REIMAGINING LORD SHIVA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AMISH TRIPATHI'S SHIVA TRILOGY

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ABSTRACT

Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy, comprising the novels "The Immortals of Meluha," "The Secret of the Nagas," and "The Oath of the Vayuputras," presents a reimagined version of Lord Shiva, a revered deity in Hindu mythology. This critical analysis aims to examine the trilogy's portrayal of Lord Shiva, evaluating its adherence to traditional Hindu beliefs and its impact on readers' understanding of the deity.

The analysis begins by providing a brief overview of the trilogy's plot and main characters, emphasizing the central role of Lord Shiva as the protagonist. It then delves into the reimagining of Lord Shiva, highlighting the departures from conventional depictions found in Hindu scriptures and beliefs.

One of the significant departures is the humanization of Lord Shiva, presenting him as a mortal being endowed with extraordinary powers rather than an eternal, divine entity. This humanization allows for the exploration of relatable emotions and struggles faced by Shiva, such as love, anger, and self-doubt. The analysis evaluates the impact of this portrayal on readers' perception of Lord Shiva and the potential implications for their understanding of Hindu mythology.

Furthermore, the trilogy introduces a reinterpretation of Lord Shiva's relationships with other deities and characters. For instance, his association with the Nagas, traditionally depicted as serpent deities, is reimagined as an alliance of outcasts and downtrodden individuals. This reinterpretation challenges existing religious narratives and raises questions about the author's intentions in deviating from established beliefs.

INTRODUCTION

Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy, comprising the novels "The Immortals of Meluha," "The Secret of the Nagas," and "The Oath of the Vayuputras," has garnered significant attention and acclaim in the literary world. The trilogy presents a fresh and reimagined portrayal of Lord Shiva, one of the most revered deities in Hindu mythology. By blending mythological elements with a fictional narrative, Tripathi offers readers a unique perspective on the ancient deity.

The Shiva Trilogy follows the journey of Lord Shiva, who is depicted as a mortal being with extraordinary powers known as Neelkanth. He is hailed as the saviour of the land of Meluha and embarks on a mission to defeat evil forces threatening its existence. Tripathi's reimagining of Lord Shiva introduces intriguing alterations to traditional portrayals, prompting a critical examination of the trilogy's impact on readers' understanding of the deity and Hindu mythology as a whole. In this critical analysis, we aim to delve into the reimagined portrayal of Lord Shiva in the Shiva Trilogy, evaluating the narrative choices made by Amish Tripathi and their implications. By exploring the humanization of Lord Shiva, the reinterpretation of his relationships with other deities, and the incorporation of religious and philosophical themes, we will critically examine the trilogy's adherence to traditional Hindu beliefs and the potential impact on readers' perception of the deity. This analysis seeks to foster a deeper understanding of the creative liberties taken by Tripathi and their significance within the context of religious storytelling. By critically engaging with the trilogy's portrayal of Lord Shiva, we aim to stimulate discussion and reflection on the boundaries between myth and fiction, tradition and innovation, and the evolving nature of religious narratives. Through this exploration, we aim to shed light on the complexities of reimagining a revered deity like Lord Shiva and the implications it may have for the understanding and interpretation of Hindu mythology. By critically analyzing the Shiva Trilogy, we hope to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding religious narratives, cultural interpretations, and the intersection of literature and faith.(Dutt, Sagarika,2012)

Amish Tripathi

Amish Tripathi is an Indian author known for his bestselling novels that blend mythology, history, and fantasy. He was born on October 18, 1974, in Mumbai, India. Tripathi has a background in

finance and holds an MBA degree from the Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata. He worked in the financial services industry before pursuing his passion for writing.

Tripathi rose to fame with his debut novel, "The Immortals of Meluha," which was published in 2010. It marked the beginning of his Shiva Trilogy and became a massive success, garnering a wide readership in India and beyond. The subsequent novels in the trilogy, "The Secret of the Nagas" (2011) and "The Oath of the Vayuputras" (2013), further solidified his position as a popular author. What sets Tripathi's novels apart is his unique approach to mythology. He reimagines and retells mythological stories, infusing them with elements of fantasy and adventure. His writing style incorporates a fast-paced narrative, vivid descriptions, and strong character development, making his books engaging and accessible to a wide range of readers.

Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy, in particular, catapulted him to literary fame. The trilogy presents a fictionalized version of Lord Shiva, a revered deity in Hindu mythology. It reimagines Shiva as a mortal with extraordinary powers who becomes a hero and savior in the land of Meluha. The trilogy explores themes of good versus evil, destiny, and the nature of divinity, while also incorporating elements of history and ancient Indian culture.

Following the success of the Shiva Trilogy, Tripathi continued to write mythological and historical fiction. He published the Ram Chandra Series, which includes "Scion of Ikshvaku" (2015), "Sita: Warrior of Mithila" (2017), and "Raavan: Enemy of Aryavarta" (2019), focusing on the epic Ramayana. He has also written the "Indic Chronicles," a series that reimagines various mythological and historical figures.

Amish Tripathi's works have been celebrated for their ability to make ancient Indian mythology and history accessible and engaging to modern readers. His books have been translated into several languages and have sold millions of copies worldwide. Tripathi's success has made him one of India's most popular contemporary authors, and he continues to be a prominent figure in the Indian literary scene.

HUMANISING THE DIVINE IN THE SHIVA TRILOGY

The Shiva Trilogy by Amish Tripathi is a well-known work of mythological fiction in India. The trilogy is a fictionalized euhemeristic treatment of the Shiva stories. The study makes the case that Tripathi's portrayal of mythology is more of a frame of reference for modern problems than a recounting of historical events. The trilogy is set in the Indus Valley Civilization, which flourished around 1900 B.C., at the meeting point of the Iranian plateau and the South Asian peninsula. The plot centers on "Somras," a posthuman project of the Meluhan society, which causes the Saraswatiriver to dry up, a seasonal plague to spread through the Branga region, and the physical deformation of the Naga community. In response to the politics surrounding the use of Somras, there has been terrorism, counterterrorism, war, and atomic bombs.

The word myth is derived from the Greek word "mythos," which means "story" or "word." The explanation of the rhetoric and mythos of science conjures up the reassuring notion of a straight line leading to the truth. This wonderful viewpoint on the present day is admirable. Amish Tripathi, a well-known young personality, has beautifully told a mythological classified version of the Hindu Puran, a new fashionable and exploratory Shiva narrative.

This collection is jam-packed with all the thrills and adventures of mythological figures. Amish Tripathi created the shiva's trip in Meluha in a stunning manner. They can marvellously learn fresh information about Shiva in this series. Amish's recreation of the shiva, a legendary figure, gave our younger generation new religious perspectives. He discussed the distinction between Dharma's and Karmas in the brand-new, sweeping Shiva trilogy. His supporting effort clarified the Shiva Puran and the worship of the gods and goddesses. When the steadiness vanished, he investigated The birth of Lord Shiva. Srishi, Sthiti, and Laya frequently infuse the name of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva has always illuminated the harmony of life's strong desires as well as the control of our moods and emotions in interpersonal relationships.

"May God favorBhadra! He does at least accept some accountability."

Amish Tripathi is a young and well-known author of mythical stories. This is a compilation of three Indian novels. The Oath of the Vayuputras, The Secret of the Nagas, and The Immortal of Meluha. He is a renowned and talented Indian author. He is from a middle-class, devout household in Mumbai, India.

HUMANISM IN THE NOVELS

People who adhere to humanism, myth, and science honor Shiva, the novel's protagonist, as the Neelkanth, or God of gods. He enjoys sharing chillum, chanting, and singing hymns and folk music like the average person, and the younger generation looks up to him. In order to portray Shiva as a fighter who stands up for his people, the author used the word "warrior" rather than "traitor" for him. By setting an example for her parents and the public by shielding and defending an elderly woman who was attacked by dogs, Sati, a princess of Meluha and a blind adherent to Meluhan regulations such as those governing Vikrama women, etc., supports humanism. Ganesh, a Naga Lord, practiced humanism from an early age by protecting numerous youngsters from being abducted for the bull race and numerous lesser groups from powerful groups of people.(Gill, R.B,2013)

Naga queen Kali was a steadfast advocate of humanism who supported the weaker groups and shielded them from direct and indirect abuse by the more powerful groups. Kartik adopts his father's philosophy and follows in his father's footsteps, saving many people from Pashupatiastra attacks as well as daily humiliation by those in positions of power because their goal is to eliminate the evil, somras, and not individuals connected to somras manufacturing or protecting projects.

a) Humanism through the Maika system

The skilled hospital team in Maika will look after the expectant women. The woman leaves the newborn in Maika after giving birth before returning home alone.

The Meluhan Gurukul, a large school built by the empire close to Maika to provide education to everybody, is where the child is then placed. Every youngster grows up with access to the entire empire's resources. The administration is responsible for maintaining the privacy-obsessed records of parents and their kids. Therefore, every child would receive equal treatment at the Gurukul regardless of whether he was born to a Brahmin, Vaishya, Kshatriya, or Shudra.

The army leader of Meluha, Parvateshwar, made a public statement expressing his pride in the Maika system. As soon as a child reaches adolescence, they are all administered somras. Therefore, every child has the same chance to achieve in life according to his or her ability. All children are subjected to a thorough examination at the age of fifteen, the results of which

determine which of the four castes—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, or Shudra—the child will be assigned to. The young people receive one extra year of caste-specific instruction after choosing their caste. They enter the corresponding caste schools to finish their education and don their varnacolor bands—white for Brahmins, red for Kshatriyas, green for Vaishyas, and black for Shudras. That being the case, the caste system is also known as the varna system. When they turn sixteen, children are assigned to prospective parents based on their varna. For instance, if any brahmin parents requested to adopt a child, they would receive a child who had attained brahminvarna through extensive training and examination. The child then develops while being raised by these adopted parents as their own.

Shiva thinks the Maika system is extraordinarily efficient and fair, but it has one drawback: the separation of a child without an identity causes parent-child ties to purposefully dissolve. Everyone in the universe has the potential to succeed, according to Daksha, who noted that "his empire found the ratio of higher castes increasing in the population." A kid is given an equal opportunity to succeed. Shiva believed that because Ram actually offered the lower castes a chance to prosper, they must have liked him for doing so. Shiva, though, speculates that not many moms would have been content with this. He finds it difficult to conceive a mother willingly handing up her child as soon as he or she is born without ever having the chance to see him again. It is easy to picture how many people from the upper castes, such as the Brahmins, would have felt about Lord Ram. After all, they lost their primary source of authority. Many members of the upper castes, including Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas, resisted Lord Ram's reforms, according to Daksha. Some Chandravanshis are still alive today despite the fierce fight that Lord Ram fought to vanquish them. The Chandravanshis gave off the impression of being dishonest, corrupt, and morally void individuals. The Suryavanshis think that their issues originate from them. Some Suryavanshis think that Lord Ram created Chandravanshis in the first place because he was too generous to pardon them. The Chandravanshis' control over Lord Ram's birthplace, Ayodhya, was difficult for the Suryavanshis to accept.

HUMANIZING LORD SHIVA AS MAN IN AMISH TRIPATHI'S SHIVA TRILOGY

Amish Tripathi's trilogy about Shiva, which includes The Immortals of Meluha, The Secret of the Nagas, and The Oath of the Vayuputras, is a stunning synthesis of literature and faith. Amish Tripathi's Meluha and Swadeep narrative is told in the trilogy. From Gujarat in the south to Kashmir and Afghanistan in the north, Punjab in the east, and Sindh in the west, the construction of Meluha spans the entire North-West of the Indian subcontinent. Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and all of Pakistan make up the current Indian provinces that Meluha is based in. Eastern Afghanistan is part of it as well. The Suryavanshis' dominion, Meluha, is sometimes referred to as the "country of pure life." One continues running across people and locations in the Immortals of Meluha that sound familiar. On the banks of the mighty Indus, Meluha has two notable cities: one is called Harriyappa and the other is Mohan Jo Daro. The name Mohan Jo Daro, which apparently refers to "Platform of Mohan," honours the revered philosopher-priest Lord Mohan. Similarly, the establishment of Swadweep includes all of Bangladesh, the majority of Nepal, and Bhutan in addition to the current Indian provinces of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, and Meghalaya. The Nagas live in the Dandaka Forest, a dangerous forest, in their capital city of Panchavati, which is part of the modern Indian province of Maharashtra as well as portions of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh. Swadweep is the Chandravanshi empire, also known as the island of the individual. The inhabitants of the Kingdoms of Meluha and Swadweep serve as a representation for the mythical clans of the Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis, which are descended from the Sun and the Moon, respectively. He continues by designating a species of humanoid snakes known as the Nagas as the opponent, setting the stage for an epic struggle with intriguing and far-reaching ramifications. Tripathi uses mythical figures in Meluha and Swadeep and humanizes them. According to him, myths are nothing more than confused memories of a real history that has been buried beneath mountains of earth and ignorance. According to this perspective, the trilogy tells the story of Shiva, the Adistrota of numerous global arts, the yogi who empowers the world, and whose third eye represents both knowledge and anger.(Indrajit Patra,2018)

Shiva is transformed into a man in The Immortals of Meluha, an adaption of an Indian story. In order to give us a glimpse of a time when the earth was governed by old ideals and wars were fought for pride, it has taken into account the web of mythology, Puranas, and folktales that combine to form a cogent pattern. The prologue, Immortals of Meluha, ends exactly where its sequel, The Secret of the Nagas, begins. This clarifies how all of the heroic narratives in Indian mythology that have supernatural components work. The Nagas are a deformed and condemned tribe, and Lord Shiva has been depicted as a hero on his journey to eradicate such ills as caste prejudice and women's oppression (Parvati and Kali). The author gently and methodically reveals the truths behind the customs and rituals that modern Indians follow without questioning their origin or purpose while using a descriptive storytelling style that transports the reader to ancient India. The third book in the Shiva Trilogy, The Oath of the Vayuputras, provides an enticing modern picture of ancient India where men and women battle side by side for their homeland and every woman is valued. Rana Mukherjee, a reviewer, describes it like way:

The very first beginning of the novel by Amish Tripathi reads, "The universe bows to Lord Shiva, I bow to Lord Shiva." In addition, he expresses his devotion to Lord Shiva by stating in the acknowledgement, "I would like to bow to Lord Shiva, for blessed me so abundantly, much beyond what I deserve." It appears that he writes this to avoid any form of issue. (The Immortals of Meluha xii) However, what he writes following that suggests something else, which is evident right away after the recognition on the very next page, when he explains his inspiration for composing The Shiva Trilogy. (Gokhale, Namita. 2009)

"Shiva!" he writes. The God of Gods, the Mahadev. Evil-destroying force. devoted lover. Strong warrior. devoted dancer. charismatic boss all-encompassing and untouchable. A ferocious anger and a quick wit that go hand in hand.No foreigner who came to our country over the years, including conquerors, merchants, scholars, rulers, and travellers, ever thought that such a great man could have actually existed. They concluded he must have been a mythical god, whose existence could only exist in the minds of men. Unfortunately, this viewpoint has become conventional thinking.(The Immortals of Meluha xiii)

Tripathi attempts to show that Lord Shiva was a genuine man who lived in ancient India around 1900 BC by describing the character Shiva in his novel as a real man rather than a mythological

entity. Shiva was a legend because he possessed many extraordinary abilities that a human is not allowed to possess all at once. All of these characteristics made him into a superhuman who was able to accomplish anything and for whom nothing seemed impossible. In numerous points throughout the novel, the other characters refer to him as God, but Shiva always refutes them by stating that he is not a god but rather just a human. Keep in mind the time when Guruji, the dance instructor, referred to Shiva as the Nataraj, or Lord of dance, in praise. Shiva responds with an immediate "Oh no! I merely serve as a conduit for the limitless Nataraj energy. The medium can be anyone. (Page 81 of The Immortals of Meluha) Tripathi goes on to clarify this further by stating that Shiva frequently considered the significance of his fortunate blue throat, which attracted others' attention. At one point, Shiva even wondered, "Why in the holy lake's name is my blessed blue throat so important?" (The Immortals of Meluha 83)

By doing this, Tripathi makes it very evident throughout the entire book that Shiva was a mere mortal and not a deity. Slogans like "Jai Shri Ram" and "Jai Shri Brahma" are frequently heard in the novel, yet Shiva becomes enraged or angered if someone even attempts to praise him or compare him to another deity, as we can see in the argument between Shiva and Nandi.

"'We experienced a comparable situation more than a thousand years ago, and Lord Ram came and showed us a better approach. I have no doubt that you will also direct us toward a better course.

"Nandi, I am not Lord Ram!"

How dare this fool compare me to Lord Ram, the MaryadaPurushottam, the perfect law-abiding follower?

My Lord, you are superior to Lord Ram, Nandi remarked.

"Nandi, stop with this crap!" How could I possibly be compared to Lord Ram? not to mention regarded superior?

But my Lord, you'll accomplish things that raise you above him. Just stop talking! (The Immortals of Meluha179–180)

This explains to the readers how irritated Shiva used to get anytime he was compared to a revered or holy figure. As soon as Daksha referred to him as Mahadev, he disputes the claim, claiming that Daksha exaggerated his accomplishments and that he is not in fact Mahadev. 'Dharmayudh the

Holy War' is a chapter. Shiva provides a definition of a Mahadev: "Does he sit on a pitiable height and watch idly as ordinary men perform the duties that are his responsibility? No!' …

"When a man fights for the right, he becomes a Mahadev." A Mahadev does not emerge from his mother's womb as one. He is created in the crucible of combat, as he makes war against evil!

I am the Mahadev!

"But I'm not the only one," you say. Saying "Har Ek Hai Mahadev!"

Saying "Har Har Mahadev!" According to Amish Tripathi, whosoever fights with all of their instincts and stands up to evil is a Mahadev; Shiva did this and was afterwards known as Mahadev (The Immortals of Meluha 346-347). He was a man when he was born, but his desire to battle and exterminate evil caused him to become a deity. God is present in every single individual, but the world only recognizes him in those who dedicate their entire lives to improving humanity and its state of affairs.

Shiva is the name of the Mahadev, or God of Gods. He goes by the name Evil's Destructor. He is a devoted lover, fearless insurgent, worn-out performer, and wise ruler. Everyone is powerful, but he is mistaken. He has a quick wit and a scary wrath that is building quickly. Foreigners, winners, traders, thinkers, kings, and visitors who have been to our territory over the years had never imagined that such a great man could actually live. They reasoned that he must be a superhuman deity that can only manifest in specific awareness or regions of the human mind. Sadly, we started to accept that, and it evolved into our knowledge. The only people who led us to believe he was a supernatural Deity were the outsiders.

Amish questions what if it's incorrect. Shiva is a genuine individual, according to the author. Shiva is not a wealthy fictional character. He is a real character. He is a man who has developed into a godly citizen as a result of his karma. The rich mythological heritage of ancient India is interpreted in the Shiva Trilogy. There is a combination of historical and fictional evidence. As a devotion to Lord Shiva and as a reminder of his life's lesson, the author offers this work. This is a lesson that has been misunderstood and lost to time. We all learn this lesson about how to alter others. It serves as a lesson that every person possesses the potential to become a Deity. We must learn to hear our own voices. We have to pay attention.

CONCLUSION

Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy presents a reimagined portrayal of Lord Shiva, departing from traditional Hindu beliefs and mythology. Through the humanization of Shiva, the reinterpretation of his relationships, and the incorporation of religious and philosophical themes, Tripathi creates a unique narrative that captivates readers and challenges conventional understandings of the deity.The trilogy's humanization of Lord Shiva allows readers to connect with him on a more relatable level, exploring his emotions, struggles, and personal growth. This portrayal, while deviating from the traditional divine image of Shiva, offers a fresh perspective that resonates with readers and brings the deity closer to their own human experiences. Tripathi's reinterpretation of Shiva's relationships, particularly with the Nagas and other deities, introduces intriguing narratives and alliances. By challenging established religious narratives, Tripathi prompts readers to question existing beliefs and encourages a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of divine relationships. The incorporation of religious and philosophical themes in the trilogy adds depth to the narrative and provokes contemplation. Concepts such as karma, dharma, and the cyclical nature of time are explored, aligning with Hindu thought while providing new interpretations and perspectives for readers to ponder. However, it is crucial to approach Tripathi's reimagining of Lord Shiva with a critical lens. While the Shiva Trilogy offers an engaging narrative, it is essential to recognize the creative liberties taken by the author. These deviations from traditional beliefs and mythology may raise questions about the potential impact on readers' understanding of Hinduism and the blurred boundaries between fact and fiction.

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