its high sales and its capacity to entertain, rather than its position in the literary canon. In the history of Indian publishing, Amish Tripathi’s fiction *Shiva Trilogy* that includes the series of three novels- *Immortals of Meluha* (2010), *The Secret of The Nagas* (2011), and *The Oath of Vayuputras* (2011) has become the fastest selling book series with 2.5 million copies in print and over 70 crores in sales. *Shiva Trilogy*, usually categorized as fantasy myth, is a blend of Myth, Fantasy, Science fiction, Gothic, and Thriller with Historical Romance; notably all the sub-genres of popular fiction. My article analyses diverse characteristics that qualify the fiction *Shiva Trilogy* to be at the top rank in the category of Indian Popular fiction. It also presents a symposium on myth and reality attached to popular fiction.

Nirmla Rani (2016) Amish Tripathi is a trending Indian English writer who narrates mythological stories with logical explanations to make the modern readers believe them. His novels “The

Immortals of Meluha”, “The secret of Nagas” and “The Oath of Vayuputras” are the three novels that make the Shiva Trilogy series. The paper focuses on examining how these texts divergent attitudes towards the characters and incidents in the Indian Mythology, how these ancient texts reinterpret the mythical past, and how the respective authors utilize myth creatively for coming to terms with the predicament of the present. In Indian English literature, the use of Hindu mythology is like literary tradition. Indian myths have an extended history resolving all kind of social, political, spiritual apprehensions. Indian myths help in deeper understanding of mankind as well as instruct and preach about the perfect way of human life. Indian novelists make the fullest use of myth symbolically and metaphorically. The present study explores the mythical world in Indian fictions. Myth has always given creative impetus to the authors over the ages. Myth shapes the meaning of a literary work with all depth and breadth of its accumulated meaning. Myth and legends provides a wide range of scope for inspiration. The faith on the myth enables a writer to choose elements from it and use it for the purpose.

3. OBJECTIVES

1. To search ancient Indian Myths in the novels
2. To find, social, religious and historical aspects in the novels.
3. To identify Myth and its use in novels
4. To find the modernity in the novels.
5. To search ancient Indian Myths in the novels.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the novels written by Amish Tripathi. Novels are mainly based on Ancient Indian myths and philosophy. Amish used the Indian myths, philosophy, historical aspects and culture of ancient India in modern perspective. Therefore, I adopt the following scheme (method)

- Detailed Study of Amish Tripathi’s novels



- Examined Ancient Indian myths
- Comparison between Ancient Indian myths and modern concept used by Amish Tripathi
- Study of Indian philosophy
- Study of Indian culture
- Use of libraries for books
- Use of magazines
- Use of internet for articles

5. EXPECTED OUTCOME

Globalization has created certain kind of cultural identity crisis among English speaking elite class in India. This class regularly consumes the western bestsellers and fantasy fiction need an Indian counterpart. The proliferation of mythological novels which address the cultural 10 identity crisis is the direct result of globalization process. Old myths when translated into the language of global media and technology provide Indian analogue of the western best sellers. When read as refractions, these myth narratives resolve the identity crisis by creating a space for English speaking cosmopolitan elite class to locate themselves in globalised Indian semiosphere. Semiotics of culture provides mechanism to analyze contemporary mythological novels. Thus, the anxiety of Indian identity in the era of globalization renders a valid answer to the resurgence of Indian myths in Indian fiction in English. Myth becomes consumable commodity in the era of global late capitalism. When studied closely, they demystify historical and cultural reality that is modified by its ideological function. When read as Romances or Magical narratives, these mythological novels reveal the text's relation with history which they symbolically embody. They are the carrier of deeper anxiety and conflicts within the text that can be accessed in Political Unconscious.

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