RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE IMPORTANCE OF MYTH IN OUR LIVES THROUGH SHIVA IN *IMMORTALS OF MELUHA-A NEW DIMENSION*

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Abstract

In *Immortals of Meluha* by Amish Tripathi, we witness the journey of Shiva from an ordinary tribal leader to the savior of the Meluhans.The myth of the 'Neelkanth' which speaks that the one with the blue throat will be the savior of the Meluhans against the evil, plays an important role in this odyssey. Shiva's blue throat makes him the 'Neelkanth' and he is thrust upon with responsibilities. This myth helps in the transformation of Shiva from 'no one' to the 'worshipped one'. A relation can be drawn in the journey and transformation of Shiva to that of a common man. The faith of our family in our abilities is a myth. Our abilities are not always in balance with their beliefs. However, this myth like that of the myth of 'Neelkanth' plays a very prominent role in our lives. It acts as a source of strength and facilitates our self-discovery. It helps us progress, transcend our limitations and evolve as a superior self.

Keywords- myth, journey, faith, family, transformation, self-discovery.

"Myths are stories of unascertainable origin or authorship accompanying or helping to explain religious beliefs. Often (though not necessarily) their subject is the exploits of a god or hero, which may be of a fabulous or superhuman nature, and which may have instituted a change in the workings of the universe or in the conditions of social life".(Childs and Fowler 146)

Indian mythology are narratives found in Hindu texts such as the Vedic Literature, epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana. Hindu Mythology does not have a perpetual monolithic structure. The same myth typically appears in various versions and can be depicted heterogeneously across diversified socio-religious traditions. These myths are taken to have esoteric aura around them , often symbolic meaning and have been furnished with an intricate range of interpretations.

From our childhood we have grown up listening to the myths through oral traditions from our elders. We have imbibed the values ingrained in these stories. Though we know they are not complete truths yet we cannot deny how the deeper meaning of these mythical stories have an enriching impact on our lives.

The Immortals of Meluha (Tripathi 2011)is the first part of the Shiva Triology which revolves around the myth of the 'Neelkanth',the one with a blue throat. The myth plays a significant role in framing the persona of Shiva and the grand task of tracking down the evil and battling against it for the whole of India.

The Immortals of Meluha is the odyssey of a tribal man from 'no one' to 'the worshipped one.' Shiva is the tribal leader of the tribe 'Gunas', concerned about the security of his tribe. 'Gunas' are constantly under the threat of attack from the outer tribe, the 'Prakatis'. His expedition started from the security of his tribe and proliferated to that of the whole of India. He progresses from ignorance to enlightenment, from doubt to confidence. The myth of the Neelkanth plays an important role in it. He is thrust upon with new responsibilities. He is bound by the love and reverence of the people to take up the herculean task of finding out the evil and destroying it.

A parallelism can be drawn between Shiva and the modern man. Shiva is depicted as a common man with all his weaknesses. He is not a man having magical cure for all the riddles. He is worried about the loss of men and wealth in the tribal attacks. We find him emotionally vulnerable. He shares his doubts, confusions and his plaintive state at not being able to find an appropriate solution to the dilemma of security with his friend Veerbhadra. Like the common man he is not sure of his destination. Yet the faith of the society on the myth of 'Neelkanth' in *Immortals of Meluha* and in turn on the miraculous endowment of Shiva because his neck was blue, spurred him to rise above his infirmities, his doubts and strive incessantly towards a colossal design.

We are all like Shiva-in a duel with our complications. What advances as an aid is the myths that we use in our daily lives. For instance- we learn that hard-work, patience and perseverance can bring success and victory like that of Lord Ram. But this is a myth and not the absolute truth. There are many more considerations that come into the field like corruption, nepotism, red tape and power clashes. Lord Krishna announces to focus on our karma and not to expect for results. Anyway there is hardly anyone who is able to adhere to this philosophy completely.For a case in point,the faith on the fact that you will get back the same behavior the way you treat people can be put into question in today's world of self-centeredness and the rat race for fame and success. In spite of all these, life would have been very burdensome and each breath could

seem to hang heavily upon us without these myths. Thinking about the consequences in the future may discourage us in the present. Grudging about the faults in the social systems may make us feel resentful and bar us from putting in our own efforts.

Apart from the religious and different other myths that we have already known till today, there is another myth which plays a significant role in our lives.The faith of our family in our abilities is also a myth. The confidence of our family on our capacities may not be proportionate to our abilities. However their conviction in us makes us vehement in facing a crisis situation. It escorts us in our adversities. Its robustness supports us.The way the myth of 'Neelkanth" in *Immortals of Meluha* transformed Shiva from a tribal leader to an exalted being, the faith of our family causes our metamorphosis.

Myths, as follows, are very helpful. They have a meaningful existence in our lives. They act like a skeletal frame in the development of our persona. The parents who keep faith that their child will become a leader, will arise to be a leader and acquire leadership qualities. The faith in him/her inclines him/her towards it. The faith of the family help the child to acquire the anticipated proficiency.

This myth also facilitates a journey from self to self. The journey fills us with vigor. The journey becomes more prominent than the destination. The journey reconstructs us. Through the journey we attain a newer and evolved self from the previous one. Shiva, from a tribal leader in the course of his journey of fulfilling the myth of 'Neelkanth', emerges as a virtuous leader potent of taking the responsibility of the whole of India and think about the welfare and good of the society. In the journey of our life,the faith of our near ones ,specially our family, plays an important role. Their faith arms us with the capabilities to fulfill their belief.

In today's world, we find the youth who are emotionally starved and suffer from anxieties and hypertension. In India, the National Mental Health Survey 2015-16(NIMHANS 2016) reveals that nearly 15% Indian adults need active intervention for one or more health issues and one in 20 Indians suffer from depression. According to World Health Statistics published by WHO in 2019, India's suicide

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rate stood at 17.8 suicides per 1,00,000 people in 2016(WHO 2019). This was higher than the global suicide rate of 10.5. According to a study by The Lancet(Patel et al. 2012) aimed at quantifying suicide mortality in India in 2010, suicide deaths at ages 15 years or older, 40% of suicide deaths in men and 56% of suicide deaths in women took place at ages 15-29 years .This shows the plight of our youth population. Another finding by The Lancet also says that suicide rates in India are highest in the 15-39 age group, 71.2% among women and 57.7% among men in 2016 (Bhattacharya 2019).

The role of faith of our family or friends play a prominent role in helping us to sail through the difficult times and find our true self. It is only the faith or the 'myth' that is the incomplete truths that may help us to fight in the critical situation or the emotional crisis faced in daily lives. It makes us sturdy to tackle the difficult circumstances. Thus, through the journey of fulfilling the new dimension of the myth of our family ,we truly discover a new self.

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