



Research Article

MYTH AND REALITY IN AMISH TRIPATHI'S NOVELS

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 10th December, 2018

Received in revised form 2nd

January, 2019

Accepted 26th February, 2019

Published online 28th March, 2019

Key words:

Myth, Fiction, etc.

ABSTRACT

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.

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INTRODUCTION

Amish Tripathi is foremost among the popular fiction writers. He is known for writing the Shiva trilogy, which means that it is a set of three books: *The Immortal of Meluha*, *The Secret of The Nagas* and *The Oath of The Vayuputras*. In these books Amish has delineated lord Shiva's life very beautifully and effectively. How he was a common man like everybody else, living a rural life, and how destiny had something else in store for him. Shiva trilogy is the story of a legendary man. Shiva is a Tibetan tribal chief who is fierce and hates the frequent fights and wars and has the quality to decide quickly between good and bad, virtuous and evil, right and wrong.

According to M.H. Abrams, —Myth is one story in mythology- a system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives. Myths are traditional narratives in which people explain the nature of the world and their place in it. Myths in the strict academic sense serve to complement, supplement and reinforce the religious ideology of a people. The more popular usage of the term myth is a usually traditional story of ostensibly historical events that

serves to unfold part of the world view of a people or explain a practice, belief or natural phenomenon. Whereas myth deals with the religious world and natural phenomena, legends are semi-historical narratives coming from the past that recount the deeds of heroes, movement of peoples, and the establishment of local customs. Legends serve the function of entertaining, instructing, inspiring and bolstering the pride of a family, tribe or nation by using a mixture of realism and the supernatural or extraordinary. Often historical figures are given attributes, values and ideals that place them above the real of ordinary people. As a result these historical personae lose their humanity and acquire a mythological status that serves to make their actions beyond the realm of human scrutiny. Myth and history have been used in literature from the time immemorial as means of expressing past.

A myth is the collection of ancient stories which talk about beliefs and cultural traditions with historical facts. All myths have a meaning and advocate some morals. It teaches us the perfect way of living our life. Human mind is always searching for different experiences and it can be possible by a quest of myths. All countries have their own myths and it is connected with their culture, lifestyle and natural phenomenon. Amish portrays Shiva as a normal being and convinces the reader to accept the possibilities of this myth. The trilogy covers on religion, truth, fantasy and the battle between the good and evil. The language is simple and unique and easy to understand the plot of the story.

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The novel begins with a Tibetan tribal Shiva who, along with his tribe, is invited in 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 of their savior Neelkanth. Shiva turns out to be the Neelkanth as his throat turns blue after consuming the healing potion somras. Shiva falls in love with the Suryavanshi king Daksha's daughter, Princess Sati. However, he is not permitted to marry her because Sati is considered as Vikarma, carrier of bad fate, due to sins committed in her previous births; hence she is an untouchable. Shiva decides to dissolve this obsolete law and Daksha then permits them to get married. Somras, the potion that is the secret of the longevity of the Meluhans, is manufactured on the Mount Mandar by using the water of the river Sarswati. This river is on the verge of extinction. Shiva visits mount Mandar and develops a close Friendship with the chief scientist Brihaspati there. However, after coming back to the capital, this manufacturing unit is destroyed by the enemy and Brihaspati goes missing. Shiva declares war on the Chandravanshis. They attack Swadeep, the land of the Chandravanshis, defeat the Swadeepans and the Chandravanshi king is captured. However, the Chandravanshi king is enraged after seeing Shiva on the Suryavanshi side because the Chandravanshis too had been awaiting the arrival of their savior Neelkanth who was prophesied to aid them in destroying the Suryavanshis. Shiva is surprised after discovering this fact. Shiva and Sati go for visiting the famous Ram temple in the capital of Swadeep Ayodhya. There Shiva learns from the priest that he is not the first Mahadev to be isled. It is not actually his task to destroy 'evil'. He is required for the most important task and the most important task is to answer the most important question, 'What is evil?' Shiva is burdened with the bold of the Chandravanshis who were considered as 'evil' by the Suryavanshis. He has now discovered that the Chandravanshis consider the Suryavanshis as evil and have been expecting him to eliminate that evil. As he comes out of the Ram temple, he finds his wife Sati has followed him to the temple. He notices a Naga behind a tree preparing for attack. The novel ends with Shiva rushing to save Sati.

In *Immortals of Meluha*, the supernatural aid will appear at first in the form of the Somras, the drink of the gods: "Taking the Somras at defined times not only postpones our death considerably, but it also allows us to live our entire lives as if we are in the prime of our youth mentally and physically" (Tripathi, 28). But as we come to see that this Supernatural Aid will occur again at a later period of the story when Mithra will convince Vayuputra to grant Shiva the Pashupathiastra which can annihilate any specific target one aims at. However the first such instance of granting of Supernatural Aid was in the form of Somras which turned Shiva's throat blue and was thus a clear indication that he was indeed the prophesied redeemer Neelkanth: "The legend says that the Neelkanth will be a foreigner. He cannot be from the Sapt-Sindhu. And that his throat will turn blue when he drinks the Somras" (Tripathi, 65-66).

The first book, '*The Immortals of Meluha*', begins with the introduction of Shiva as a Tibetan warrior. He enters into the city of Meluha to rescue the people from the attack on Chandravanshi. He realised himself as the Neelkanth which literally means the blue-throated, an incarnation of Mahadev,

after he takes the Somras, a potion which makes his throat turn blue. It signifies that we do not always need to suppress or react to the vices. We sometimes need to modify the negativities and make them ineffective. He broke the system of Vikarma by marrying Sati, the Princess.

In the first two volumes of Shiva's trilogy, that in *The Immortals of Meluha* and *The Secret of the Nagas* we could find the concept of vikarma. People who are suddenly attacked by some diseases and women who give birth to stillborn child are considered as vikarma. They are believed to be the bad carriers of their fate and they are completely alienated from the rest of the people. Not only that, they are not allowed to attend any function or ceremony.

Tarak spoke up. 'The law says no vikarma should be allowed on the yagna platform. (TIOM, 226)

In the second book, *The Secret of the Nagas*, Shiva acts as a rescuer and fights against evil. At the end of the book, the battle is not only to banish the evil but also destroys our mentality based on evilness. The symbol of Naga is fear, it should be destroyed otherwise reaching our goal is difficult. Lord Shiva is often shown with a snake curled three times around his neck and looking towards his right side. The snake holding the neck of Shiva represents the power of venomous speech, as it hurts others too. Through the writings of Amish, the projection of Shiva as a human being, who once lived among us, makes us to think spontaneously. We should appreciate the extensive research by him on specific Hindu mythology and ideals. Shiva accepts that ignorance is the evil and he suggests them to love each other and it is the only solution. No one is bad, it is just that they are different; their thinking and their lifestyles are different. Shiva is the perfect role model for leadership. In the second book, he commands that, we should not judge anything or anyone and realize that every good has some bad in it, and every bad has a few good qualities with it. Our consciousness is the only one to differentiate and find them. Amish said, " Our greed in extracting more and more from Good turns it into evil" (Tripathi, 70).

Myths are the reflections of a profound reality. They are said to be the greatest falsehoods, which tells us the greatest truths. In the novels, *The Immortals of Meluha* and *The secret of the Nagas* we could find the concept of karma. According to that, a person's life is based on his own thoughts and actions. If our thoughts and actions are good then they will lead a good life. On the other hand, those persons who are suffering in their present life are due to their past life sins.

Their own karma, my Lord', said Nandi, his eyes suggesting the obvious. 'For example if a woman gives birth to a stillborn child, why should 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 get paralysed, why would it happen to him unless the universe was penalising him for the sins of his previous birth? ... (TIOM, 95)

In the third book, the idea that excess of everything is bad, even excess of goodness can be bad is expounded. Life is a journey of every man towards the righteousness. It motivates us to think deeply. Amish creates Shiva as a normal man and he makes us to think. People believe, the right way to reach God is to choose the right path and realize the righteousness of humanity. It is very comfortable and easily holding its grip

over the story line and makes us all realize that the writer tried to find the answers to all those hidden questions inside us. Shiva comes to know about the ill effects of Somras and seeing Meluha itself as the centre of manufacturing of Somras potion he declares war on the city. Here conversation between Shiva and Vasudev pandit Gopal give unique insights into the cyclical nature of the hero-villain myth.

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How to cite this article:

Nirmla Rani (2019) 'Nursing Empowerment Leadership Filament- Clinical Cabinet', *International Journal of Current Advanced Research*, 08(03), pp. 17952-17954. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24327/ijcar.2019.17954.3420>
