



An Analytical Study of Modernized Regionality of Indian Myths in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

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Abstract

Regional literature is the greatest creation of the Indian plethora and a live picture of old days myths of Ramayana, Mahabharata and other legendary heroes. It becomes more poignant when the natives of any region value their language and understand its culture with a scientific explanation of facts. By learning & reading literary pieces from the regions, the power of the native tongue multiplies and intensifies the words that create an impact on the soul. With the flow of time, regional myths were also modernized in literature and presented with an amalgamated picture perfect. New pop star of mythology and a flag holder of modern regionality Amish Tripathi is an emerging force in this field. His Shiva Trilogy is a pack of wonderful books that enwrapped modern-day fire issues with the regional concept of lord Shiva and put the book market on fire. Various regional concepts of Indian society are dipped in colour of rationality and presented with authentic ink. The caste system, Vikarnas or untouchables, discrimination between rich and poor, outcaste Nagas, political interests, puppet king, feminist ethics, sura and asura concept, Ardhnarishwara, humanization of Gods and Anachronism are dealt in this paper well.

Keywords: Ethno-nationalism, Modernized Regionality, Indian Myths, Transformation.

Introduction

Man, the most intellectual of beings is always pre occupied with the concept of existence. In his search of self, he sometimes relies on Darwin's origin of species and on other extreme; he delves deep for his roots in ancient myths and cultural heritage. Cultural roots allured him and a new trend of mythological reading emerged on the screen of Indian Literature. The most technical generation started to dig out their roots and involved in finding out the present signification of prevalent myths. Myths are not the product of one day, they evolved this form after a transformation of centuries. It's a general notion that mythological tales first came in form of traditional oral tales and mouth-to-mouth transmitted stories about local chivalry. Later on, these were circulated in written form with locale tint in folk tales and rituals. According to region, different sub cultures took the same stories and transfigured them. But with a change in time, these rituals industrialized into stiffed superstitions and everywhere enchained in prejudices. On third stage of advancement, when awareness spread these age-old stories were elucidated and premeditated under a new trend- archetypical criticism. This new trend of literature, Mythological reading allured and captured the taste of



masses. There emerged various elucidations of myths. In modern time also, every genuine head of mythological studies interpreted it with a unique perspective.

Myths turn out to be a conception or an ideology which emerges after centuries from the fight, flight, fright and an extensive reaction of a community to establish perfection in its own way. Sometimes it was explained and treated as half-truth. But Amish believes, “Myths are nothing but jumbled memories of a true past. A past buried under mounds of earth and ignorance.” Myth is not mithya now, it is a thriving cultural means that people are actively re-engaging and re-involving with, in new ways it gives meaning to them and satisfy their rational mind. From Tagore through Naipaul to Amish, reading of myths and literary scenario is thoroughly changed by the writers who are acquiring their independent identity. They are not watching India through the veil of western lens but they have created a plethora of liberal interpretations in mythological trend. Today God is not any supernatural power, it is just the proper use of inner self and exposure of inherent skills, it is the story of a selfless entity as depicted by Amish Tripathi. Though on the divergent side, “Ancient Hindu seers knew myth as mithya” that is, according to Devdutt Pattanaik, “a frame of reference” to “Sat” or truth (Myth=Mithya 1). However, for the evolved mind the definition of God varies depending upon our intellectual evolution and it is the human potential that can humanize God or Godify human as well. Devdutt Pattanaik demystified all relevant myths in his books and solved the reverberated enigma of myths.

Ashok K. Banker *Ramayana Series* is a landmark with various abstract qualities personified; Ashwin Sanghi *Krishna's key* is a thrilled story around such theme and Divakaruni is also a master mind in her *Palace of illusion*, in the depiction of Draupadi's character. The new steel nib of mythology - Amish Tripathi penned down an awestruck and astounding view of lord Shiva and divulged Him from a mythical figure to a common, blood - throbbing man who with due time established himself as a myth. Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy is an “epic fantasy” that elaborate journey of God Shiva from “a humanist point of view” in an “odd blend of fantasy, reality, and speculative history” (Chatterjee, Humanizing Theography 75). Tripathi perceives Shiva as “a person in flesh and blood” whose actions rose him to such height in mythology (Preface to Shiva Trilogy, Immortals xv).

In *Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas* and *The Oath of Vayuputras*, the journey of Shiva is depicted, how he emerged as a man of high order and values. In present context, the social, cultural, and political motives in Shiva Trilogy are sued to be symbolic image of the Twenty-first century discourses namely ethno-nationalism, climate change, counter-terrorism, and nuclearization (Dutt and Bansal, 1-10). Shiva's struggle in this trio of books, against Somras is, therefore, multidimensional as it includes opposition to the social, cultural, and political conflicts caused by Somras. This ‘Surrogate’ history of Amish springs from a doubt in Indian historiography that occurred in the colonial period under British rule because during that period of conflict “history had taken over from Purana as the dominant mode of reckoning the past...as ethnology's surrogate” (Guha 3-11). Present historical analysis of myth basically refers to the hermeneutical exercise of ‘Euhemerism’ that well-thought-out as “so-called gods as... mortal men who had, through the respect of their



descendants, become falsely worshipped as gods” (Bidney 379; Cooke 397). History and mythological tales are blind folded by think-tank of any particular time. Kali, the Queen of Naga Community in *Shiva Trilogy*, also expresses such distrust “for history is written by victors. They can write it however they want. The losers are always remembered the way the victors portray them” (Oath, 205). This doubt of Indian historiography boosts Tripathi to turn to history grounded on myths or Puranic history. But his returning back to Puranas or Hindu mythology that takes place “after spending many years in the wilderness of atheism” echoes the religious shot of humanities indorsing “a post-secular project of resacralization” at the crack of the Twenty-first century (Immortals xv; McClure 144).

The readers in the Twenty-first century are actually a Post-modern humanity, living in the ecosphere after the “death of God” (Paul 5). To present a Puranic history of Shiva’s life grounded on historical fact and scientific truth, he used cacophony of opinions. In doing so and to re-revise the pre-historic measures he re-forms the contemporary jams of life such as terrorism, ecocide, war on terror and the post human stride of humanity (Adishesiah and Hildyard 1-13). The whole action of the novels revolves around the godly drink ‘Somras’ and its evident in text that manufacturing of Somras requires “massive amounts of Saraswati waters...during processing” and its mass production in Meluha induces river depletion in the Western Sea and desertification of the land in the South of Rajasthan (Oath, 17). Holding accountable Somras for the plight of Branga and Naga people, Tripathi has “contextualised” the “ecological destruction” of Saraswati river in present day “as a method of group destruction, drawing a link between ecocide and genocide” (Lindgren 2).

In fact, the institution of God is still at a crucial debate after the Darwin’s evolution theory and Nietzsche’s announcement of death of God. Tripathi recuperates “a lesson lost in the depths of time and ignorance” (Immortals xv) and unveiled the hidden aspects of modernized regionality of Indian myths related to Shiva. Image of Amish’s Shiva is not the same image of ash smeared, naked, trident bearer, desolated and introvert being or a god who is easy to please and gives everything to his devotees, a figure to be afraid or a linga which fulfills all desires, a mythical figure with image of ganga, snake, his blue throat, ghosts and goblins as his followers, or a saintly figure sitting on the icy platform, wearing rudraksh and bearing a third eye. But he demystified all these myths related to Shiva and established Him as a man of high values. He spelled out the mythical image of Shiva and presented Him as livid Shiva, the Mahadev, the God of Gods, Destroyer of Evil, a Passionate lover, Fierce warrior, Consummate dancer, Charismatic leader, all-powerful yet incorruptible, a quick wit accompanied by an equally quick and fearsome temper, overall a multifaceted personality. Like a man of flesh and blood, he also carries the burden of past on his shoulders and it haunt him in nightmare. Lord Shiva who has no past, has no story of origin is a myth for world, is feeling heavy his shoulder in Amish book but at last relieve this burden by his karmas as is said in Bhagwadgeeta:

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि॥2.47॥



Karmaṇyēvātīkārastē mā ḥpālṣu anēkamāka

Mā karmaḥpal'hēturpūrmā tē caṅkō 'stavakarmani ||2.47||

Despite having criticism of “clunky language and sloppy grammar”, Amish was also acclaimed the best in his portrayal of all minute details related to architectural designs, awareness for hygiene, drainage systems, discovery of copper, cotton clothes and administrative skills in Meluha in *Shiva Trilogy*. Somras is a drink of gods in Indian mythology and it is critically analyzed in reference to its after effect on Nagas and Brangas. It works as background for every evil and when Shiva realized it, he vowed to take it out from equation and demolish it entirely. Amish though took all mythological facts in root of his story and blended well it with his fantasy and knowledge of history. His family background of Banars worked well in blending of ancient and modern, even in name of towns also, Kahmir, Takshila, Karachapa, Lothal, Devagiri etc. Meluhan tradition of ‘But the laws cannot be broken, my Lord. Not even for you’ proved Meluha a Ramrajya but its Shiva who believes its contrary that ‘Some traditions are meant to be broken’.

Like a mythological lord of centuries ago, He uses marijuana to get rid of his guilt of past and numb his senses. All regional myths in modern context are demystified and deconstructed significantly in this trio of books. An overabundance of countless mythological symbols is layered here as symbol of AUM, Nagas as his favorite people, importance of Sarasvati river, his love for Kashi, his blue throat, somras as poison, trident his invention, his obsession for Sati, his art of dancing and singing, his liking for raw milk, tiger skin as his garment, elephant head Ganesha, warrior Kartikeya, Parvati from Parvetswar, Kali a fierce goddess. These glorious modernized local myths are quick-wittedly used for evolving character of Shiva and it shows his transformation from a mythical lord whose name cannot be uttered to a man whose actions and decisions take goodness in equation and united this Saptasindhu in one and all compact state. Indian scriptures are abundantly filled with praise songs of Lord Shiva and Amish Tripathi has aptly used it and transformed mythical image of Shiva totally.

Amish Tripathi dusted off cob webs over mithya concerned with Shiva and illuminated this cool-hot dude in new mythological trend. He explored well myth of Mahadev, untouchability in form of vikrama, phenomena of evil, Sati-a headstrong and brave princess, her father-real conspirator with Bhrgu, Shiva close soulmate Veerbhadra, warrior Kartik who was called the God of war, fierce kali, elephant head intellectual lord Ganesha, religious significance of Kashi, a public notion about Nagas, caste system, role of Manu-Smriti, anachronism, new light on concept of Sura-Asura, Rudra and Shiva and actual implementation of Ardhnarishwar in his *Shiva trilogy*. It is Mahadev who learns at last, “just because someone is different doesn’t make them evil” and established the ultimate truth. This trio of books focused on religion, truth and the constant battle between the good and evil in a very common language. Amish while writing for free, globalized, techno-rich, data dating and popular culture of India has not forgotten rich cultural heritage and golden age of India. He voluntarily revived long forgotten heroic age and made it more enticing and appetizing by spinning it with fantasy. In fact, he has taken Vedic concepts from the scriptures and



presented it with scientific explanations; terrorist attack to deformed Naga babies, Maika tradition, working of Somras on human bodies, abolition of concept of Vikramas, secret revelation of Shiva blue throat, destruction caused by Daivi Astras and Zoroastrian elements connected with present day Iran. He has also added some spice to story by creating myriad of emotions and distributing them proportionately among characters. passionate and emotional scenes between Shiva and Sati, picture perfect locales, reference of soap, a modern coined word- liger, beats of Shiva's dumru, fumes of intoxicating chillum, Shiva strength of character on Agni-Pariksha of sati, wailing warrior on his beloved death are all tracts that make this story authentic and unlock myth with a new cryptographic-historical key. However, new quasi-mythopoeic, quasi-scientific elucidations that replace the age-old interpretations of Shiva's blue throat, Sati's death by fire or Ganesha's elephant head and reference of Manu Smriti stimulate a new rubric of myths and mix well myths into new concoctions. Along with myths, these books focus on fierce issues of untouchability, women empowerment, love and caste system in a compelling narrative style. Surprisingly, in present era of demythologization and re-mythologization, Amish have surely established a fictionalized historical and geographical account of India by rendering the recreation of the traditional myths through the means of fantasy well. It's justified here to sum up in words of Mrityunjay Khurana in *The Kolkata Statesman*, "Amish has skillfully used Upanishadic, Puranic, Zoroastrian and Buddhist mythological images and their essence in lucid and contemporary language."

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