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## USE OF MYTHICAL CHARACTERS IN SHIVA TRILOGY

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The Indian literature is dominated today by novels dealing with the mythical past. These novels often rework the Indian myths creatively to address contemporary human issues. Indian mythology is a rich treasure trove of tales, rich in plurality and characters. The usual concept of seeing things in just two shades of black and white dissolves as we are introduced into epics like The Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Every character is depicted as humane, prone to errors. Indian mythology is well depicted by the Indian writers beginning from Raja Rao and Girish Karnad till the contemporary writers such as Amish Tripathi and Ashwin Sanghi of today.

Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy is based on the reconstruction of several Indian mythical characters and stories drawn from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and Shivapurana. For the philosophical arguments he has relied on via classical Sanskrit texts and Vedas and Upanishads. Amish, in his own terms of narrative style has succeeded in bringing life to the mythical character that we have heard of since our childhood. Lord Shiva is his central character while Lord Ram is characterized as the worshipper of everyone. In one of his interviews about the characters, Amish says,

Lord Vishnu propagates good but the role of Mahadev is to destroy evil. Since the series is a philosophical thesis about the nature of Evil, you have Shiva as the protagonist. Unlike Lord Vishnu, Mahadev doesn't take an avatar; he acts as an outsider who has to battle evil. Lord Vishnu and Mahadev are both crucial and they work in partnership so you can't mix the two as they are interchangeable. Because of the Shiva Trilogy, reinventions of the myths have become an interesting part of Indian literature.

Amish Tripathi has created purely a fantasy fiction out of the mythical stories. Amish has given complete form to mythology by using mythical theme- the battle between good and evil, mythical narrative, epic form and finally mythical characters in Shiva Trilogy.

This paper focuses on how Amish cleverly used the mythical characters and myths to produce his epic-fantasy fiction. The trilogy is the celebration of an epic hero 'Shiva' and his journey. Each book in the trilogy captures the different phase in the journey of Shiva. The book one 'The Immortals of Meluha' projects the transitional phase of Shiva from a Tibetan immigrant to Mahadev meaning the "God of the Gods", whereas the second one 'The Secret of Nagas' carries out the adventurous quest of Shiva. The final book of the series "The Oath of Vayuputras" is where Shiva truly becomes a God, a protector for his people and restores the balance, the one where he truly becomes 'Mahadev'. It consists of a stories about the Hindu deities like Ganesh, Sati, Kartik, Kali and many more .

He has succeeded in making these figures into simple flesh and blood human beings, and therein lies the beauty and acceptability of his books. There is a very great explanation to the famous myths like the origin of Ganesh, the 'Neelkanth', the 'Somras', Shiva's third eye and many more.

This trilogy deals with the story of Shiva from humanist point of view. It claims to be an interpretation of "the rich mythological heritage of ancient India, blending fiction with historical fact". Amish believes that "All of us are Gods ". His first novel of Shiva Trilogy is "Immortals of Meluha" is about a near perfect imaginary kingdom that follows the dictates of Lord Rama, somewhere in northern India, in 1900 B .C . The novel talk about Lord Shiva and how he became God from Amish's point of view.

In Shiva' s Trilogy Lord Ram is God, although he is not an active character, but many times his presence and power is reminded to us in the very beginning of the novel it is told by Nandi that the Chandravanshis Empire was built by Lord Ram. Surayanashis are the descendants of Sun while the Chandravanshis are the descendents of Moon. Daksha is presented as the king of Meluha kingdom who is the son of Brahmanayat. In the myth, though, Daksha was created by Brahma. He is shown to be secretly playing d matchmaker to Shiva and Sati,his daughter which is also depicted in the myths. Like in the myths, Daksha becomes the antagonist of Shiva later in the novel.

The Suryavanshi tribe of Meluha had a legend that a Neelkanth would arrive and destroy the evil and thus they presumed that the Neelkanth would destroy the Chandravanshis, their rival tribe, who for them were synonymous with evil. They believe that a man from a foreign land will arrive and when he drinks the somras it will reveal his blue throat. This man would save the Meluhans from evil. When Shiva and his tribes came to the city of Srinager and are received there by Ayurvati; the chief of medicine newbie Meluhans. The Suryavanshis test their healing potion called somras, on his tribe and everyone except Shiva, falls ill . Shiva throat turns blue after consuming that somras, when Ayurvati notice Shiva throat turning blue, tears broke through her eyes. She kept repeating

"Om Brahmeye namah, Om Brahmeye namaha!

What happened? Is it serious? Asked a worried Shiva

'My Lord you have come! The Neelkanth has come! (IM 24)

The Suryavanshis rejoice at finding their saviour, the Neelkanth. All started giving the honour to the Neelkanth but Shiva was unable to understand the reason behind the respect which he getting all of a sudden. He was utterly perplexed by the sudden devotion of every Meluhans around him. Bhadra, friend of Shiva reports:" I have heard just one line about the legend of Neelkanth , apparently Meluha is in deep trouble and only Neelkanth can save them". (34) Shiva who has come from tribal area is unable to believe that the Meluhans who are much more advanced than the Guna tribe and Shiva, worship him like a God just because of the blessed blue throat. It resembles the actual story of Lord Shiva, demons and God's wanted to have a amirtha, the nectar that would make one live long avoiding death. So they made a disastrous poison which finally threatened the very existence of all lives, Lord Vishnu could not stop it. So Lord Shiva put into his mouth in order to save the world. Goddess shakti, stopped the poison in his throat by putting her hand in His throat. The poison stayed there as a

black stain. However, the legend says two things first, that the Neelkanth will not be from the sapt -sindu and second, the Neelkanth will be the "destroyer of Evil". The Meluhans believes Meluhans that this implies that Neelkanth will destroy the Chandravanshis ,since they are obviously evil. But destroying the Chandravanshi doesn't mean that the Suryavanshi will be saved.

Shiva is adept in dancing in the novel too as in the myths. In the novel Shiva before beginning his dance takes the preparatory pose which is the Nataraj pose. He prays to lord Nataraj the God of dance for blessing him. The dance master who sees Shiva's dance is so much impressed with the dance that he calls Shiva as Nataraj a reference to the Shiva as Nataraj in the myths. Sati marries Shiva only when Shiva, the neelkant, sent out a proclamation banning the concept of Vikrama.

Shiva's friend and comrade in the Guna tribe is his friend Bhadra. In mythology Bhadra is a demon who emerges out of Shiva's *jata* after he thrashes his *jata* or lock of matted hair on the mountains out of his frustration and anger at the death of sati. Bhadra is a fearful demon with a thousand faces, arms and eyes who was an army in himself. He was created by Shiva to avenge the death of Sati by killing Daksha and all those who participated in the *yajna*. In the novel, though, Bhadra is portrayed as Shiva's loyal friend who is like a brother to him. Bhadra in the novel marries krittika who is sati's companion. In *shivpuranas*, krittikas were the six stellar Goddesses who were the foster mothers' of Karttikeya. As in the myths in the novel too Krittika is portrayed as a motherly figure to kartik. In the book *The Secret of the Nagas* sati says that "krittika is almost like a second mother to kartik" (161).

Sati is Daksha's and Veerini's daughter who later goes on to become the wife of Shiva .There is a sharp contrast between the sati portrayed in the novel and to that of the myths. In the novel, sati is a *vikarma*, which is a person who was punished for her previous birth's sin. She is confined to a life of deprivations as a *vikarma* woman. She can neither marry nor attend *yajnas*. In the myths, sati is the incarnation of kali, who does *intensetapasya* to marry Shiva, whereas in the novel Sati spurns the advances of Shiva who wants to marry her. She rejects Shiva offers to marry her on the reason that she is a vikarma. Amish has taken philosophies send Gita and Upanishads and used them in his work. " the fourfold caste has been created by me according to the differentiation of Guna and karma". (Bhagavad Gita , ch .4.verse 12) karma, which says that fruit of once deeds, good and bad are to be enjoyed not only in this life but also in future lives. It has been said that it perpetuates the caste system and also gives rise to the assumption that a leper is to be looked down upon his fellow being since he deserves at punishment because of his past deeds. This conceit is applied in this novel, " The Immortals of Meluha" where Shiva and Nandi are talking on Vikrama people.

Shiva asks, "who are Vikrama women?"

Nandi replied, Vikrama are people in this birth 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. This the only way they can vibrate their karmas Clean of the sins of their previous births. Vikrama men have their own order of penance and women have their own order(IM 142)

Sati marries Shiva only when Shiva, the *neelkant*, sent out a proclamation banning the concept of *vikarma*. Sati is furthermore a great warrior and a swordswoman who fights in the war against the Meluhans' towards the end of the novel. In the myths, however, there is no mention of Sati as a warrior. In the novel, Sati is initially married to Chandandhwaj who is killed by Daksha, her father. She also bears a son Ganesha, a Naga child out of this union. Sati is killed by Swuth an Egyptian assassin who was originally hired by Daksha to kill Shiva. In the myths, Sati dies by immolating herself after she is insulted by Daksha who does not invite her and Shiva to the *yajna*. Sati was not less to Shiva in valour. She was submissive Vikrama, unflattering

Suryavanshi, skilled warrior, devoted wife, loving Mother and a beautiful woman attained death by Egyptian assassin.

Her last fight in her life was with Swuth.(...) Swuth whirled around, stunned. Sati was up on one knee. She was breathing Rapidly, forcing some strength into her debilitated body. She had dug her sword into the ground and her right hand was on its hilt Astrid tried to use the leverage to push herself up. She failed, took quick breaths,(...) Swuth went down on one knee. He had to give Sati an honourable death. (O V 476-478)

Karttikeya is the son of Shiva and Parvati in myths. In the novel, Kartik is born as a result of the union of Sati and Shiva. Kartik is an excellent warrior in the novel as well as in the myths. Kartik and Ganesh attacked Ayodhya and successfully prevented them from aiding Meluha. Kartik the Lord of War! Along with his brother Ganesh decimated avid supportive aids of Magadhan army in support of war against evil.

As Kartik's breathing slowed, he allowed his gaze to take in the scene of destruction all around him. Hacked bodies littered the battlefield. A once proud Magadhan army completely decimated. The river had turned red due to the massive Bloodletting that had just occurred. He was covered With blood and Gore. But his eyes were clean. The Bloodlust had left him.(OV 259)

In the novel, Ganesh is the son of Sati and Chandandhwaj. The most interesting interpretation is probably of Ganesh, whom Tripathi refers as "Lord of the people"(SN 29). Ganesh is also known as Ganapati across India;hence Lord of the people is an apt translation of the title. Daksha casts out Ganesh from sati's life by lying that he was a stillborn. He considered Ganesh to be a *Naga* child because of his deformity and did not want his daughter sati to nurture this child. The Nagas represent as evil by the Meluhans society in the trilogy. Though the Nagas possess tremendous strength and skills, they were neither treated as human and not even allowed to live in their country by the Meluhans. The Nagas are the symbol of have and misbehave with all Meluhan peoples. Ganesh reunites with his mother Sati in the *The Secret of the Nagas* when Sati realizes the truth of his existence. In myths Ganesh is popularly considered to be the son of Shiva and Parvati, the puranic myths relate several different versions of his birth.

In the novel Kali is portrayed as the younger sister of Sati. Kali too like Ganesha was cast out from Sati's life by Daksha. Daksha was ashamed and disgusted with the deformity of Kali and cast her out from his family out of shame. Kali, Sati's sister and Ganesh, Sati and Shiva son are also Nagas. These are the deformed and horrible creatures.

The Naga woman was actually two women in one body. The body was one from the chest down. But there are two sets of shoulders flushed to each other at that chest, each with a single arm dangling in either direction. The Naga has two heads. One body, two arms, four shoulders and twin heads.()

Kali had a horrific appearance. The novel describes her as having a torso with an exoskeleton covering it. She also possessed small balls of bone which ran from her shoulders to her stomach like a garland of skulls. On top of her shoulders were two small extra appendages serving as third and fourth arm. In the novel, Tripathi has tried to depict Kali on the basis of the descriptions in the myths.

There are many other small things the trilogy gives a sense to but these were main prominent points. Even at the end of the book there is a part where he tells that Kali travelled to the eastern parts ,where Maa Kali

is hugely worshiped now. The nagas as told by the books, settled in the North eastern region where we now have the state of Nagaland. Shiva left the region and went to Kailash, the place where nagas were banished. Panchvati is today's Nagpur. This whole story matches today's world and seems factual enough to believe. The book really gives meaning to the phrase of "HarHarMahadev" – "Everyone is God" but the only thing is that he/she has to bring is the good inside him to create a difference. Who was Shiva? A simple man who rose through hardships and eventually became God through his deeds.

The whole universe bows to Lord Shiva. I too bow to Lord Shiva.