

## Representation of Lord Shiva as Man in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

**G. Sharmely**

Ph. D Research Scholar

PG & Research Department of  
English, V.O. Chidambaram College  
Thoothukudi, India

### Abstract

More recently, in Indian Writing in English several mythological tales are getting a modern makeover into historical fictional themes. Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is a fantasy re-imagining of the Indian deity Lord Shiva's life and adventures. The trilogy also portrays how Gods were human beings ages ago until they attained immortality as a result of their deeds and actions. This paper analyzes how Amish has represented Lord Shiva as a man who rose Godlike because of his karma, inspite of the Hindu mythology referring him as a God, 'The Mahadev'. Amish in *Shiva Trilogy* attempts to humanize the Hindu eternal 'Mahadev' - The God of Gods and the destroyer of evil with knowledge as its underlying theory.

**Keywords:** Mahadev, Lord Shiva, Mythology, Historical Fiction, Karma, Evil

### Introduction

More recently, in Indian Writing in English several mythological tales are getting a modern makeover into historical fictional themes. The trend signify good times for bestselling Indian writers such as Amish Tripathi, Ashwin Sanghi, Dr. Devdutt Pattanaik and Ashok Banker who are wooing readers with characters cast in a human mould amid a masterful weaving of mythology and suspense. The trend was initiated in 2003, with the publication of the first volume of an eight-part series by Ashok Banker on the classical epic *Ramayana*, which expresses the success of the noble King Rama over Ravana, a learned king gone astray. Indian mythology now stretches from graphic novels to business books by combining the appeal of fantasy and historical fiction. And the genre's flourishing popularity is yet another story of how tradition in India has fitted to development. Tripathi's novels about Shiva breathe humanity into characters that most Indians consider to be a God.

Amish Tripathi is popular for his novels *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*. The three books collectively form the *Shiva Trilogy*. Through the novel, Shiva reveals the answer for what is evil, why does it exist and how does one deal with it. This

# The Creative Launcher

An International Peer Reviewed & Refereed E-Journal in English

Vol. I & Issue V

paper analyzes how Amish has represented Lord Shiva as a man who rose Godlike because of his karma, inspite of the Hindu mythology referring him as a God, The Mahadev.

The *Shiva Trilogy* is a fantasy re-imagining of the Indian deity Shiva's life and adventures who in Tripathi's words was, "Just a man, 4000 years ago but is today remembered as the Mahadev (the God of Gods)" (1). Amish explains that it was a television program that has inspired him to pen *The Immortals of Meluha*, the first novel in the *Shiva Trilogy*. In India, we typically call our Gods as 'Devas' and demons as 'Asuras' but during the course of the program, he discovered that that the Zoroastrian Persians refer to their Gods as 'Ahuras' and Demons as 'Daevas,' the opposite of the Indian pantheon. That triggered an interesting debate in his family:

What if the ancient Indians and the ancient Persians had met? Perhaps they would be calling one another evil because one civilization's God would be the other's Demon, and vice-versa. Who would be right? (2)

But he couldn't conclude the answer. He says they're just two different ways of life and that philosophy is at the very heart of the *Shiva Trilogy*: one's perception of evil. He thought there is no one better than Lord Shiva, the destroyer of evil, to convey a prophecy on the subject.

Shiva is called the Mahadev which means the God of Gods. He is also referred as the Destroyer of Evil. He is a passionate lover, fierce warrior, consummate dancer and charismatic leader. He is all powerful but he is incorruptible. He also has an attitude of quick wit and also equally accompanied by a quick and fearsome temper. Over the centuries, foreigners, conquerors, merchants, scholars, rulers and travelers who came to our land doesn't believed that such a great man could possibly exist only in reality. They assumed that he must have been a mythical God who can exist only in the knowledge or area of human imagination. Unfortunately we started to believe it and that became our received wisdom. So only the foreigners made us to believe that he is a mythical God.

Amish asks us what if it is wrong. Here the author explains that Shiva is a real man. Shiva is not a figment of a rich imagination. He is a person of flesh and blood. He is a man who rose to become a godlike because of his karma. This *Shiva Trilogy* interprets the rich mythological heritage of ancient India. It blends fiction with historical fact. The author dedicates this work as a tribute to Lord Shiva and the lesson that his life teaches us. It is a lesson lost in the depths of time and ignorance. It is a lesson through which all of us rise to better people. It is a lesson which says that there exists a potential God in every human being. What we have to do is we have to listen ourselves.

The *Immortals of Meluha* is the first book in the *Shiva Trilogy* that chronicles the journey of this extraordinary hero. It introduces Shiva as an ordinary human being with an extraordinary destiny in store for him. A destiny which makes him a saviour and a god, and whose arrival has been prophesied by an ancient legend.

The book reveals Lord Shiva in a new perspective. He is exposed as a common man, a leader, a dancer and his karma makes him God. Shiva is a tribe leader who has taken the responsibility of safeguarding his tribe members from the neighboring ethnic groups, who keep attacking Shiva's home territory. Shiva recalls of his destiny uttered by his uncle, "Your destiny is much larger than these

# The Creative Launcher

An International Peer Reviewed & Refereed E-Journal in English

Vol. I & Issue V

massive mountains. But to make it come true, you will have to cross these very same massive mountains” (IM 4). So, they travel to Meluha for a secure life.

Nandi, a close admirer of Shiva, approaches him and propose a safe passage to their land. Shiva’s landing at Meluha was the starting point of his Neelkanth journey. The word ‘Neelkanth’ means the man with the ‘blue throat’. His throat changes azure as he drinks the Somras, a famous drink. Ayurvathi was the first to detect it. “She kept repeating. ‘Om Brahmaye namah. Om Brahmaye namah.’ ‘What happened? Is it serious?’ asked a worried Shiva. ‘You have come! My Lord, you have come!’” (IM 23). On noticing it, Nandi too dropped on his knees crying, “You have come! My Lord! You have come! The Neelkanth has come!” (IM 23). The Meluhans also called themselves as Suryavanshis followed the solar calendar. The clan idolizes Shiva as a savior who would fight and win the Evil of Chandravanshi, the clan that followed the lunar calendar.

Shiva doesn’t know what was going around. Holding a hand to his freezing neck, he turned around to the polished copper plate and stared in stunned astonishment at the reflection of his “*neel kanth*; his *blue throat*” (IM 24). The Meluhans announced Shiva as the Neelkanth, their legendary protector.

The gripping adventure of heroism and war focus how one man can modify the course of events. The drama in the story takes a new twist with the introduction of Sati. Legend has it that Sati is also called Parvati. The subplot of the story is the budding romance of Shiva and Sati, while the main plot is consistently taking the readers through the fascinating course of events. The battle between the two kingdoms constitutes the plot throughout.

Shiva was then taken to Devagiri to meet the king, Daksha. On their way, Shiva and Nandi hear a tall Meluhan Kshatriya announcing the procession of vikarma women. Shiva asked Nandi regarding the vikarma women. Nandi said that

Vikarma people, my Lord, are people 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 is the only way they can wipe their karma clean of the sins of their previous births. Vikarma men have their own order of penance and women have a different order. (IM 92, 93)

Nandi further explains that there are many rules for vikarma women which they should follow. But Shiva doesn’t agree this. He remarks as,

That sounds pretty ridiculous to me. A woman could have given birth to a still born child simply because she did not take proper care while she was pregnant. Or it could just be a disease. How can anyone say that she is being punished for the sins of her previous birth? (IM 93)

Shiva tries to court Sati and impress her, but she rejects his advances as she is a vikarma. Even when Kritika asks her to break the law to find happiness, she rejects it by telling, “I am a Suryavanshi. Rules are all that I live by. What have I got to do with happiness? Don’t ever dare to speak to me about his again!” (IM 214). Eventually Shiva wins her heart and they decide to get married, even though the Vikarma rule restricts them from doing so. Enraged by the so-called

# The Creative Launcher

An International Peer Reviewed & Refereed E-Journal in English

Vol. I & Issue V

obsolete law, Shiva declares himself as the Neelkanth and dissolves the Vikarma law, “That is not what I asked. I want the entire vikarma law scrapped. Nobody will be a vikarma from now on. Bad fate can strike anyone. It is ridiculous to blame their past lives for it” (IM 279). Daksha allows Sati to get married to Shiva, amongst much joy and happiness.

At the end of the first trilogy, Amish gives way to the next story on the fierce Nagas who add a new aspect to the suspense built up. Shiva’s instinct says, “Find the Nagas. They are your path to discovering evil. Find the Nagas” (SN 12). Later he reveals the suspense telling that the Nagas Queen and the Leader is none other than the sister and son of Sati which moves the story more interesting. The Naga Queen spoke, “Then listen, oh exalted Princess. I am your twin sister, Kali. The one whom your two-faced father abandoned! And this sad soul is the son you abandoned, Ganesh” (SN 239).

Amish ends the second book *The Secret of the Nagas* leaving us puzzled and shocked on seeing Brahaspati in the Naga territory. Kali and Ganesh take Shiva to a neighbouring school in the capital, Panchavati, where the extreme secret of the Nagas lies. Shiva expected the secret of the nagas to be a book. But Kali held Shiva saying, “The secret is not a thing. It’s a man” (SN 384). Ganesh pointed at the curtained entrance to the classroom and says, “And he waits for you in there” (SN 384). Shiva stood immobilised. The Lord of the People gently drew the curtain aside by telling, “Guruji, please forgive the interruption. Lord Neelkanth is here” (SN 384). Shiva entered and was immediately stunned by what he saw. The teacher said with his eyes moist, “I have been waiting for you, my friend. I’d told you. I would go anywhere for you. Even into the *Patallok* if it would help you” (SN 384). Shiva has now fully understood the reference to the land of the demons. There in the classroom, Shiva finds his long-lost friend, his comrade in arms and his brother, Brahaspati, perfectly alive and teaching to the students.

In the third book, *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, on meeting Brahaspati at the Naga capital of Panchavati, Shiva comes to know about the evil “Somras”, and its ill effects on the people of India. Brahaspati explains that the large amounts of water required to manufacture of Somras has resulted in the depletion of the Saraswati River’s water. The waste produced in the process of manufacturing the Somras was dropped in the Tsangpo river, which flows through Branga territory as Brahmaputra, and resulted in their dreadful plague. Also the birth of Naga babies was believed as the consequence of drinking Somras as it results in the multiplication of cells at a very high rate which lead to their deformation and outgrowths.

Daksha plans to execute Shiva and sends Vidyunmali to get Egyptian assassins. He designed a peace treaty for Shiva but in his absence, Sati attends the peace conference and discovers the truth. She fights the assassins fearlessly, but is killed. The war ends with Sati’s death, but an enraged Shiva determines to use the Pashupatiatra to end Devagiri forever. Shiva unleashes the astra and finishes Devagiri’s history, along with the Somras manufacturing units hidden below the city. The author, in the third book shocks the readers with the death of Sati but he ends the novel where Shiva pursues peace and not war and leaves to Mount Kailash “Thirty years later, Mansarovar Lake” (OV 551), where he lives with the remembrance of Sati. Ganesh, Kali and Kartik become renowned as Gods for their mastery, all over India. Sati’s death is not forgotten and she is later famed as Goddess Shakti.

# The Creative Launcher

An International Peer Reviewed & Refereed E-Journal in English

Vol. I & Issue V

Though the story tries to redefine the terminology like 'Virtue' and 'Vice', from the very beginning of the story, the web of legends, Puranas and folktales seem to blend into a cohesive type to give us a sight of a time when the earth was ruled by old values and battles were fought for pride.

The author has used our Classical legends as the starting point of his story. The characters are not new, but the tales, expressed in the third person knowledgeable narrative, are totally a creation of simplistic imagination. The legends like Shiva, Sati, Nandi, Veerbhadra, Daksha, all roam around a certain topography as true human beings of flesh and blood. The objectivity of the author over the pivotal question of 'Virtue' or 'Vice' also allows the readers to form their opinion independently. The divinity is seen from a benevolent perspective where 'Karma' is the only indicator for such lofty act. The *Shiva Trilogy* is a journey through our historical past and may find that how legends are nothing but the core part of history and Myths are truly codified social laws. Throughout the entire trilogy, Amish noted that the Hindu Gods were perhaps not mythical beings or a fiction of a rich imagination, but rather they were once human beings like the rest. It was their deeds in the human life that shaped them famous as Gods.

## Works Cited

- Agrawal. K. A. *Reflections on Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2002. Print.
- Bhatnagar, Manmohan. K. *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1996. Print.
- Coupe, Laurence. *Myth*. New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.
- Dasan. A. S. *The Rains and the Roots: The Indian English Novel Then and Now*. Mysore: Sahridayata – Global Fellowship Academy, 2006. Print.
- Dorairaj, Joseph. A. *Myth and Literature*. Palayamkottai: Folklore Resources and Research Centre, 2003. Print.
- Hamilton, Paul. *Historicism*. London: Routledge, 2007. Print.
- Iyengar, Srinivasa. K.R. *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1962. Print.
- Radhakrishnan. N. *Indo-Anglican Fiction: Major Trends and Themes*. Chennai: Emerald Publishers, 1984. Print.
- Strauss, Levi. *Myth and Meaning*. London: Routledge Classics, 2001. Print.
- Tripathi, Amish. *Immortals of Meluha*. New Delhi: Westland Ltd, 2010. Print.
- . *The Secret of the Nagas*. New Delhi: Westland Ltd, 2011. Print.
- . *The Oath of the Vayuputras*. New Delhi: Westland Ltd, 2013. Print.