

DECONSTRUCTING AND REMONSTRATING THE MYTHOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF AMISH TRIPATHI'S THE IMMORTALS OF MELUHA

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Abstract

The present research paper aims at highlighting the mythical concept of Amish Tripathi's *The Immortals of Meluha*. Amish glorified the mythological narratives with the historical evidences and give new perspectives to the existence of God Shiva. Mahadev is not just a mythological saga of Indian belief system but the personification of their religion. Amish not only redefines this mythological concept as the way it was but tries to incorporate the new dimension through a logistic way. He is deconstructing the concept of 'being God' not through the majestic power one can possess but through the 'Law of Karma.' Amish simply believe that right action and right choices of a person will determine his faith towards the way of becoming God. The protagonist of the story is Shiva—the Hindu God entirely different from the tales of Indian mythology. Amish choose the character from the tales of mythology and gives a new dimension to them. Amish believe that characters we consider gods, were not gods since the beginning. Instead, it is their Karma and actions which eventually make people to call them Gods. This novel is not only about the mythology but also addresses many other issues like untouchability, women empowerment, love, caste system etc. *The Immortals of Meluha* is the novel which is based on the mythological Shiva trilogy followed by *The Secret of Nagas* and *The oaths of the Vayupuranas*. A section of the society also getting offended, so they remonstrating this perspective from the roots. Thus, Amish's new perspective is shattering their thousands of year's belief system.

Key Words: Mythical, Dimension, Deconstructing, Majestic, Remonstrate

INTRODUCTION

Amish Tripathi, presently, a leading and popular contemporary writer in Indian English Fiction. He is one of the bestselling novelists today. He has written his debut novel *The Immortals of Meluha* (Book 1 of the Shiva Trilogy). The success of his first novel encouraged him to give up a fourteen years old career in financial service just to focus on his writing. He is passionate about history, mythology and philosophy. Recently he has also written Rama Trilogy, *Ram: Scion of Ikshvaku* (2015), *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* (2017) and *Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta* (2019). Amish, here again, is blending the mythological narratives of history with a new perspective of the post modern era. Artistically, he offers a new dimension to the epic book of India's *Ramayan*, where he is deconstructing each and every character with new approach. In all his works he puts emphasis

on individual's *Karma* (Action) instead of his powers. *Legend of Suheldev: the King who saved India* his first historical fiction book and first book in Indic Chronicles was released in June 2020. This is very evident from his entire range of works that he has the calibre of using these historical facts and has a scientific explanation for everything. This Scientific approach enables people to think about his new perspective about *Karma*. Even though in his writing there are many underlying questions which he is asking himself in *The Immortals of Meluha*: "But what if we are wrong? What if Lord Shiva was not a figment of rich imagination, but a person of flesh and blood? Like you and me. A man who rose to become godlike because of his *Karma*. That is premise of the *Shiva Trilogy*, which interprets the rich mythological heritage of ancient India, blending fiction with historical fact (1). Amish's narratives enable people to ponder about the differences between reality and the myth of the mythological narratives. He is also trying to encourage people by saying that every individual has God within self and they can revive this bliss by giving emphasis on their action (*Karma*). Amish believe that to make this world a better place to live, a person should give emphasis to their actions. In one of the article Amish says: "Whether a man is a legend or not decided by history, not fortune tellers." He further says: "I don't believe in symbolic gods. I believe that God exists all around us. In the flow of river, in the rustle of the trees, in the whisper of the winds. They speak to us all the time. All we need to do is listen" (Web). Thus, as per Amish's notion there is no abstract form of being God, he says one need to look around where each and every part of nature has a driving force. The nature is giving us strength to do right things, by choosing the right paths so the balance of life can be maintained throughout.

OVERVIEW OF THE IMMORTALS OF MELUHA

The Immortals of Meluha is a journey of Shiva, a twenty one year old boy, from Tibet to Srinagar. He is the chief of the Guna tribes and has taken the responsibility to save his tribe from the attack of Pakraiti. Nandi is the captain of the Meluha's army, once he visited to Shiva in Tibet. Nandi here offered Shiva and his tribe to come along with them as an immigrant. Nandi assured them that they will provide land for cultivation and shelter for survival. One day Pakratris attacked the Guna and Nandi fought against Pakratris and saved Guna's people lives. This won shiva's trust on Nandi. Shiva took the opinion of their tribe and all being ready to go with Nandi. Nandi take them to Srinagar, a place where

Meluha, Suryavanshis lives. There under the supervision of Ayurvati, Guna tribes were kept in the medical rehabilitation camps which were located at the outskirts of Srinagar. Ayurvati was the chief of medicine of Meluha. Ayurvati gave the medicinal drink to all the Meluhas which was called Somras (*Amrit*). Somras aims to purify all the disease of Guna tribe, symptomatic fever and body ache which ultimately cure all their disease. She strictly warns them to maintain hygiene. Shiva is not affected by any of fever and others symptoms but his neck turned blue after the consumption of Somras. Ayurvati and Nandi were surprised to witnessing this miracle. Nandi informed about this incident to Emperor Daksha. They all addressed Shiva “My Lord” and “*Neelkantha*.” As per the prophecy; a person with blue throat will come and save Suryavanshi from their enemies. Daksha proclaimed Shiva *Neelkantha*- the destroyer of evil. Daksha explained to Shiva that Chandravanshi were their enemy because they had joined hands with Nagas. Nagas were the cursed people born with physical deformities.

Further in the novel Shiva saw Sati, who is the daughter of Daksha? Shiva met Sati in the temple while she is practicing her dance. Shiva accidentally touched Sati which was prohibited because she is the heir of vikrama class. This class has their previous birth sins which they have to carry forward to this birth. Later on, Shiva learned about the marriage of Sati which was taken place ninety years ago. The consequences of her sins were she gave birth to premature baby who eventually died. Her husband also died on the same day due to drowning in the river respectively.

There is also a portrayal of Brahaspati (Head of the all planets), chief of the temple who have the knowledge of making the Somras. Shiva enquired about the making of Somras from Brahaspati and urges it for the Sati. Later, Daksh gave proposal of Sati’s marriage to Shiva which was accepted by later. For seven days grand ceremony and rituals of marriage has been performed. Later on, Brahaspati is killed by Nagas while returning from the marriage. Shiva declared the war against Chandravanshi and Nagas and ten thousands of Chandravanshi has been killed in this war. Shiva won the battle and imprisoned the Chandravanshi emperor and their family. Ananadmaya—the Ayodhan Chandravanshi princess met the Shiva and explain that they are not with the Nagas even they are also fighting against them and waiting for Shiva who will save them. Consequently, Shiva met the priest of Ayodhya temple, who is waiting for Shiva for their protection as well. Shiva went on remorse feeling. The

Shiva felt guilty having killed so many Chandravanshi without having the proper knowledge about them. The novel had an abrupt ending in the temple where Shiva heard the cry of Sati because she has been attacked by the Nagas.

Resultantly, one can observe that Amish has taken major element from the rich mythological heritage of ancient India, blending fiction with historical fact. Meluha is the Sumerian name of the Indus Valley Civilization. Amish describe terrain and landscapes that resemble the Indus Valley. *The Immortals of Meluha*, is a state or an empire which corresponds in resemblance and location with the north-western part of contemporary India and some parts of modern-day-Pakistan. He sets up the perfect background for the story of Shiva. Amish tried to justify this by saying: "There are many realities. There are many versions of what may appear obvious. Whatever appears as the unshakeable truth, its exact opposite may also be true in another context. After all, one's reality is others perception, viewed through various prisms on context" (web).

Thus, Amish skillfully and immensely modify these selected characters in his novel as the characters of post modern era. Like, his Shiva is the normal human being made up of blood and flesh who, can have injury and will take time to heal the wounds. See the instance in the novel how Shiva, shattered and feel guilty after killing so many people in the war:

Shiva couldn't find the strength to look Lord Ram in the eyes. He feared the verdict he would receive. He crouched behind a pillar, resting against it, grieving. When he couldn't control his intense feelings of guilt anymore, his eyes released the tears they had been holding back. Shiva made desperate attempts to control his tears, but they kept flowing as though a dam burst. (389)

Amish Tripathi's Shiva is not known for the inborn majestic power in him but he has acquired the power through his hard work and *Karma*. Amish is the firm believer of the *Laws of Karma*. This is also evident from Shiva and Nandi conversations in the novel: 'Now who the bloody hells are the Nagas?' asked Shiva. "They are born with hideous deformities because of the sins of their previous births. Deformities like extra hands or horribly misshapen faces"(59) . Thus, *Laws of Karma* also known as the law of cause and effect. It states that whatever thoughts or energy we put out; we get back—good or bad. "It's like sowing and reaping" (Web).

As per the Amish since ages, a man can raise his bar of rationality and potential to an extent level. Here is another brief piece of conversation from the novel between Shiva and his soldiers: “I am going to fight these terrorists,’ roared Shiva. ‘I am going to show them that we are not scared anymore. I am going to make them feel the pain we feel. I am going to let them know that Meluha is not going to roll over and let them do what they want.” (247). It is evident that Amish’s Shiva finds necessity to motivate his soldiers like ordinary persons do. There is no aura and invisible power in him but, what makes him special or extraordinary is his bravery, courage and his dedication for to do something for his people. In a nutshell these all characteristics are known as action (*Karma*). When a person has dedicated his aims and life for the well being of others, he/she will definitely rise from the ashes like a phoenix does.

REMONSTRATION

Deeply revered by Hindus, Lord Shiva is regarded as transcendental in the form and limitless absolute. He has many compassionate and ferocious depictions. In his gracious aspect, he is depicted as an omniscient yogi who lives an ascetic life on Kailash Mountain with his wife Parvati and their two children Ganesha and Kartikeya. In his fierce aspect, Shiva becomes a destroyer and transformer. In this form, he is depicted as a powerful demon-slayer and destroyer of evil (Web). Eventually when Amish Tripathi tries to give the different angle to the Mahadev (Devon ke Dev), A section of the society are not ready to accept and digest this perspective of Amish, where he is addressing and regarding Shiva as an ordinary person. Critics have criticized Amish on the ground of where he is hurting the religious sentiments of people and insulting their God. Thus, Amish have to face much critical opinion and opposition as well. Furthermore, it is very interesting to know how Amish have shaking the notion of masses.

Amish critical references to The Lord Shiva define that Godly thing; which is not something an ordinary person cannot acquire. Nevertheless, he tries to modify the same values and ideas which had been endlessly discussed in our *Vedas*, *Puranas* and *Bhagawat Gita*. With reference to these mythological books: The human beings should be a constant and continuous follower of their ‘*Karma*.’ Lord Krishna says in *Bhagawat Gita* i.e. A person should always pursue his *Karma* in order to get or achieve Heavenly bliss (Moksha). As Amish has mentioned in one of his interviews: “A Man becomes a Mahadev, only when he fights for good.

A Mahadev is not born from his mother's womb. He is forged in the heat of battle when he wages a war to destroy evil. *Har Har Mahadev*— all of us are Mahadev" (web). Trying to figure out how Amish had Deconstructing the Mythological element with new dimension. Let's have a comparison, through which one can easily correlate the facts that how Amish has transforming the original ideas.

Amish, in the *The Immortals of Meluha*, experiments to these select characters and give them a new outlook. In the novel Shiva was fighting for the sake of his people (Meluha & Guna) and tried to keep them safe from the Pakratis and Nagas people. Here, Amish is trying to define the *Karma* through Shiva's actions which is eventually incarnate him as The Lord Shiva. Likewise, Mahadev has been also doing since ages, protecting good people from the evil one. Shiva in the novel is ready to do whatever are the essential for his clan, so he consumes Somras (*Amrit*), which has glorified him. The same has been done by the Lord Shiva in our mythical narration to save the world from the venom *Halahal* who evolved from the sea during Sagarmanthan. Thus, here is a brief conversation between Shiva and priest of temple (Brhaspati) portrays the notions of gods and Asuras as follows:

Everything happens for a reason. If you are going through this turmoil, there is a divine plan in it.' 'What bloody divine reason can there be for so many deaths?' "The destruction of evil? Wouldn't you consider that a very important reason?' 'But I did not destroy evil! Yelled Shiva. "These people aren't evil. They are just different. Being different isn't evil.' The Pandit's face broke into his typically enigmatic smile. 'Exactly. They are not Evil. They are just different.... 'Yes! Lord Rudra.' 'But he did destroy evil. He destroys the Asura.' 'And, who said the Asuras were evil?' 'I read it... ' Shiva stopped mid— sentences. He finally understood.... 'Yes smiled the pandit. 'You have guessed correctly. Just like the Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis see each other as evil. So did the Devas and the Asuras. So if you are going to the read a book written by the Devas, what do you think the Asuras are going to be portrayed as? ... More so than you can imagine. The Devas and the Asuras, just like the Chandravanshis and the Suryavanshis, represent two balancing life forces— a duality. (391-392)

Through, this piece of conversation Amish using allegorical means to convey the message that we only received an individual's narratives in front of us. We rarely have the second or class narratives in our tales. As per one's perspectives others

could be a hero or evil and we believe that without giving a second opinion. That is why Amish start questioning these mythological narratives through scientific justifications.

Furthermore, in the novel another episode which has been inspired from the *Lord Shiva* tales is his Marriage. Lord Shiva got married to the Daksha's daughter Sati, who eventually sacrificed herself into the fire because Daksha insulted the *Lord Shiva*. Likewise in the Novels, Characters are the same but *Sati* here is not the embodiment of Goddess but she is a married woman who has been cursed by her previous birth sins. To whom Shiva got married after purifies her sins by the consumption of the Somras (*Amrit*). Daksha is portrayed as a king who do like Shiva the most and pursue and follow his ideas unlike, Daksha in our mythical tales, where he supposed to hate *Lord Shiva*. Amish has portray Daksha is a good ruler and kind father as he is glad to know that Shiva like her daughter. Daksha is amused to tie their knot and happily he arranges a huge ceremony for their marriage rituals. Discursively, here is an instance from the novel which shows how much Daksha like Shiva and has introduced Shiva to his praja (society): "Daksha raised his hand. He waited just enough for the anticipation to build up. And then jubilantly bellowed, "Yes! The rumors are true. Our savior has come! The Neelkanth has come!"(176). It is evident from the above discussion that Daksha considers Shiva as their savior not as an enemy. Further, Guru Varahaspati portrays as a Temple's priest and he is the source of knowledge for the making of Somras. Likewise, Nandi has also deconstructed as a follower of the Shiva and a captain of the Meluha army. Nandi is brave, intellectual and have his own opinion. He is not portrays as religiously ignorant unlike the mythical tales. Thus, it is evident that the novelist Amish has taken all his resources from the mythological tales and deconstructed these tales entirely to a new tangent. He has properly channelized all the sources of knowledge and created the new concept of postmodern fiction. Still, there is a section of the society which is adamant, rigid and remonstrating Amish's perspective entirely.

CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on the foundation of a new perspective or vision which one can have from the mythological tales. It's just not only Amish Tripathi's fictitious world but a serious matter or issue to which we can ponder on. The lesson from the Shiva life (Amish's Shiva) is for the entire human race, which shows how one

can change his/her, destiny through his actions. Amish Tripathi encourages individuals to focus on their actions and be in scientific approaches. He merely discarded this concept of being seated and waiting for their fortune. This lesson has been lost in the abysmal of time. Isn't it sounds fair enough that we can improve our action, bring integrity and think alike for the well being of humans. There should be no discrimination based on caste, class and creed. If one can modify these mythical tales or narratives for well being of human race than what's wrong in it. Every action should be based on keeping this universe as their home. There should be no boundaries irrespective of country. If one inculcates WWW- world without walls, concept in their mind only then every individual will think about the well being of others. Amish not only deconstruct the characters from the mythical tales but modify their ideology too. As Krishna says in the *Mahabhart*: 'God resides inside every human being' there is nothing outside of human body and a man is capable of doing everything. A man can raise high from an ordinary being to extraordinary being through 'Karma' and 'Sadhana' (Meditation). He is keep giving message to every human being that an individual possess all powers within himself. Therefore, man has to introspect and reinvent himself through the power of self evaluation.

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