

Modernisation of Myth in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy and Ram Chandra Series

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ABSTRACT

Every great civilization has its own treasure of mythology. Egypt, Rome, Greece, India, China and other cultures are the classic examples. Each of them, during the course of history, created folklore, community rituals and social beliefs which led to the creation of vast bodies of mythology. India has probably the richest store house of mythology and legends in the world. It is fed from countless sources and preserved in the four Vedas, the Upanishads, the two epics, the eighteen main Purans and many chants, plays, poetry, sculptures, dance, music and folklore. The roots of India's legendary past go before the Aryans to the Dravidians and even the Pre-Dravidian tribals. Therefore its values, its social and legal systems and its aesthetic awareness, have survived intact and remained relevant to all Indians. Human actions to become the subjects of myths, which to some extent, related to historical events, the best examples are the Ramayana and Mahabharata. These sagas beautifully describe the interactions of human characters and personalities. In this lineage, the new Indian writers, like Amish Tripathi, Ashok Banker and Ashwin Sanghi have started a new tradition by blending the mythology of the past with present reality. By doing so these writers are modernizing the Indian myth. Amish Tripathi relied on the stories and fables that he heard from his family. He noted that Hindu Gods were probably not mythical beings or a figment of a rich imagination but rather they were once human beings like the rest. Amish has touched every character and place in the series with a humanistic approach. The present paper throws light on the realistic presentation of technology, the production of somras, the civilized lifestyle and the journey of a man from a Tibetan tribe towards becoming a God.

Introduction

India has probably the richest store house of mythology and legends in the world. These civilizations begin as growing communities of racially-united human beings or as powerful kingdoms. Travel and trade link them with each other even in the remote past. Each of them during the course of history created folklore, community rituals and social beliefs which led to the creation of vast bodies of mythology. Indian myths have a profound influence on our present life. It has permeated into Indian traditions and day to day activities by way of religion, philosophy, sociology, science, arts and history. In fact there is hardly any aspect of Indian life that is not touched by the refreshing gentle breath of mythology. Consequently customs, traditions, family life, social and even financial principles in India are associated with some event or some person in the mythical narrations. Indian civilization has enjoyed a continuity of thousands of years- from Mohen-jo-Daro to the present time- in terms of religion, intellectual analysis of life and stream of cultural and artistic consciousness. Therefore, its values, its social and legal systems and its aesthetic awareness have survived intact and remained relevant to all Indians.

Modernity in India has been observed quite differently by different people. The term 'modernism' is so vague and so general that no two people are likely to use in the same way, and it ought not to be used at all unless this fact is taken for granted. One of the chief problems in the study of any literature is to understand the relationship existing between the literature and the social milieu in which it was produced. To make matters worse, we sometimes find a blend of the intellectual

and mystical attitudes. Modernity which is termed as an ever changing concept of life is certainly blended with these rationalities. The impact of the new scientific 'enlightenment' upon established religious beliefs was, of course, devastating. Modern man like Amish Tripathi found Fetishism and orthodoxy disappearing at the very rise of scientific outlook. Role of the transcendentalists in shaping the destiny of the modern man is laudable. The transcendentalists insisted on a complete break with tradition and custom, encouraged individualism and self-reliance and rejected a too intellectual approach to life.

The Indian writers in English contemplated over their ancient past in nourishing the literary art to capture the sensibility of India. They went back to the rich heritage of India. Some of the greatest literary writers have written prose and fiction that has generated a lot of interest and have been very popular with the Indian readers of today. The new generation writers such as Chetan Bhagat, Preeti Shenoy, Ashwin Sanghi and Amish Tripathi have given a new face to Indian fiction in English. These writers have started a new tradition by writing about Indian myths and they tried to mix past and present in the form of myth and modernity. With this background, it is no wonder that mythology has remained rich and varied treasure house of legends of incredible imagery and has been a source of arts and crafts of a vast variety. The word 'myth' however, still retains its air of unreality. Most people who are convergent with the intricate myths and legends of India notice that almost everything that happens to the heroes and heroines of such fables is out of proportion and unbelievable. In myths, miracles happen, the cities float in the sky or exist under oceans, or

dialogues between animals, serpents, birds, human beings and celestial beings are commonplace. Methodology often gives an extra ordinary meaning to ordinary events. It gives a rationale for all the unlikely happenings. What is more through the ornate religious rituals, the rich artistic heritage and outstanding body of literature, these myths and legends have lived in the minds of Indians for so long that their powerful influence is seen in every facet of Indian life and culture even today. Almost every day of Indian calendar is connected with a myth or a legend giving cause for festive days, auspicious moments or unlucky configuration of planets. Many mythical objects and people are present in the consciousness of Indians everyday because religion and rituals are linked with them in daily life. Millions of Indians therefore, have faith that myths are relevant in today's India, and that faith fuses the myths of past with present modern age.

Amish uses myth as the main theme of his novels. In a way these myths are the integral part of the novels. Some of the main characters are Gods and some characters are Super Humans. In *Shiva Trilogy*, Lord Ram is presented as God but in *Ram Chandra Series*, he is presented as a common man. Although Ram is not an active character in *Shiva Trilogy*, but many times, his presence and power is reminded to the reader. Other main mythical characters are Sita, Brihaspati, Parshuram,, Rudra, Daksha and many more.

Amish reconstructs the stories of *Shiva Trilogy* and *Ram Chandra Series* by blending the science and religion, history and myth, actual geography and imagination and manliness and divinity. The present paper shows Amish's different interpretation of concepts like good and evil, scientific description of production of Somras, realistic presentation of Shiva, Ram, Sita and other Indian Gods and Goddesses. Through his imagination, Amish has presented the modern avatar of Shiva, Ram and Sita. Amish Tripathi has reportedly stated in one of his interview that Lord Shiva is real and not certainly a myth. In all the three novels (*The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*), of *Shiva Trilogy*, Lord Shiva is the main protagonist. He is Barbarian, living on Mount Kailash and the chief of his tribe. He is the Neelkanth of Meluha legend. He really becomes Neelkanth, when he comes in Meluha and consumes the somras given to him by Ayurvati. Amish has drawn this character of Shiva at its best. He is a common man who makes love, who cares for others and even cries when Sati is dead. In the beginning of *The Immortals of Meluha*, Amish has given the description of Shiva in a different way :

Shiva! The Mahadev. The God of Gods. Destroyer of Evil. Passionate lover. Fierce Warrior. Consummate

dancer. Charismatic leader. All- powerful, yet incorruptible. A quick wit, accompanied by an equally quick and fearsome temper.

Over the centuries no foreigner who come to our land- Conqueror merchant, scholar, ruler, traveller- believed that such a great man could possibly have existed in reality. They assumed that he must have been a mythical God, whose existence was possible only in the realms of human imagination. Unfortunately, this belief became our received wisdom.(xiv)

The Shiva is a destroyer of evil and protector of the people. He is not a God in the novel but is godlike. Lord Ram is shown far more superior to him. To destroy the evil his journey starts as a common man. He is surprised to see many things like the different type of ships. He is a good friend of Brihaspati. We can see that Shiva is the simple man but because of his *karma* he becomes God of God. There are many battles in the *Shiva Trilogy* that uses the modern technology in war. The *Daivi Astra*, which was discussed, resembles the modern *Bom*. The main battle is between the Chandravanshi and the Suryavanshi. Amish in the *Shiva Trilogy* has given much importance to Somras. Somras is a medicine which is shown to treat so many diseases. Not only Ayurved but Nagas also good at medicines.

Female characters in *Ram Chandra Series* and *Shiva Trilogy* are also modernized. Sita, in the novel *Sita- Warrior of Mithila*, dominates the story throughout the novel. She is the real warrior in the novel. In the beginning of the novel, Sita cuts more thick leaf stems with her Sharp knife than Makrant, the Malayaputra soldier. Sati is introduced in the first part of the *Shiva Trilogy* when she rode on a Chariot of the horses into the courtyard, she was confidently controlling the horses and when she dismounted the Chariot, there was confidence in her. She walked in a dignified manner. For the first time when she talked to Shiva, there was a confidence in her talks. So in this way, Amish has portrayed Sati is no less than Shiva in valour.

Amish Tripathi has used the modern perspective based on mythical, historical, philosophical, cultural as well as, subjective and imaginative views. *The Shiva Trilogy* and *Ram Chandra Series* cover so many concepts. It is full of mythology, philosophy, history, religious concept of God, good and evil, masculine and feminine and the concept of Om in the area of modernity. Amish has depicted many of the characters like Shiva, Sati, Ganesh, Ram and Sita in modern form.

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