

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* : A Study in the Concept of Hinduism

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Abstract. In Indian mythology Shiva is the pivot around whom a plethora of stories, myths, cults, sects, dogmas are based upon. Hinduism and the present civilization of India rely heavily on both cosmological and human Shiva. The human Shiva is infested with self-doubt whether he is the Neelkanth or the chosen one to destroy the evil. Shiva is the protagonist of Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*. Amish Tripathi presents Shiva as a historical and mythical figure in his novel. He presents Shiva in the form of *Ardhanarishwara*. He delves deeply into the interaction of masculine and feminine aspects of nature which lead to creation and destruction of both the evil and the righteousness. He, being a liberal person has shown strong opposition to untouchability, too. He has presented a very factual view of Meluhan civilization. Amish has tried to explain the two institutions of Mahadev and Vishnu. He has shown in his novel that avatars of Vishnu are the lawmakers who establish peace between states and propagates principles and laws which are necessary for the development of civilization, while Mahadev at the scenario when something evil starts to brood in society destroys it. Hinduism has always been an inclusive religion which has a tendency to blend the good elements of other civilizations and make them its own. Moreover, each and every person has a Shiva in him or her. It is just a matter of will that he brings this Shiva to the fore for the welfare of human kind.

Keywords : Shaivism; Ardhanarishwara; Suryavanshi; Chandravanshi; perpetual conflict.

R.R. Tolkein writes in his *The Lord of Rings* that as the time sweeps history becomes fiction and fiction becomes myth. And in Indian mythology Shiva is the pivot around whom a plethora of stories, myths, cults, sects, dogmas are based upon. Shiva, the destroyer is probably the most revered out of the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva Himself in the Hindu way of life.

Hinduism and the present civilization of India rely heavily on the both cosmological and human Shiva. Cosmological Shiva signifies the all-pervasive, omniscient, omnipresent Shiva which signifies the masculine aspect of the creation. And there is this human Shiva who is naive enough to be lured by Daksha into battling against the foes of Daksha. Considering the evil this human Shiva infested with self-doubt whether he is the Neelkanth or the chosen one to destroy the evil, Shiva is the protagonist of Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*. Probably inspired by the historical theme that Shaivism was practised by the people of Indus Valley

Civilization, Amish Tripathi presents Shiva as a historical and mythical figure in his novel :

Shiva rocks just how much Shiva rocks the imagination is made grandiosely obvious in *The Immortals of Meluha*, [...] Shiva's journey from Cool dude [...] to Mahadev [...] is a reader's delight [...] what really engages is the author's crafting of Shiva, with almost boy-worship joy. (The Times of India)

His *Trilogy* covers the voyage of Shiva metamorphosing from the ordinary leader of a tribal named Glunas in the Himalayas to the mighty Mahadev, the destroyer of evil who paves the way for the forward march of the civilization. Amish Tripathi captures the essence of the human aspect of Shiva as scribbled in our scriptures and mythology but with the valuable addition of vulnerability to it which endears him to readers.

In Shiva he discovers a perfect family man to whom his family is his world, who unflinchingly destroys the whole Meluha after the brutal assassination of Sati, his soul. By this incident Amish Tripathi presents Shiva in the form of *Ardhanarishwara*. In this series Amish Tripathi delves deeply into the interaction of masculine and feminine aspects of nature which leads to creation and destruction of both the evil and righteousness. Amish has successfully tried to answer the questions pertaining to the societies such as, evil, destiny, Dharma and Swadharma:

Yes, my Lord. There are many rules that the Vikrama women have to follow. They have to pray for forgiveness every month to Lord Agni, the purifying fire, through a specifically mandated Puja. They are not allowed to marry since they may contaminate others with their bad fate. They are not allowed to touch any person who is not related to them or is not part of their daily life. There are many other conditions as well that I am not completely aware of. If you are interested, we could meet up with a pandit at the Agni temple later and he could tell you all about vikarma people. (Tripathi 2010 : 95)

Amish has taken contradictory stands on destiny when he shows Shiva openly standing against the law of Vikarma. He seems to be tilted towards the random nature of destiny rather than being influenced by the idea that everything is predetermined nature of destiny. But this stands in contrast with the other incident

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* : A Study in the Concept of Hinduism of this novel in which it shows that Shiva was destined to be the Mahadev, the destroyer of evil :

Vikarma People, my Lord, said Nandi, sighing deeply are people who have been punished in this birth for the sins of their previous birth. Hence they have to live this life 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 their own order. (94)

Amish Tripathi through the journey of Shiva tries hard to answer one of the most significant questions of human existence : what is evil and in one paragraph he tries to answer this by writing that even a good practice when continued for a period of time and is limited to a privileged class becomes evil for the civilization. Thus he discourses the thin line between the good and the evil.

During the initial years of our vedic civilization when the pursuit of knowledge was made limited to only a privileged class called Brahmins and Kshatriyas it led to the breeding of many evil practices. Thus Amish Tripathi shows that pride, greed, selfishness and luxury are the foundations for the evil to flourish upon. He supports the free dissemination of knowledge. Amish Tripathi has brought the unique concept of *Suryavansha* and *Chandrvansha* which shows the two types of the most prevalent nation states on the earth. Survananshi types of people are the people who are strict followers of rules and regulations and are extreme disciplinarians. These types are very strong even in present scenario. Japan, Korea, Iran are the current examples of Suryavanshi system of administration. While Chandrvanshis are more of the rebellious type of people who are more of free thinking, dissenting, anarchists sect of people who have the habit of being anti-government. These people are more prone to anarchism and disorders. India, America, France are the current examples of these types of nation states. Suryavanshi prefers to follow *Swadharma* over the universal dharma :

Lord Ram was the emperor who established our way of life, my Lord; replied Nandi. He lived around one thousand two hundred years ago. He created our system, our rules, our ideologies, everything. His reign is known simply as *Ram Rajya* or 'the Rule of Ram'. The term *Ram Rajya* is considered the gold standard in how an empire must be administered, in order to create a perfect

life for all its citizens. Meluha is still governed in accordance with his principles, Jai Sri Ram. (35)

Amish Tripathi, being a liberal person has shown strong opposition to untouchability when Shiva touches Sati and announces that not a single person in this world is untouchable and he sets the example against untouchability by marrying Sati. He also lends support to widow remarriage through his protagonist Shiva who married Sati who is a widow. Influence of our holy scripture *Bhagwad Gita* is completely visible on Amish Tripathi as he presented an unadulterated form of Varna system which is non hereditary and is completely on the person, attributes that makes him of a particular varna. As Daksha was a king but because of cowardice he was assigned a lowly kshatriya status.

The women characters of the novels are of mixed types. Where Sati and Kali are finally independent, liberated and the protectors of their entire class, Neerni, the mother of Sati and Kali is totally a devout wife extremely docile and submissive. Amish Tripathi didn't fall prey to the temptation of presenting western feminism rather he presented the present eastern Indian feminism where women are capable, fiercely strong, liberated and at the same time they all are compassionate, motherly figure who are both protector and preserver of the family.

Amish has presented a very factual view of Meluhan civilization. He has borrowed heavily from the history of Meluhan civilization, the details of city planning and the detailed description of warfare. He has made it more grand with his powerful imagination. Buildings, ships, weapons are much more grand than they were in Indus civilization. He has tried the scientific exploration of many so real events but his scientific explanations don't cease to make it more of a fantasy than a period of scientific novel. He has tried to follow the present trend of scientific appropriation of the highly so real mythical events.

Amish has tried to explain the two institutions of Mahadev and Vishnu. He has shown in his novel that avatars of Vishnu are the lawmakers who establish peace between states and propagate principles and law which is necessary for the development of civilization, while Mahadev at the scenario when something evil starts to brood in society destroys it. In the present political context when there are debates and discussions undergoing on Nationalism, ultra-nationalism, Indian culture and Hindutva. Amish Tripathi tries to find answer in this Shiva trilogy. As in the present and past our authors tend to glorify our leaders into gods and heroes, they tend to make them, unquestionable, thus inciting a blind fan following among the masses. But Tripathi has raced against the time to humanize these characters and has presented them vulnerable and prone to emotional breakdowns so that a common person can connect and take inspiration from them. They were not unearthly persons but their never-say-die attitude make them immortal.

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So this is a fresh air amidst the jingoistic fringe elements who are hell bent on crushing any debate and dissent on our mythical gods and goddesses where majority of persons in the Hindu community silently or actively support these types of political outfits. In the present political scenario of India where there is a debate over Indian culture and where people are excluding the Islamic and western influences on our culture, they are asserting that Indian culture is mostly Hindu culture. In such a scenario Amish Tripathi shows the way by the example of Shiva that Hinduism has always been an inclusive religion which has a tendency to blend the good elements of other civilizations and make them its own. In the age where our political leaders are taunting inter-religious marriages as "love Jihad", Amish Tripathi shows the marital alliance between two warring class "Suravanshis" and "Chandrvanshis" as totally acceptable and a reason to celebrate.

Amish Tripathi has immensely travelled to find the answer to the problems of our present political and social discourse. And he has shown that our mythical gods, our ancient Hindu scriptures are not the problem rather than they are the solution. And we should instead of misinterpreting them, focus on the fact that our scriptures were the first that proclaimed the universal brotherhood and development of scientific temper and rational thinking. Our most revered God Mahadev Shiva has taught since the beginning to be impartial, non-judgmental, compassionate and all-inclusive.

The novel has striking similarities with the current fractured nation states of Indian sub continent which are the bete-e-naire of each other and their hostility in leading towards the backwardness of each other and coercion of their citizens. By depicting Swadweep, Meluha and Panchvati always scheming to mould each other, Amish draws parallel from current perpetual conflict between India, Pakistan and Srilanka. And an all-compassionate, all-inclusive leadership like that of Shiva can unite them. And each and every person has a Shiva in him or her. It is just a matter of will that he brings this Shiva to the fore for the welfare of human kind.

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