



BLENDING OF MYTH AND FACT IN THE SHIVA TRILOGY

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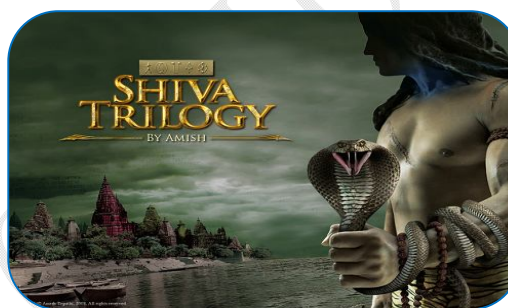
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ABSTRACT :

Evaluating the works of contemporary authors with an apt yardstick is not an easy task. I would like to start this paper by defining the difference between myth and legend. A myth is not based on the fact, but is a type of symbolic storytelling. For example, the Norse people didn't know the truth behind the thunder and lightning. But they invented the myth of Thor and his hammer. Whereas a legend contains the facts and an exaggerated story of fact to the point that real people or events take on a "larger than life" quality. For example, Robin Hood might have been true, but most of the stories about him are exaggerated or folkloric.

History and myth, like fact and fiction, have often been represented as opposites. When we define the word. Myth in colloquial terms, we often refer to an untrue story or anything that is opposed to reality. Here Amish Tripathi has used the myth of ancient India and alter the myth without harming the religious sentiments of the readers.



KEYWORDS : myth, history, folklore, craftsmanship, tradition, isolation, incarnation, immolation.

INTRODUCTION

Myth can be defined in words of M. H. Abrams

Myth is one story in a 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.

A Glossary Of Literary Terms, 9th Edition, 2009.

A very simple definition of myth is a well-known story which was made in the past to explain natural events or to justify religious beliefs or social customs. The psychologist Carl Jung also took the myths seriously. He believed that myths express wisdom that has been encoded in all humans, perhaps by means of evolution or through some spiritual process.

Amish believes that,

Myths are nothing but jumbled memories of a true past. A past buried under mounds of earth and ignorance. – Amish.

Indian mythology is the oldest mythology whose origin can be traced back to the prehistoric time around 5000-10000 BC. The Indian or Hindu mythology has abundant contents, obscure characters, resounding stories and innate association with modern science. There also are epics like

Mahabharata and Ramayana – the earliest being the longest known epic in human history. Indian mythology includes the facts to self-realization.

The myth has proposed the goals of humankind which are articulated by ancient sages as purusharthas. According to the notion, there are four purusharthas

dharma (righteousness),
arth (wealth),
kam (desire
moksh (salvation).

Indian Myths are flourished with the four Vedas, the Upanishads, the Mahabharat, the Ramayana, and the Purina and their maxims have survived through centuries. In western civilization, religion and myths are inseparable. They are defined in between the belief and the disbelief.

Indian Works Which Dealt With Myth And Fact

In the last decade, Indian writing in English has been dealing with mythological subjects enormously. The writers like Amish Tripathi, Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik, Anand Neelakandan Kavita Kane, known for their works in mythology and restoring the ancient Indian scriptures, stories, symbols and rituals. The works of these writers have retrieved mythology from being buried. These writers revived the ancient exhausted stories into an interesting Heroic epic and spun mythology with fantasy.

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*, *The Ramachandra Series* are the well-known mythological works.

Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik former physician, turned author, mythologist has written *Pattachitra* and *Chitrakathi*.

Anand Neelakantan best known works – *Asura: Tale Of The Vanquished*, *Ajaya: Roll Of The Dice* and *Ajaya: Rise Of Kali*. The first of three is the narrative of Ramayana through the perspective of Ravana, the king of Lanka and his aide, Bhadra.

Kavita Kane one of the leading women writers, is known for narrating the powerful women in Indian mythology. She has written four books so far, each book retelling the Indian myths through the perspectives of women protagonists. All her four books, *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen*, *Sita's Sister*, *Menaka's Choice* and *Lnaka's Princess* are unique in narration through women characters of the great epics.

Chitra B Divakaruni's novel, *The Palace of Illusions* is a unique retelling of the Mahabharata from the perspective of Draupadi.

There are many more authors like – Namita Gokhale, Shivaji Sawant, Amruta Patil, S L Bhyrappa, Roopa Pai, Sharath Komarraju, etc. who have contributed significantly to the Indian mythological fiction in the late 20th century.

Craftmanship of Amish on Myth

Amish Tripathi takes theme from history and tradition. According to Jungian theory of classical mythology, the main gods and goddess express archetypes that are common to human thinking everywhere. For an example Zeus symbolizes patriarch, Apollo symbolizes cusp of manhood and independence, Hermes symbolizes trickster. Using the myth and history, Amish have gone to the past to recreate the history.

The novelist has used the characters from Indian epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. For an example, Brahaspati tells Shivathat the *Somras, the drink, of the gods*, was given only to the Brahmins because they were the people who works for the benefit of society and so they have to live longer and healthier life. Later on Lord Ram declared that it should be given to all. Shiva said that he knows all about this. He then asked about the defects of Somras. Brahaspati tells him that there always have been Nagas in India. For example, Ravana, the greatest enemy of Rama, was Naga and a Brahmin.

Blending of Myth and History in Shiva Trilogy

By using the myths, we can import the moral and immoral, do's and Don'ts, the actions and its consequences and rituals and it are behind truth. Amish has used the myth and recreated it significantly.

In a way, these myths are the essential part of the novels. Some of the main characters are Gods, and some characters are super humans.

Shiva trilogy contains three books:

- The Immortals of Meluha
- The Secret of Nagas
- The Oath of Vayuputras

In Shiva Trilogy, lord Ram is God, although he is not an active character, many times his presence and mightiness is reminded to the reader. Here we have discussed a few important characters and incidents which have mythical characteristics. They are- Shiva, Brahaspati, Rudra, Daksha and many more.

Shiva, The Neelkanth:

In Indian myth lord Shiva is the chief deity of Hinduism. He is known for spending long periods in meditation in the Himalayas. The mystery of Shiva's blueness in skin color has disclosed clearly in the myth of the churning ocean. The process of churning the sea is for getting the nectar which provides immortality. The nectar, the celestial liquor, is not only the drink which gives immortality, but also it can be the reason for mortal end. It has led to the emergence of nectar as well as poison. Shiva kept the poison in his throat to save the lives of many. So Shiva became Neelkanth.

Late in the evening, after a hearty meal, all the Gunas were served a medicinal drink in their rooms

Amish Tripathi's *Immortals Of Meluha* chapter 1- p.no 07

Amish has imported the idea from myth and alter it. He has recreated the character of Shiva as the Chief of the Guna tribe at Mount Kailash, which is the place mentioned in Shivapurana. After he entered into the land of meluha he and his mates have given a medicinal drink. After a while the whole mates have got high fever except Shiva. It shows the unique feature of almighty. Suddenly Ayurvatinoticed the neck of Shiva which is turned into blue which is claimed by the meluhans that the savior Neelkanth has come.

"The neck shone an eerie iridescent blue. With a cry that sounded like that of a long-caged animal just released from captivity, Nandi collapsed on his knees.

'My Lord! You have come!

The Neelkanth has come!"

Amish Tripathi's *Immortals Of Meluha* chapter 1-p.no-10

Sati, The Goddess Of Marital Felicity:

In the myth, Sati is the goddess of longevity and marital felicity. She is the first consort of Lord Shiva and is believed that Parvati the aftermath wife of Shiva, was the incarnation of Sati. Sati is the daughter of Daksha and Veerini who goes on to become the wife of Shiva. In the novel, sati is depicted as vikarma, which is a person who was untouchable for her previous birth's sin. She can neither marry nor attend *yajnas*. So she rejects Shiva on the reason that she is a vikarma. Sati marries Shiva only when Shiva, sent out a proclamation of banning *vikarma* concept. In the novel, Sati is killed by Swuth an Egyptian assassin who was originally hired by Daksha to kill Shiva. In the myths, Sati killed herself by immolation after she and her god Shiva are insulted by Daksha.

Brahaspati, The Guru

"My Lord, we would bemeeting Brahaspati.

He is the Chief Scientist of the empire.

He leads the team of scientists who

manufacture the Somras for the entire country.

Amish Tripathi's *Immortals Of Meluha* chapter 8- p.no-59

Brahaspati is a sage in vedicera.he appears in rig veda and he is considered as Guru by all the gods and devas.Atthesametime,Brahma madehimthe Headofalldeities.Likethis, Angiras got this designation due to Blessings of lord Shiva. Brahaspati is of medium size man much shorter than Shiva. His complexion is white colored, deep eyes well-trimmed beard give Brahaspati a different look.

Brahaspati was standing in the centre of the room, his hands folded in a namaste. Of medium height, much shorter than Shiva, his wheat-coloured skin, deep set eyes and well-manicured beard gave Brahaspati a distinguished appearance. A clean shaven head, except for the choti and a serene expression, gave his face an intellectual look. His body was slightly overweight. His broad shoulders and barrel chest would have been markedly pronounced if they had been exercised a bit, but Brahaspati's body was a vehicle for his intellect and not the temple that it is to a warrior or Kshatriya. Brahaspati wore a typical white cotton dhoti and an angvastram draped loosely over his shoulders. He wore a janau tied from his left shoulder down to the right side of his hips. 'How are you Kanakhala?' asked Brahaspati. 'It has been a long time.

Amish Tripathi's *Immortals Of Meluha* chapter 8–p.no-59

Here in Shiva Trilogy Amish used Brahaspati as the chief of scientists who are preparing the somras which is specially made for being immortal and healer. Amish have used the same description for Brahaspati in this novel which is described in myth.

Rudra, The Mightiest Of The Mighty:

Rudra is called wind or storm. He is also called 'Vaidyanatha' I.e. lord of the Physicians, or fathers of the Hindu medical science. He is personified as terror or roarer. Brahma had carefully compiled his great medical work from the Vedas, but Rudra was a great practical physician.

Lord Manu, The Father Of Humanity:

'Who was Manu?' asked Shiva. 'I have heard of him often, referred to as "the Father" Amish Tripathi's *Immortals Of Meluha* chapter 12–p,no- 84

In Hinduism, Lord Manu referred to the first man of humanity. He often referred to as 'the father'. People considered him as the progenitor of human Civilization. Brahaspati in the novel says to Shiva,

.....'He is considered the progenitor of our civilization by all the people of India.' 'Including Swadweepans?' asked Shiva incredulously.

'Yes, we believe so. In any case, Lord Manu lived more than eight and a half thousand years before the present day. He was apparently a prince from south India. A land way beyond the Narmada river, where the earth ends and the great ocean begins. That land is the Sangam Tamil.'-

Amish Tripathi's *Immortals Of Meluha* chapter 12– p.no-84

NANDI, The Gate Keeper Of Shiva:

Nandi is a Captain in the Meluhan army in this novel. Nandi was the man who discovered the Gunas, who later went on to become the Neelkanth, Shiva. Nandi became Shiva's most loyal followers throughout his life. In myth, nandi, depiction of bull, is the gate guardian of lord Shiva. He is the son of the sage Shilada. He has got the knowledge of Agamic and Tantric which are taught by Shiva.

Daksha:

Daksha is the king of Meluha kingdom who is the son of Brahmanayak in this novel. In the Hindu mythology, Daksha was the son of lord Brahma. He is, as depicted in myth, the father of Sati. Like in the

hindu mythology, Daksha becomes the antagonist of Shiva and causes the death of his daughter Sati, his insult of Shiva had caused the self immolation of Sati.

Karttikeya and Ganesh:

Karttikeya, the hindu god of war, is the son of Shiva and Parvati in mythology. He is also known as lord Muruga. In the novel, Kartik is born as a result of the union of Shiva and Sati. Kartik is an excellent warrior in the novel as well as in the myths. In the novel, Ganesh is the son of Sati and Chandandhwaj. Daksha casts out Ganesh from Sati's life by lying that he was a stillborn. He thought that Ganesh to be a *Naga* child because of his physical deformity and did not want his daughter to nurture this child. Ganesh reunites with his mother Sati in the *The Secret of the Nagas* when Sati realizes the truth of his existence. Likewise in myth, Ganesh was born with elephants head.

Myth Of Neelkanth, The Blue Throat Shiva

In Hindu scripture, there is a process called Samudra Manthan which is done by gods and the demons, in order to get elixir. While churning the ocean, precious things like gems, gold, silver and animals came out of it. The things are equally shared by the gods and demons. At the same time deadly poison *halahal* came in force. It was very dangerous. All the people were very much afraid. At last they went to Shiva and prayed to help them. Because lord Shiva has the power to digest the poison. After consumed the poison, the body of Shiva was turning into blue. Shiva kept the poison in his neck which signifies the poison can neither be drunk nor spitted out. The poison is none other than negative thoughts and vices in our lives.

However, in the novel, the blueness of Shiva's neck reason is quite different. When Shiva was a child, his uncle Manobhu, gave him a medicine. In Meluha, The Somaras was given to them by the doctor Ayurvati. Hence the reaction of both medicines at the right time made his neck blue.

Creation of Somras:

Amish belong to a city called Banaras (Varanasi), a city situated on the banks of Varuna and Asi. This city has a historical and mythical importance. It is believed that the city situated on the trishul of lord Shiva. Banaras or Kashi is situated on the banks of holy river Ganga in the Uttar Pradesh. The Ganga is a sacred river but now due to many reasons it has become polluted. The reasons are industrialization, overuse of water, and draining the wastes without purification. The main inspiration of Amish is Micheal Danino's book 'The Lost River: On the trail of The Saraswati'. He has written a lot on the river Saraswati. Saraswati was the most sacred river of ancient Indian civilization. Danino has made research that drew the conclusion that the Saraswati flow through the parts of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

In the novel, the flow of river Saraswati covers areas of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, whole of Kashmir and parts of present Pakistan. It covers the area of Meluhan Empire. It rises from mount Kailash in mansarovar. In the novel Saraswati's importance is stressed by the author. Somras is a celestial drink that cures many diseases. It slows down the ageing process. It cures many types of diseases. The process of preparation of Somras is very complex. It needs a lot of water of the river Saraswati. Brahaspati tells Shiva in detail how the Somras is prepared. It requires various ingredients that are not easily available. They are the leaves of the Sanjeevanitree, and massive amount of River Saraswati's water. Water from any other source doesn't work only water from Saraswati.

Somras will cause both blessing and curse for many. Due to this drink The Nagas tribe in the novel have many deformities. The drink causes the cells to grow continuously so they appear as deformities, like having an extra arm or long nose.

Use of massive amounts of Saraswati's water is to stabilize the mixture of Somras. The Somras is prepared for nearly eight million people. So, the use of water increased. Therefore, Shiva lists out clearly the side effects and the ecological destruction caused by the Somras. The defects of Somras in the novel and the defects of factory wastes in real are simultaneously described by the writer Amish.

1. It causes cancer.
2. It causes ecological imbalance.
3. It produces large amounts of toxic waste, which cannot be disposed on land or in sea.
4. It causes plague.
5. It causes deformities among Nagas and common people.

CONCLUSION

In our Indian society, a writer or an artist has the artistic freedom to express himself. A writer should have the prudent and wise use of the artistic freedom for the sake of societal good without destroying the values of the society. Amish Tripathi has got much from the *Shivpuranas* in his depiction of the story of the *Neelkant*. The book in spite of its fictionalization of myths earned praise from readers and critics alike and attained the status of a bestselling novel. Tripathi conveys the maxim of *Dharma* and *Karma* by rekindling their interest in Shiva to this generation.

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