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MYTHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS IN AMISH TRIPATHI'S 'THE IMMORTALS OF MELUHA'

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ABSTRACT

The title chooses for this paper is Amish Tripathi's first novel *The Immortals of Meluha*. The novel starts with introducing the protagonist Shiva. He is an immigrant Tibetan barbarian. He belongs to the fearsome warrior clan who are known as Gunas. The novel background is an imaginary land Meluha. The Meluhans are Suryavanshis who are descendants of the sun believes in a legend that Neelkanth will appear and save them from the terrorist attack. They believe that the terrorist attack is by the evil Chandravanshis who has allied with the Nagas, people with physical deformities with exceptional martial skilled warriors. Shiva accepts his fate which his uncle believes and becomes their saviour and indulges in war with Chandravanshis. After the war is over, he comes to know that even the people of Chandravanshis believe in the legend of Neelkanth. The novel ends with Shiva consider Nagas as evils and swears to find them.

Keywords: *mythology, facts, re-narration, divinity, mystery, adventure, legend*, the following abbreviations are used after quotations, IOM- *the Immortals of Meluha*

INTRODUCTION

The word mythology means mythos for story of the people and logos for word or speech. Mythology is nothing but the collection and also the study of such myths. Myth is a legendary story usually relating someone, event, gods, goddesses, demigods or supernatural humans. Mythology is either set in the historical or modern world. Myths mostly involve with magic, adventure, thriller, heroism, braveness and explain virtues and vices. Myths are usually with the blending of facts and imagination. Myths usually differ from place to place according to their nature or culture or tradition or beliefs. It passes from generations to generations to maintain order. It expresses society's religious values and norms.

Mythology is from ancient times. The great civilizations have their own mythical stories such as

Chinese mythology, Indian mythology, Roman mythology and Egyptian mythology. Myth not only explains sacred stories but also about werewolves, vampires and blood sucking demons. In the stories of myth also explains about balance of life, the good and the bad. Myths are passing not only as stories but also in the forms of songs, dances and visual art. It is passing in every possible way in which people are communicating and expressing their thoughts.

In India, the mythology has been passing from generations to generations either by oral or written or dramas or sculptors or paintings. Myth creates entertainment, enlighten, education and even many scientific findings are based on myth. Hinduism is chief among Indian mythology. *Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads, Mahabharata, Ramayana* and *Puranas* are the backbone for the Hindu Indian mythology. In India, every aspect of life revolves

around myth. In Hindu pantheon, Brahma is the creator, Vishnu is the preserver and Shiva is the destroyer.

Young generations find philosophies as boredom. They are not reading philosophies not even listening. Many changes happen in the myths. Many are in the attempt to reproduce myths with entertainment through fantasy, imaginary, colloquial language with the present day generations likes and styles to quench their thirst to read and listen to the philosophies. The attempt makes the children to understand their culture deeply and follow in their life. Myths involves in every aspect of life through festivals, traditions, dance, music, finance, food habits, cleanliness, preserving the nature, drawings, paintings, styles, sociology, psychology, archaeology and even science. Through the stories in the myths many extinct living and non-living things has been discovered. These include places, rivers, birds, animals, people, civilization and even dangerous weapons. The proof explains myths are not fictitious but real incidents.

Contemporary authors use myth to rethink our traditions. They blend myth with facts, scientific approach, history, fiction and fantasy to encourage children and even adults to follow our customs and values to get better in life through their works. Amish Tripathi attempts to bring out the myths of Shiva in his Shiva trilogy as *'The Immortals of Meluha'*, *'The Secret of the Nagas'* and *'The Oath of the Vayuputhras'*.

DISCUSSION

Lord Shiva is depicted as the protagonist. The protagonist is depicted as human being with no powers. Throughout the novel author succeeds in maintaining Shiva as humanly as possible to cope up with his character. The novel starts with showing Shiva as a human. His body covers with numerous battle scars. It is perfect start for showing god as a man because god's wounds will be healing automatically with their powers. Here he is a normal man who fights to overcome his nightmares. He is a man who tries to find solution for the people's problem by searching throughout the novel. He is a man wants to help people who seeks help from him. Shiva's childhood friend Bhadra becomes a stranger

as Shiva is now tribe's chief. Shiva's tribe is in the name of Gunas. Their tribe is a formidable one, a fearsome martial clan and trying to survive in a tough, hostile land. So this naturally made Shiva a brave warrior and a good leader.

Meluha is an imaginary land. It was created by Lord Ram many centuries ago. The land mentions in the novel is the inspiration of Indus Valley Civilization. The cities are built in the platform with the fort walls. The city was divided into blocks of roads laid out in a neat grid pattern. It has market areas, temples, gardens, meeting halls. There were multiple- storeyed block structures. The empire even has underground drainage systems, bathrooms, well-built lakes. The drainage systems covered with differently coloured stones. They even have attached bathroom with a sloping floor for the water to drain easily. They have a magic device on the side walls from which water flows through and it is shower.

The Guna's are given a medicinal drink after lunch. It's a usual drink given to all immigrants to check and clear if diseases carried by them. After drinking the medicine, all people fall ill with high fever. Ayurvati and her team take care of everything as it is common for them. Unusually Shiva has no fever but he has breathing problem. Shiva's scar in the knee, his dislocated shoulder and his frost bitten toe even his body feels rejuvenate. His throat feels so cold. Ayurvati checks Shiva and she collapsed with her back against the wall. Both Nandi and Ayurvati are crying as they are seeing Shiva's throat. Shiva starred in a polished copper plate and looks stunned to see his blue throat. The novel starts with the legend of the Neelkanth from here.

The legend of the Neelkanth is that he will be a foreigner. He cannot be from the Sapt- Sindhu. The Neelkanth will be the destroyer of evil. His throat will turn blue when he drinks the Somras. Shiva's uncle always tells his destiny lies beyond the mountains. Shiva has no faith in the prophecy and his uncle's words. But he always thinks his words. He wants to help Meluhans not because of his blue throat or their faith in Neelkanth or his uncle's words but because of his guilt. He wants to use this chance to redeem himself.

In the ancient days, there are four groups of people. The *Puranas* and *Vedas* mentions this groups of people as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Brahmins are talented people who are doctors, teachers, lawyers, priests and basically any intellectual people. Kshatriyas are the warriors and rulers. Even the women can be Kshatriyas. Vaishyas are craftsmen, traders and business people. Shudras are the farmers and workers. The people belong to one caste cannot do the other caste's job. As Kshatriyas are warriors, they have their own rules of war.

"We will not attack an unarmed man. A better- armed person like a cavalry man will not attack a lesser- armed person like a spear wielding foot- soldier. A swordsman will never attack a person below his waist because that is unethical." (IOM 115)

Every Meluhans wear two amulets and pendants which symbolise their caste and rank. First amulet contains lines. Brahmins' amulet contains the lines which are drawn of the head of Parmatma. The lines drawn as the shoulders of the Paramatma means he is a Kshatriya. The thighs of the Paramatma means he is a Vaishyas and the feet of the Paramatma symbolise he is a Shudra.

The second amulet depicts their chosen tribe. They chose the tribe when he or she turns twenty- five years old. Brahmins choose from birds. Kshatriyas choose from animals. Vaishyas choose from flowers while Shudras choose from fish. They must qualify the chosen tribe through the examination process. The first pendant is the brown seed which is the representation of last Mahadev, Lord Rudra. It symbolises the protection and regeneration of life. The second pendant is the sun which represents they are the descendants of the Sun that is they are the followers of Suryavanshis.

Puranas mentions Shiva's wife is Sati. He gives equal importance to her. So he gives his half of his body to her and looks like Arthanatheeshwar. In the novel Shiva fall in love with her on first sight. Sati is mentions as with calm confidence. Sati belongs to the Kshatriyas. Shiva and Sati's first conversation is after a fight. She fights bravely equal to Shiva. Shiva is completely possessed by her.

Puranas mentions Daksha as Sati's father and he always insults Shiva. In the novel, at first he respects and even calls Shiva as Lord. He is the emperor of Meluha. He is so simple. He is describes as shorter than Shiva, not musculature, wheat complexioned face, dark eyes and a straight nose. Brahaspati is shown as the chief scientist in the novel. Brahaspati is a Brahmin. So he wears the traditional janau and a white cotton dhoti. Brahaspati's second amulet is swan, a high select chosen- tribe among Brahmins.

Puranas and Vedas mentions the Asuras and Devas are immortals. They never become old. They always look young after they become adult. The reason for their immortal is Somras, the drink of the gods. Shiva first confuses as Nandi is blabbering in his fever such as he is searching for Neelkanth a hundred years. Shiva thinks he is suffering from fever and so it affects his brain. As Shiva reaches Devagiri, he asks Daksha's age. Daksha looks like thirty years old. Shiva stuns as he finds Daksha's age is one hundred and eighty four. This is possible only with the Somras, the drink of gods. "Taking the Somras at defined times not only postpones our death considerably, but it also allows us to live our entire lives as if we are in the prime of our youth- mentally and physically." (IOM 83)

Vedas, Puranas and Upanishads mention Lord Brahma as the creator of life. In this novel, the author indulges Brahma as one of the greatest Indian scientists. He invented Somras many thousands of years ago. He lived and worked at Meru so there is a temple for him. The trinity of gods leaves a tribe behind them. Each tribe is with a specific name. Brahma selects a group of adolescent boys from seven regions of ancient India so that he can mould their character into becoming selfless helpers of society at his gurukul. They honed their minds to achieve almost superhuman intelligence.

In the ancient times, title for men of knowledge was Rishi. Since Brahma's chosen men were seven in numbers, they came to known as Saptrishi. There is a strict rule for them. They were not allowed to charge anything for their services and had to live on alms and donations from others. They were not allowed to rule or practice any trade.

Overtime as their responsibilities grew the Saptrishis selected many more people to join their tribe. They devoted their lives to the pursuit of knowledge and for the wellbeing of society without asking for any material gain in return. The tribe of Brahma is also called as Brahmins. As ages went by, some Brahmins start ruling and some save wealth for them. To the extent some even rebelled against Saptrishi Uttradhikaris. They were none other than the successors of the Saptrishis. The corruption was done by high chosen- tribe Brahmins like the eagles, peacocks and swans. Overtime Somras is given to all people by Lord Ram.

In the mythology, Ayodhya is the birth place of Lord Ram. It is considered as a sacred place. Shiva and his entourage enter the Swadweep literally the island of the individual. They march towards Ayodhya, the impregnable city. This is the capital of Chandravanshis. Chandravanshis are the descendants of moon. They follow the moon calendar. Meluhans are astonished to see the Swadeep. It is completely opposite to Meluha. There are no order and rules. At the top of main gates, a crescent moon had been sculpted into the walls. Then there is the motto of Chandravanshis- Shringar, Saundarya and Swatantrata meaning passion, beauty and freedom. In ancient times, Ashwamedh yagna is followed by some kings. It is the sacrificial horse travels freely through any kingdom and if any king stops it, they face the battle otherwise the kingdom comes under the horse's king. All territories in Swadeep is under Dilipa, emperor of Swadeepans due to this yagna. The pandit reveals them as Vasudevs. Each Vishnu leaves behind a tribe with a two missions. The first is to help the next Mahadev, if and when he appears. The second is that one of us will become the next Vishnu. Lord Ram entrusted this task to his trusted lieutenant, Lord Vasudev. Shiva asks the pandit whether Mahadev also leaves such tribe. The pandit impressed by the Shiva's intellect. Lord Rudra's tribe is in the name of Vayuputra.

Narrative techniques are used to help the reader to read easily and not to find boredom. The reader can use their imagination in their mind to visualize. Narrative techniques are also known as literary devices. The literary elements are setting, plot, theme, style, characters and voice of story.

Some of the narrative techniques used in these novels are flashback, foreshadowing, argument, humour, legend, monologue and prologue. Amish Tripathi's point of view on the title suits well with the story. The novel concerns about the Somras which keeps the people of Meluha immortal. Prologue is a narrative technique. It gives information about the background details in the novel. Author gives a brief prologue to the novel. He made the god Shiva as the protagonist in a human form. "Shiva! The Mahadev. The God of Gods. Destroyer of Evil. Passionate lover. Fierce warrior. Consummate dancer. Charismatic leader. All-powerful, yet incorruptible."

The past life of Sati and Krithika are also explained by the Brahaspati and Nandi respectively. Sati is a widow and she gave birth to the still born and on the same day her husband had died. So Sati is considered as vikarma. Krithika is a widow and her husband died fifteen years ago. So the flashbacks are used in the novel to explain some of the events in the present. One incident is Parvateshwar thoughts about Sati. When Sati is injured by agnibaan, Parvateshwar thinks about the bravery of Sati in her childhood days. Sati was sixteen years old and had just returned from the Gurukul. Daksha, Veerini and Sati went for picnic. By that time she was fighting with a pack of wild dogs to save a severely injured woman. Parvateshwar was very proud of her.

Amish used Hindi and Sanskrit words in the novel to give the flavours of Indian mythology. The doctors in the novel are Brahmins. The chief doctor is Ayurvati. The medicine used for treatment is Ayurvedic. The words like Vijayibhav, Ayushman bhav, Akhand saubhagyavati bhav are the blessings. Vijayibhav means be victorious, Ayushman bhav means may you live long and Akhand saubhagyavati means her husband always be alive and by her side. Amish portrayed Shiva as a human. So the words used by him are like younger generation. He swears too much like I'll be damned, by the holy lake, what the hell?

Humour is not much used in the novel except Shiva, Veerbhadra and Brahaspati. When Shiva was injured in an ambush on the Mount Mandar, Shiva and Brahaspati made joke on it.

Brahspati concerned about the attack of Nagas on him. Then he joked as Shiva is the omnipotent N whose name cannot be spoken. Then Doctor advises not to take Somras for sometime as it may cause damage. For that Brahspathi joked as it's already done all the damage it can on him. They both burst out laughing. Shiva is sometimes jovial.

Legend is one of the literary devices in the novel. The legend is Neelkanth. The Neelkanth will not be from the Sapt- Sindhu. He will be the destroyer of evil. His throat changed to blue when he drinks the Somras. All people in Meluha blindly believe in the legend and even in the Swadeep. This faith made the people to believe in the words of Shiva. He made use of the Neelkanth for the welfare of the society. Even though he itself does not believe in the legend, he accepts it for the people.

Monologue is used mostly by Shiva. He mostly speaks himself which cannot be spoken out due to some reasons. "He whispered- Holy Lake, help me get her. I will not ask for anything else from you ever again!" (IOM 92) Many such occasions demands him to speak to himself. Amish used science to explain many things. The Vasudev pandits scientifically explain many things to Shiva to understand better. They always speak quizzically. They even explain the colour of the leaf. White light is the confluence of seven colours and this is the reason when rain falls on sunlight on disperse rainbow. Same when light falls on the leaf it absorbs every colour of sunlight and not absorbs green. This is the reason the leaf looks green in colour.

Amish focuses on duality in many places as good and evil, masculine and feminine and many such things. He shows Shiva as a great warrior as well as great dancer. Sati is portrayed as a great fighter as well as humble being as the loving mother. The mentioning of every human being has good and evil within them and either one overrule the other. His quest is to find evil for that he has to find the good. The duality is in the coin also by saying the good and evil is like two faces of coin. We cannot search only one side but both the sides to find completely. The Asuras and Suryavanshis are masculine while devas and Chandravanshis are feminine. There are always fight between good and evil. It balances each other

otherwise the world will implode. They represent two balancing life forces like a duality.

CONCLUSION

Amish used mythology as his core theme. The mythical characters are Shiva, Sati, Daksha, Ganesh, Kartik, Kali, Veerbhadra, Nandi, Lord Ram, Lord Rudra, Brahspati, Brahma, Manu and avatars of Vishnu such as Matsya, Narsimha, Parshuram. Many mythological happenings as the Manu from Sangamtamil, places mentioned as Meluha is Indus Valley Civilization. The cities Harappa, Mohenjadar are mentioned in the empire of Meluha. As he is shown as man, he faces the feelings which each person feels every day. He faces difficulties. He too experiences all human feelings such as joy, pain, guilt, anger, sympathy, love, affection. The author manages everything balanced. This novel makes the readers to journey in the path of tradition to live a contented and peaceful life. The novel opens the spiritual mind to feel peaceful. It shows the good and evil. It shows the people to live a life with good hearted by not thinking bad.

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