

Myth, Modernity and Philosophy in Amish Tripathi's
The Shiva Trilogy

Rithika S
(21PEN011)

A Thesis submitted to
Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for
Women, Coimbatore 641043

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH

May 2023

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
May 2023

Chitra Sivasubramaniam
Signature of the ^{10/5/2023}
Supervisor

A. Vijayarajam
Signature of the ^{10/05/2023}
Head of the Department

DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled "**Myth, Modernity and Philosophy in Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy***" submitted by me for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) is the record of work carried out by me during the period December 2022-May 2023 under the guidance of Dr. (Mrs.) Chitra Sivasubramaniam, Associate Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women and has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other titles in this University or any other similar institution of higher learning.


10/10/2023

Signature of the Candidate

CERTIFICATE

I declare that the thesis entitled "**Myth, Modernity and Philosophy in Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy***" submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) by Rithika S (21PEN011), is a record of research work carried out by her during the period December 2022 - May 2023 under my guidance and supervision. This work has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other titles in this University or any other similar institution of higher learning.

Chitra Sivasubramanian
10/5/2023
Signature of the
Supervisor

A. Vijayarani
10/5/2023
Signature of the
Head of the Department

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Abbreviations

S.No.	Abbreviated Titles	Abbreviations Used
1	The Immortals of Meluha	IM
2	The Secret of the Nagas	SN
3	The Oath of the Vayuputras	OV

S. No	Contents	Page No.
1	Introduction	1
2	The Legend of Neelkanth	15
3	Representation of Culture and Modernity	33
4	The Philosophy of Karma	46
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Chapter I

Introduction

Literature has been created before the beginning of Christian era. Egypt, India, Greece and China have produced their master narratives before the Roman literary tradition. The literary expanse over the world during the course of time has gone very long. It is almost impossible for an individual to read all the literary works produced in the different parts of the world during the course of time. Literature of the world flourished in its own style. Literary art of each of these parts is distinguished from one another in relation to the cultural impact and style and technique.

Apart from Hindu spiritual and philosophical knowledge, India has Buddhist literature and Jain literature. *Jataka Tales* of Buddhist tradition are extremely popular which contains some of the philosophical knowledge about human existence. Buddhist literature also comprises of *Tripitakas*, *Buddhavacana*, *Sutras*, *Vinayas*, *Mahavastu*, and *Shastras or Abhidharma*. Tradition of Jainist literature is also rich in India. Its canonical texts are called *Agamas* which are believed to be the discourses of 'Tirthankara'. It has eleven 'Angas' and fourteen 'Purvas'. *Shatkhandagama* is an important text which belongs to Jainist literary tradition.

India has a rich heritage of grand heroic narratives like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. *Ramayana* is equally grand in its style and technique though its grandeur is little less than that of *Mahabharata*, which is often compared with Greek epic *Iliad* for its grandeur, sublimity, characterization and narrative technique. *Ramayana* bears striking similarities with the plot and characters of *Iliad*.

Mahabharata is often considered to be the greatest of all the epics in the world for its narrative technique and art of characterization. It includes almost every aspect of

human life and speaks about all the people in India of its time. It also comprises of great Indian philosophical knowledge in the form of *Bhagavad Gita* (400 BCE), the most sacred Hindu text.

Indian literary tradition begins long ago with the origin of *Vedas* which have been regarded as important work of Indian culture. *Vedas* are written in verse form. There are four *Vedas* namely *Rigved*, *Yajurved*, *Samaved* and *Atharvaved*. *Vedas* are brilliant poetic collections with almost uniform stanza patterns which make them melodious in tone. They have been an inseparable part of Indian culture and rituals. They are also regarded as ‘Apourusheyas’, (not created by humans or having divine origin) and fall in the category of ‘Shruti’ (heard). The Indian texts of ancient origin, which are also regarded as the sacred texts of Hindu spiritual philosophy and religion, are basically classified into three categories namely ‘Shruti’, ‘Smruti’ and ‘Samhita’. ‘Shruti’ means, heard or to be heard, ‘Smruti’ means remembered or to be remembered and ‘Samhita’ means the code of conduct or the law book to be followed.

Upanishads are Sanskrit texts and are part of the *Vedas* containing central philosophical concepts and ideas of Hinduism. Some of the concepts and ideas of *Upanishads* are shared with Buddhism and Jainism. They are commonly known as ‘Vedanta’, the last chapter of *Veda* and is regarded as highest purpose of *Veda*. The concept of ‘Brahman’ and ‘Atman’ are the central themes of discussion in *Upanishads*. ‘Brahman’ refers to ultimate reality and ‘Atman’ refers to self or soul. There are more than two hundred known *Upanishads* in Hindu literary tradition and the translation of *Upanishads* was carried out in nineteenth century. The Western world was attracted towards Indian philosophy with the translation of *Upanishads*. They are regarded as the “Product of highest human wisdom” by Arthur Schopenhauer.

Puranas are mythical stories about Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Each of the *Puranas* gives prominence to the character after whom it is named. Most of the *Puranas* deal with the mythical stories of Shiva and Vishnu. There are eighteen *Puranas* namely *Shiv Puran*, *Vishnu Puran*, *Nardiya Puran*, *Padma Puran*, *Varah Puran*, *Brahmavaivarta Puran*, *Markandeya Puran*, *Brahma Puran*, *Matsya puran*, *Garud Puran*, *Vayu Puran*, *Skand Puran*, *Brahmand Puran*, *Bhagwat Puran*, *Ling Puran*, *Vaman Puran* and *Agni Puran*.

There is a rich heritage of literary glory and novel is the form of literature. The tradition of novel in India is said to have commenced with *Kadambari* (7 CE), the earliest known prose narrative in Indian tradition of story -telling. Its literal meaning corresponds to that of the novel and its characteristics are similar to that of the novel. *Kadambari* written in the seventeenth century is the master creation of the Indian literary stalwart Banabhatta, who is authentically credited for writing the first Indian novel of considerable length with a complicated plot and multiplicity and variety of characters. It enriches the glorious literary tradition of India along with other poetic forms of writing. Narration has been the characteristic feature of Indian literary tradition.

India is the country of age long tradition of literature and culture. Mythology in India is not just the literature but the part of major culture. Indian psyche is still governed by traditional literature and value are propagated through it. Ritual and beliefs in Indian culture still continue to exist. There is a great fascination among Indians about its history and mythology. Myth is an unchanging narrative based on the idea that primitive people portray supernatural occurrences to explain natural happenings and phenomena. The term ‘mythology’, on the other hand, refers to the collecting and interpretation of tales known as ‘myths’. It is critical to understand the

difference between myth and mythology. People's material, spiritual, and cultural ambitions are addressed in mythology. M.H. Abrams in the book, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (2014) claims that,

In classical Greek "mythos" senses any story or plot, whether true or fabricated. In its central fashionable significance, however, a myth may be a story within the mythology system. Those are the hereditary stories of ancient origin, once believed to be true by an individual or a bunch of individuals having common culture. (230)

Present world is under the wide influence of material developments, scientific study and technological advancements. Scepticism has been a prevailing idea in all walks of life. Traditional ideas like faith are tested on the reason. Nonetheless, ancient stories and culture are being read and reread to understand the hidden truth under metaphorical expressions. Retellings have been gaining wider popularity since last fifty years. Sensing the psyche of Indian public, some of the writers have chosen to take on the retellings of the mythical stories to suit the purpose and taste of the modern world.

The rewriting of myths reconnects people to a bygone era, provides a continuation of the old in a new age by adding a new perspective. The archaic form of narrating mythical or religious tales seems to lessen the readers' delight, as the narratives belong to ancient times, but the gods and goddess do hold a special place in the hearts of the readers. If they become the storytellers or protagonist, the story becomes more meaningful and closer to their hearts. Myths develop and change regularly; they help in transforming the dreams and strengthen the desires. These narratives could enlarge the reader's vision; turn their thoughts to assured possibilities

and may inspire them to dream. They may help in making a better world. Thus, the myths that are constructed today will help to shape the world, influencing the future generations. Therefore, mythopoeia is modern literature where an author creates fictional mythology. Mythological narratives express the beliefs and values about the culture through archetypal characters. Archetypes have existed since ancient times, and they assist in producing emotion in the readers and allow them to relate to the characters. Archetypes transcend eternity and customarily furnish the first outline or shape of the mythological figure or character. A skilled novelist can handle several archetypes and develop an entirely new story. The religious archetype that is embedded in one's collective memory reinforces the myths even in modern times.

Ashok Kumar Banker, an internationally acclaimed contemporary author and screenwriter is placed in the line of most popular Indian writers for his retellings of Indian mythology. He has written eight volumes of *Ramayana Series*, which has been credited with the resurgence of mythology in Indian publishing. This is a set of eight books brought out in the span of eight years – *Prince of Ayodhya* (2003), *Siege of Mithila* (2003), *Demons of Chitrakut* (2004), *Armies of Hanuman* (2005), *Bridge of Rama* (2005), *King of Ayodhya* (2006), *Vengeance of Ravana and Sons of Sita* (2007).

Devdutt Pattanaik's *Jaya* (2010) is an intense retelling piece on the *Mahabharata*. The narrative employs the folk and regional variants of the *Mahabharata* like the 'Pandvani', 'Gondhal' of Maharashtra, 'Terukutthu' of Tamilnadu and 'Yakshagana' of Karnataka. Devdatt Pattanaik in the retelling of *Sita* illustrates Ram through the various stages in Sita's life and the roles she plays in Ram's life. Pattanaik has tried to understand the metaphorical meaning hidden in Indian myth. His *Myth=Mythya* (2006), is an attempt to uncover the philosophical meaning hidden in literary and artistic expression in Indian culture. He interprets the

hidden meaning in Hindu paintings and culture and expresses it through his *Seven Secrets of Shiva* (2011), *Seven Secrets of Vishnu* (2011) and *Seven Secrets of Hindu Calendar Art* (2009). In M. T. Vasudevan Nair's retelling of *the Mahabharata*, *Randamoozham* (1984), Bhima is the main protagonist of the book. The entire Mahabharata is narrated as a historical tale in the first person, from Bhima's perspective. Although Bhima is known for his valour, his first preference always goes to Arjuna or Yudhisthira. The book talks about Bhima's joys, heartbreak and frustrations as he is unable to digest the uncompromising expectations out of a 'Kshatriya', a soldier. Angst is one of the major themes throughout the novel.

Ramesh Menon in his retelling *Krishna-The Blue God* (2000) has rendered his tale in lyrical prose that conveys all the beauty and excitement of the original. He has also tried to make the spiritual literary classic available to the readers of old as well as new generations. He has succeeded in his attempt to capture the magnitude of the original scriptures and present its content in a more secular and effective way.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni gives a new voice to Sita and Draupadi in her famous retellings, *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019) and *The Palace of Illusions* (2008). The author draws inspiration from the original epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* to recreate the mythological history that remains unaltered in Indian culture. The author demonstrates the importance of female rights and the courage of Sita and Draupadi to retain their individuality. The novels narrate the myths from the female perspective and the ancient Indian myths are rewritten with a contemporary aura.

Irawati Karve studies the humanity of *Mahabharata's* characters, focusing on their virtues and their equally numerous flaws. The book reflects the nature of the

author – secular, scientific, anthropological. She is appreciative of literary values and deals with social problems of the past and the present. She tries to blend the essence of modern world into her version of *Mahabharata* entitled *Yuganta: The End of an Epoch* (1967). It is also an attempt to narrate the original story of *Mahabharata* with a rational point of view which makes the reader feel that the stories are not works of imagination but are true stories of the ancient heroes.

S. L. Byrappa's *Parva* (1979) is a narration of *Mahabharata* as a monologue originally in Kannada. Several principal characters of *Mahabharata* narrate their experiences at the time of the 'Kuruksheetra' war. It is a transformation of an ancient legend into a modern novel. Byrappa tries to give voice to each of the characters in *Mahabharata* to bring out their perspective of life and the truth of life.

Pratibha Ray, in her retelling of *Mahabharata* under the title *Yagyaseni: The Story of Draupadi* (1984), tries to fight the belief that a woman is responsible for the greatest war of all time. This is not only a reaction to patriarchal patterns of thinking but an attempt to voice the unspoken sufferings of women. She tries to give valid justification for Draupadi's actions in *Mahabharata* and blames others for the destruction of 'Kuru' race. She becomes a woman speaking for a legendary woman who has been constantly blamed for being the cause of the 'Kuruksheetra' war.

Amish Tripathi, one of the most famous authors in the tradition of retellings has tried to do more than what his predecessors and contemporaries have tried. He has not only retold the myth but also has tried to give it a validation in the modern world of logical reasoning. His *The Shiva Trilogy* establishes the glorious tradition of general welfare in ancient India. It also gives a validation to the Indian mythical

narratives, which he does so with his brilliant technique of placing the characters in the context of history.

Amish Tripathi is one of the most celebrated novelists in India today. His maiden publication, *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010) has become immensely popular claiming the title as best-seller. All the books that are written by Amish Tripathi deal with religious themes because he is a devoted worshipper of Lord Shiva. He hails from a devotional family background as his parents were religious and his grandfather was a Sanskrit scholar and a Pandit at Banaras. But Amish admits that the writing of *The Immortals of Meluha* has “turned him into a devotee to Lord Shiva from an atheist” (Rana Preetika). He believes that religious faith and liberalism are complementary to each other. Sandipan Deb, the former Executive Editor of Outlook and Editor of Financial Express writes that through all Amish’s books flow a current of liberal progressive ideology: about gender, caste and discrimination of any kind (Financial Express). Amish Tripathi believes that his success lies in his visits to Shiva temples and he also requests his true fans to visit the Shiva temples.

Amish Tripathi becomes a popular Indian English writer with the publication of his first book *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010), which is the first of the series of the three novels dedicated to Lord Shiva entitled *The Shiva Trilogy*. Other two novels of the Shiva series are *The Secret of the Nagas* (2011) and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* (2013). After the phenomenal success of *The Shiva Trilogy*, Amish decided to start another series of novels entitled “*Ramchandra Series*”. He has published his first two books of the *Ramchandra series* under the titles *Scion of Ikshvaku* (2017) and *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* (2017). He has published his third book *Ravan: Enemy of Aryavarta* in 2019 and the final book of the series, *War of Lanka* in 2022. He has published a non-fiction book entitled *Immortal India* (2017).

Tripathi has drafted the novels from the mythical stories of Somras and the triangular relationship between Shiva, Sati, and Daksha. He makes imaginative use of mythology for propelling the plot and for developing the theme of his texts belonging to the field of popular literature. He tries to provide validation to the mythological reality in order to make it concurrent with the contemporary world of logic and reasoning. He tries to build a logical argument for his incidents, characters and their actions. He tries to retell the fictional stories setting them into historical context, geographical areas and mythological characters using modern techniques, lucid style and elaborate descriptions. He has chosen to write about the Indian superhero with a different perspective. His vision to look at the things is not only imaginative but also logical. The story of Shiva by Amish Tripathi is altogether different from the original mythological stories of Lord Shiva. Amish has taken most of the mythical stories to build a new story of his imagination. He builds his philosophy based on the divine principle of equality.

The novel, *The Immortals of Meluha* starts with Shiva, a Tibetan coming to the western Indian kingdom of the prosperous city of Meluha which he later adopts. Shiva is portrayed as a normal human being not only with feelings and desires, but also with a strain of courage, justice and fairness. The Meluhans look for someone who can and save them from their arch enemies, the Chadravanshis. Meluhans worship Shiva as Neelkanth who wages a war with the Chandravanshis. Shiva meets Sati, the princess of Meluha and the daughter of the old but manipulative King Daksha.

The Immortals of Meluha foregrounds modern time issues in the backdrop of ancient tales. The tribal migration of Shiva proves to be important in laying the foundation for the entire quest. Migration and displacement (voluntary and

involuntary) have been crucial to world civilisation in the past century. Much can be attributed to the diasporic situation of the modern times, and along with it, the domineering, bureaucratic, and consumerist approach of many advanced nations is also portrayed in the land of Meluha of the trilogy. Meluha, though advanced, is not without its share of discrepancies, as in the form of laws (Vikarma) discriminating the physically challenged, including those who give birth to them. The novel also points out the paradox between science and superstition. The technical advancement of the society is contrastingly placed with the need for a foreign saviour whose arrival is foretold in their legends.

The Secret of the Nagas, the second of the celebrated trilogy begins with the rescue of Sati from the Nagas. Shiva fights with the Nagas and gets to know that they are exceptional warriors and he develops a certain respect for them. The capital of the Nagas is Panchavati, which is across the Godavari, the huge river that to Shiva looks just like the Ganga. In the consequent events, he comes to know about the alliance of the Nagas with the kingdom of Branga. The Nagas are warriors who disguise themselves as snakes and hence the name. As the novel unfolds, Shiva comes to realize that the Nagas are the people who are born with physical deformities and are left in the jungle to die by the perfectionist Suryavanshis who follow the Maika system. Shiva meets Kali, the Queen of Nagas. It is then revealed that Ganesh is the first born son of Sati, who was left to rot in the jungle because he was born with physical deformities. Similarly, Kali, is the deformed sister of Sati.

The Secret of the Nagas highlights various environmental issues of mankind. Nature plays a vital role in the advancement of a country. The toxic wastes of Somras, the life-enhancing potion produced in Meluha, are disposed far away from the country, but they eventually find their way into the water source of Branga, another

habited territory. When nature is exploited beyond bounds, nature's fury and retaliation cannot be avoided. Interestingly, nature also provides remedy for every plague on earth. The blood of peacocks is used as a medicine by the expatriate Brangas to treat their children suffering from the plague, but this can be done only at the expense of the life of peacocks. Similarly, man's greed to excel has led him to exploit nature beyond repair and exhibit hatred towards fellow human beings. Killing of the probable carriers of deformity (Sati's husband) and removing the physically deformed children from a society (Nagas) are akin to the honour killings and abandonment of unwanted or maimed children by parents even today. Society's tendency to denigrate imperfection is not new, and hence a distortion of normalcy is perceived to be a consequence of a bad deed or a curse. The scientific age has helped to get over this belief as science attempts at ways to cure or even prevent such maladies from occurring.

In the third book, *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, Shiva finally transforms into a god, a deity because of his great deeds. He was courageous enough to take the right choice and oppose King Daksha. He fights against Daksha and in the process, Sati gets killed. Shiva is enraged and he sets Meluha on fire with the Daivi Astra, a weapon which destroys the city and the civilization forever. In this novel, Amish Tripathi reflects upon the mythical episode of Sati and Daksha where Daksh insults Shiva and offends Sati. When Shiva comes to know about Sati's death, he along with his followers, the Ganas destroy the yajna of Daksha and kills him. Amish tries to impart education in modern sensibilities of secularism and multiculturalism by using a mythical story.

The Oath of the Vayuputras depicts the human avarice that extorts most from nature and also from humans for one's own betterment. The increasing greed leads to

hatred, which the man either seeks to subjugate or destroy. The Meluhan greed for perfection drives them to denigrate the Chandravanshi morals, plague the Branga children, and exile the Naga race. The ideals of King Ram are distorted by the Meluhans for their convenience. Under the pretext of perfection and peace, they seek to destroy other societies and establish themselves as superior. The very existence of the daivi astra indicates the anticipation of its use. Human race has been dabbling with the untold powers of nuclear weapons, much in contrast to its efforts to save nature and mankind. Technology has liberated man from the many bindings of past, but has unknowingly bound him to some of the irrevocable shackles of his own doing.

Despite the myth-based context of the novels, the author has interwoven current meanings into them. Each text in the trilogy, apart from the many contemporary issues, also highlights the current debate on the caste system that is specific to India. The century-old practice of caste system, the economic disparity within a society, the differing codes of ethics in different societies, the desire for longevity, the discrimination in terms of gender and physical abilities, making of drugs/potions with an aim to achieve perfect physical qualities, the unconcern towards nature, and the use of destructive weapons that are created by man in preparation for war (amidst talks of peace and treaty) are some of the pressing issues that Tripathi has dealt with in his texts, in keeping with the storyline.

Tripathi in *The Shiva Trilogy* employs portrayal of Shiva from the theistic ideologies of Kashmir Shaivism. P.L. Raina in the article “Kashmir Shaivism and Vedanta” states that, “Kashmir Shaivism is a theistic philosophy that identifies Lord Shiva as the Absolute, Infinite and pure consciousness lying beyond the reach of speech, mind, and intellect. It is transcendental and immanent and can be realized through yoga” (n.p). Tripathi makes use of Kashmir Shaivism symbolically and

metaphorically. He admits that Vedanta and Shaivism have given creative ideas and inspiration that shapes the meaning of a literary work. Vedanta, Upanishads and Kashmiri Shaivism provide a wide scope of inspiration and enable him to choose elements from the texts. Kashmir Shaivism has a simple prescription for liberation from bondage, the premise of *The Shiva Trilogy*.

Shiva is an innocent youth who is a purusha at the beginning of the novel. He removes the maya of the people and elevates his 'self' as Mahadev and transforms as Pashupati. Shiva relieves Meluhans and others from their attachment to the maya (illusion) of somras and immortality. He also conquers his 'self' as Neelkanth; he understands the real meaning of his blue throat and that he must first give up his own illusion that everything about Meluha is true. He seeks truth and thus an ordinary tribal leader achieves 'sat-chit-ananda' – the eternal bliss. From the beginning to end, he has never shown any inclination to the title, Neelkanth. Shiva uses the flames of tapa to burn all memories, desires, ideas, values, and standards that crumple his mind, the chitta. In the light of the fire, Shiva sees the true nature of the world around and the true nature of the self within.

Amish, as a keen observer of society, has seen people's interest in religious texts, myths, and contemporary interpretations of them. His rendition of the story is intended to amuse readers, as well as to allow them to escape and envision the wide sky. The present study focuses on many important aspects of society, such as ideology, culture, and myth management, language usage, and narrative craft, in the context of literature. Various myths have been adapted in various references and settings. The suggested study is based on the usage of myth in Amish Tripathi books. *The Shiva Trilogy*, which includes *Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas*, and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* are selected for the purpose. In his novels, Amish Tripathi

uses contemporary storytelling methods to weave together ancient ideas. Amish Tripathi has adopted modern techniques of narrative in weaving the themes of antiquity.

Chapter II

The Legend of Neelkanth

The definition of myth can be interpreted in many ways. A very simple definition of myth is that it is a well-known story which was made in the past to explain natural events or to justify religious beliefs or social customs. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,

Myth a symbolic narrative, usually of unknown origin and at least partly traditional that ostensibly relates actual events and that is especially associated with religious belief. It is distinguished from symbolic behaviour (cult, rituals) and symbolic places or objects (temples, icons). Myths are specific accounts of gods or superhuman beings involved in extraordinary events or circumstances in a time that is unspecified but which is understood as existing apart from ordinary human experience. (n.p)

Carl Jung, the famous psychologist who is influenced by myths spreads the concept in all his works. He sees myth and its meaning in the individual psyche. He believes that myths are most helpful when man is on the path of self-realization and it arises from one's unconscious mind which to him is a type of inspiration. He emphasizes that myths are stories that helps in one's self-realization. The most obvious example is the mythical hero where he struggles to reach his goal, finds the strength and succeeds in his aim, and here myth serves as a self-therapy. Myths like history are a way of looking at the past. A novelist takes themes from history and tradition, which force the readers to think of the past. Myths regularly exercise a deep influence in the lives of the people. Myth has significant role in man's everyday life in

the form of rituals, dreams, customs and religious beliefs. It has various facets for various purposes and each facet is unique and realistic to the perceiver who consciously or sub-consciously adopts or transforms it. Myth dominates and shapes not only the individual psyche but also the cultural aspect of the people.

The story of Lord Shiva, the Mahadev is told in *The Shiva Trilogy*, which consists of three different books titled *Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas*, and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, which tells the story of Lord Shiva, the Mahadev not as a divine, unborn being but as a common man who becomes god through his actions and eventually is identified with Supreme Being, the all-powerful, all-knowing. The story tells the untold history of India in a compelling and entertaining manner. However, even though it appears to be true, the history that the author writes cannot be referred to as actual. Tripathi's mind has conjured up a history that is entirely imaginary. Ritika Paul in the article, "Shiva for All Times: A Study of Amish Tripathi's *The Immortals of Meluha*" describes the portrayal of Shiva as a human being:

Indians worship God in four forms – Nirgun (Nirakaar – formless God), Aakar (in a form i.e. Lord Vishnu,...) Avatar (incarnation of God i.e. Lord Ram,...) and a man who becomes God or discovers God within him (Gautama Buddha). Amish Tripathi took the fourth type and portrays Shiva as a human being. Tripathi has recreated Mahdev as a human with flesh and blood. (425 – 426)

He portrays God Shiva as a man who is worshipped and becomes immortal not by his name but by his actions. Tripathi portrays Shiva like an ordinary being or a common man but elevates him to the position of Mahadev, the Almighty through his deeds.

In Indian myth, Shiva is portrayed as a God of contradictions. He is an ascetic, wears tiger skin, smears his body with ash, takes marijuana, dances in cremation yard but he is praised as the God of Gods. He is acclaimed as Bholenath, an embodiment of innocence and as a fierce warrior; Rudra in Yajur Veda and he is considered to be the creator of Vedas. He is an ascetic but his love is symbolized through the phallic symbol, the Linga. He is Adi Yogi, the originator of Yoga that balances the physical and emotional health, yet, he drinks the intoxicating bhang and inhales the marijuana which affects the health. He has not only been portrayed as a divine shaman but also as Ardhanareeswara who has been worshipped from the Neolithic age to the contemporary era. Fire is the symbol of his power but he adorns himself with a large water body, the Ganga. *The Shiva Trilogy* focuses on the mythical hero with all the divine contradictions.

Tripathi borrows many characters and incidents from Indian myths, reshapes them with scientific theories, and recreates them as mortals of the world. There are many resemblances and many differences between Lord Shiva, in the Indian myth and the character Shiva of Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy*. Shiva in the Indian myth has a third eye that burns evil. Trishul is his weapon and serpents are his ornaments. A bull, known as Nandi is his vehicle and he is praised as Veerbhadra, Mahadev, Pashupathi and many other names. Wolf-Deiter Storl in *Shiva: The Wild God of Power and Ecstasy* explains the appearance of Lord Shiva as, "Shiva's tower of felted hair, stiffened with the juice of the banyan tree, decorated with snakes, flowers, nuts (rudraksha or ustram beads), and with the waxing crescent moon, is such a crown or magician's hat...Like all shamans, Shiva is dressed in the skins of wild animals (tiger, elephant and gazelle)" (36). On the other hand Tripathi portrays Shiva as, "wearing an orange coloured tiger skin has been taken away to be washed for hygienic

reasons....A half-lit chillum lay forlorn on the side-table” (IM 17). Amish Tripathi uses myth to recreate his hero, Shiva.

The noble qualities of Shiva that promote him into a divine figure, examines people’s reverence for him and his modest response towards it. When the announcement of Neelkanth is made in Meluha, the entire nation appears to be in a festive atmosphere. The citizens of the country revere him as follows:

Our savior has come! The Neelkanth has come! Shiva winced at being put up for display on the royal platform with his cravat removed. The Meluhan elite thronged around him, their sentiments buzzing in Shiva’s ears. We have nothing to fear anymore, my Lord. The days of evil are numbered! Where are you from, my Lord? Mount Kailash? Where is that my Lord? Do you think I could go on a pilgrimage there?
(IM 178)

The citizens of Meluha and Swadeep develop veneration towards Shiva so much that they think of going on pilgrimage to the place of birth of Shiva. A host of factors from adventure to modesty characterize the protagonist who never feels comfortable with being called Neelkanth. His modesty is visible when he expresses his discomfort in being addressed as Neelkanth: “I will say it again: I am a simple tribal man who just happened to acquire a blue throat because of some exotic medicine. Honestly, I still don’t know what one man like me can do in the face of the odds that you face” (IM123). Shiva’s modesty and being unassuming can be obvious from the fact that he never believes in the great powers and uniqueness of his blue throat. It never appears to be special to him. He is of the opinion that consumption of some medicine like Somras makes his throat turn blue. Though both Swadeepan and

Meluhan accord divine status to him, he proves his humbleness and simplicity through his actions. When men of great might display humbleness, it becomes divine. Humility that is found in men of valour is nothing but divinity.

Shiva is so adventurous that he records numbers of triumph in war zones; he prioritizes peace over establishment of supremacy. Another extraordinary aspect of Shiva's individuality is that his heart grows fond of men and women including the rival tribe. The heart, which sympathizes with the enemies, possesses rich godliness in it. His accommodating nature is well projected through his act of paying attention to the words of his followers. He never likes to take any unilateral decision, an act of kindness. The way in which he rises above ordinary mortals is by possessing qualities like bravery, humility in might, lack of pride, sympathy for enemies, thirst for adventure and inclination towards peace.

Shiva has been portrayed not as a magical hero but as a man with limitations. The hero of Tripathi never possesses any magical powers like the mythical Shiva but elevates his position with his generosity, intelligence and determination and acclaims to be a real hero. The original Indian myth often describes Lord Shiva, the Destroyer of Evil, as living in Mount Kailash along with his tribe or Ganas. Henrich Zimmer in his work *"Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization"* describes the followers of Lord Shiva as, "They probably represent the hosts or ganas of the God, his followers and attendants, who in countenance, figure, attire, and attributes, resemble the divinity himself. Some carry musical instruments, a tambour, a flute...correspond to the five hosts of Shiva's followers, each host being represented by a single individual" (133-34).

Shiva's companions are always described as demons and devils who dance in the cremation pyre. But Tripathi has recreated them as human beings with a tribal name Gunas. They are portrayed as human beings with their limitations, who are at times assaulted, humiliated and tortured by their enemies, Pakratis. Gunas accept to be the immigrants of Meluha and later escape from Meluha to Kashi for their survival. Shiva as the leader of Gunas guides and protects them but never ill treats them. Tripathi expresses the greatness of Shiva as the chief of Gunas as, "This respect for the chief was not just based on convention but also on Shiva's character. He had led the Gunas to their greatest military victories through his genius and sheer personal bravery" (IM 90). Tripathi has recreated the demons Ganas as the modern Gunas for expressing the greatness of his mythical hero as a leader.

Shiva undergoes ambivalence. He exhibits his leadership quality by allowing his mind to rule over his heart. He is convinced that peace is far more important than emotional attachment. The writer sheds light on many remarkable attributes of Shiva which places him far ahead of ordinary mortals. First, his humility and love for peace are manifested in his decision of leaving his land of birth to an alien land. Another great quality of Shiva is that he treats his fellowmen with respect though they never disobey him. When Shiva's friend, Nandi visits Mount Kailash, the birth place of Shiva, he invites Gunas to Meluha. Since Shiva's tribe is constantly attacked by his enemies, Pakratis, Shiva decides to settle in Meluha along with his tribe. As a leader, he is modest and asks for his followers' willingness to leave for Meluha when they unanimously accept his decision. The immeasurable grace and indwelling blessings of Lord Shiva flows continually towards the pious and simple human soul and guards them from all possible dangers. Yet, the circumstances compel him to move from his

home land. He has been portrayed with the limitations of any ordinary human being but rises to the level of God through his actions.

Wolf Deiter in *Shiva: The Wild God of Power and Ecstasy*, compares Shiva with Jesus Christ who has burdened himself with the sins of the world for the welfare of the human beings and insists that as, “Like Christ, who took upon himself the bitter cup of perdition, so Shiva drank the poison of the world, which the activity of the Gods and titans churned from the depths of the primal ocean” (11). The narration in the myth about the blue throat states that at the time of Samudra Manthan, the churning of the Milky Ocean, the great poison Halahal comes in force. It is dangerous and there is no way to escape from it. The people approach Shiva and ask for help. After listening to the voices with sorrow, Shiva with great concern narrates to Sati that he has to protect his people from the calamity. Shiva swallows the poison out of compassion to save the people and his action pleases Lord Vishnu. The poison turns his throat into blue colour, but the spot becomes a special ornament of the benevolent soul. In Indian mythology, it is clear that due to the poison Shiva’s neck changes into blue.

Mythical Shiva intakes poison to rescue the world whereas the hero of *The Shiva Trilogy*. In *The Shiva Trilogy*, Tripathi recreates the myth of Neelkanth by presenting his hero with blue neck while consuming Somras, the Meluhan’s nectar of immortality. He is given Somras without any warning and compelled to destroy the evil. Shiva often searches answers for the question, “Why did my throat turn blue?” (IM 141). The legend of the Meluhans states that the Neelkanth will arise when the problems cannot be solved by the humans and the Neelkanth will be a non-native of Sapt Sindhu. Shiva says, “I remember being administered some medicine in my childhood by my uncle. I used to suffer severe burning between my brows from when

I was very young. My uncle's medicine helped me calm the burning sensation. The throbbing persists to this day but it is not as bad as it used to be" (OV 109). Hence, he hails as Neelkanth, the saviour of the world. To his devotees, he is like a shepherd and also an affectionate, caring mother, the Ammai Appan. He is stunned and bewildered by the people's esteemed reverence and trust on his capability.

Shiva is courageous warrior. The battle against the Chandravanshis is termed as, "Dharmayudh, the holy war" and the battle in Lothal proves his bravery and efficiency. Shiva is not a blood thirsty soldier but a kind-hearted warrior with human limitations. He is hailed as God not for his supernatural powers but for his great actions. He analyses all the chances for avoiding the war. His preparation for the peace treaty and proclamation against Somras depict Mahadev as a lover of peace.

Tripathi has recreated his hero as a modern and rational man who does not accept the myth but seeks logical reasons for the miracles. Lord Shiva is a fierce warrior and in Vedas, he is portrayed as an archer. Pinaka is his divine weapon. It is believed that Shiva has gifted some of his Daivi Astras to Arjuna, the great archer in Bhagavad Gita. He is also hailed as a fierce warrior, Rudra in Yajur Veda. Deiter in "*Shiva: The Wild God of Power and Ecstasy*" comments on the weapons of Shiva,

Shiva's scepter is the first of hunting weapons, the spear. The tip of the spear has been multiplied by the magical number three into a trident.

The trident is so important in Shiva's iconography that it can stand for the God...he carries the oldest and earliest weapons and tools of humankind: the axe (parasu), the hand drum (damaru), the staff (danda), the bow and arrow (pinaka and ajagava)...(37)

The Trishul is invented and introduced by Shiva in Meluha for the first time. Shiva's design of Trishul expresses his brilliance on warfare and portrays him as an adept warrior, who gains the admiration of Parvateshwar, the Meluhan General. He respects every individual not by his birth or appearance but by his actions. Shiva's courage to take part in the war against Chandravanshis, his Tortoise technique and his efficiency in war attract many rationalists like Parvateshwar of Meluha. Shiva's prowess on the battle field is explained in the war against Chandravanshis as, "The Neelkanth charged into the sides of the Chandravanshi lines that were bearing down on the tortoises. Caught in a pincer attack between the trishuls and the charge from Shiva's flank, the spirit of the Chandravanshis finally broke" (IM 353).

Tripathi introduces Pinaka, the bow of Lord Shiva from the Indian myth. In *The Shiva Trilogy*, the same Pinaka which is designed by Parashuram and is gifted to Shiva. Tripathi narrates Pinaka as, "It was ideal for an archer to shoot arrows from, while riding a horse or a chariot. Parashuram has named the bow Pinaka, after the fabled great ancient longbow of Lord Rudra" (OV 540). Mythical heroes are portrayed as efficient warriors who draw the love and attention of their countrymen. The hero of Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy*, too resembles the great warrior, Lord Rudra, the Mahadev of the Indian myth. He has the potentiality to inspire people through his speech and deeds. He is brave and brilliant to exercise the battle strategies. Shiva, the master of all ascetics, fakirs and shamans, contains all the heat of the universe in his lingam. The wrath of Lord Shiva is often associated with his third eye.

Fire is given great significance in the Indian Myths. The Indians believe that the sages accumulate heat through their ascetic practices to burn their sins. The great Mahadev accumulates the heat inside his physique and releases it through the third eye. Tripathi borrows mythical belief of the third eye but gives a realistic and

scientific explanation. He validates spirituality with scientific demonstration. He never treats the third eye as a miracle or a boon of his hero, but stresses on the impact of neuron blast giving it a realistic explanation:

The area between his brows didn't burn or throb either; perhaps also due to the neuron blast. But it had taken on a darker hue, almost black, that contrasted sharply with his fair skin. It wasn't an indistinct, indeterminate mark either. It looked like the tattoo of an eye: an eye with the lids shut. Kali had named it Shiva's third eye, which stood vertical on his forehead, between his natural eyes. (OV 551-552)

Shiva says, "Whenever I'd get upset, my brow would start throbbing" (OV 111). Lord Gopal, the Chief of Vasudev gives a detailed explanation of this throbbing and terms it as the third eye of Shiva as,

It is the region between one's brows. It is believed that there are seven chakras or vortices within the human body which allow the reception and transmission of energy. The sixth chakra is called the ajna chakra the vortex of the third eye. These chakras are activated by yogis after years of practice. (OV 111)

Tripathi's Trilogy also hints that those who practice yoga for decades can train their third eye but Shiva's third eye has been activated right from the time of his birth.

The concept of third eye, is borrowed by Tripathi from the myth and is reframed in his novels. The mythical Mahadev's wrathful third eye burns the victim whereas the third eye of Shiva in Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy* portrays him as a victim of stress, making the nerves to throb between his brows. This throb between the brows can be scientifically attributed to the neuron blast which can even destroy

the power obtained by Yogis through the decades of performing yoga. The third eye of Shiva persists as a scar that reminds about the devastation of the neuron blast.

Tripathi in his *The Shiva Trilogy* has borrowed many of the characters from Puranas, but he has painted the characters differently with his own imagination.

Tripathi questions:

What if Lord Shiva was not a figment of a rich imagination, but a person of flesh and blood? Like you and me. A man who rose to become Godlike because of his Karma. This is the premise of *ShivaTrilogy*, which interprets the rich mythological heritage of ancient India, blending fiction with historical fact. (IM xv)

There are no celestial characters or incarnations in his story. All his characters assume the human form.

Myth portrays women as devoted wives. Tripathi has created his heroine as a replica of the mythical wife, Sati. She is a devoted wife and dedicated mother but courageous enough to point out the mistakes of her husband. Sati guides Shiva at critical situations, hence, when Shiva intends to arrest Parvateshwar, it is Sati who advises him to maintain justice by destroying only the evil. She argues:

A man becomes God when his vision moves beyond the bounds of victors and losers...Shiva's message has to live on forever. And that can only happen if both the victors and losers find validation in him. That he must win is a given. But equally critical is his winning the right way. (OV 207)

Lord Shiva of original myth shares half of his body with his wife and becomes Ardhanareeswara whereas Tripathi's hero respects his wife, accepts her, counsels and with her aid, wages war against the evil.

Tripathi has also created strong women characters in his work. His heroines enjoy equality and are adored as the mythical Goddesses. Through creating Sati as a Vikarma woman, Tripathi has raised his voice against the social discriminations and encourages widow re-marriage. They are courageous warrior princesses. Sati, the princess of Meluha is a great warrior and she dies bravely in a duel encounter with the Egyptian assassin, Swuth. The heroine of Tripathi dies in the brave "one-on-one fight, the duel of Aten" (OV 470). The assassin is marvelled by Sati's courage and worships her as the final killer,

Swuth stared at Sati, dumbstruck....her eyes did not exhibit even the slightest hint of fear. She stared directly at Swuth with only one expression. An expression of pure, raw, unadulterated defiance....Tears sprung into Swuth's eyes as his heart felt immeasurably heavy. His mind grasped his heart's message instantly. This indeed was his final kill. (OV 477)

Tripathi has depicted Kali as the twin sister of Sati, accepting her as the incarnation of Parvati and Sati. Kali is portrayed as a blood consuming deity in the original Indian myth. She is the incarnation of Shiva's Sakthi. Wolf Deiter in the book, *Shiva: The Wild God of Power and Ecstasy* stresses the idea that Sati and Kali are the incarnations of Parvati and it is accepted that the great Goddess has many forms and incarnations. As a woman warrior, she is Durga and Chandi. He points out, "Chandi (Kali), she was made of the same poison that had discolored Shiva's neck"

(121). Devadutt Patanaik in *7 Secrets of Shiva* gives an account of Kali as, “the Goddess stands in opposition of Shiva as both the radiant Gauri, producing light, and as dark as Kali, consuming light....She is Shakti, energy, constantly on the move”

(63). Amish Tripathi combines the two contradictory aspects of Kali, blends it with his own imagination and creates a new persona. Tripathi also recreates Kali as a woman who yearns for the support of a great man like Shiva. Kali feels, “How different my life has been if fate had blessed me with a man like Shiva. May be like didi, all the poison could have been sucked out of my life as well. Perhaps, even I would have found happiness and peace” (SN 311).

In *The Shiva Trilogy*, it is the Somras that changes the colour of Shiva and the same Somras is the reason for the external outgrowth and the physical deformities of Nagas, including Kali. Hence the Somras is the reason for the blue poison of Neelkanth as well as the blackness of Kali. Tripathi has created Kali as a warrior, a Naga Queen who is abandoned by her parents solely because she is a Naga child. But Kali’s strong will power and determination make her the Queen of Nagas.

Kali is portrayed as a courageous woman, a fearsome warrior and a wise queen. She is recreated by Tripathi as the exact replica of the archetypal Kali of Indian myth and the idea is further enhanced by Tripathi through his imagination. He has recreated Kali to celebrate the feminine power and focus on the ability which lies hidden. He describes her face as,

There were small balls of bone which ran from her shoulders down to her stomach, almost like a garland of skulls. On top of her shoulders were two small extra appendages, serving as a third and fourth arm. One was holding a knife, clearly itching to fling it at Sati. But it was

the face that disturbed Sati the most. The colour was jet black, but the Naga Queen's face was almost an exact replica of Sati's. (SN 223)

Kali is also a character created by linking the Indian myth and fancy. Kali travels to Egypt to avenge the murderer of Sati.

Ganesh who is also known as Ganapathi is the most widely worshipped Indian God. He is known as Lord of Ganas since Shiva has made him as the leader of his host friends. He is also termed as the Lord of Obstacles since it is believed that he removes all the obstacles in every endeavour. There are many versions about the birth of Ganesh but it is accepted that Ganesh is created from Parvati and not by Shiva. Stella Kramrishch in *Manifestations of Shiva*, gives an account on the birth of Ganesh as, "After having bathed, she fashioned this son of hers out of the scurf and ointments from her skin and made him" (201). Tripathi has created his own story, by reshaping the mythical ideas. Ganesh in *The Shiva Trilogy* is also created by Sati's dirt-Somras. The effect of Somras taken by Sati, is the cause for Ganesh to have "...the head of an elephant" (SN 222). Ganesh is portrayed as a male child with great potentiality and also as an abandoned child who yearns for the love of his mother, Sati. Like Kali, Ganesh, the Lord of People in *The Shiva Trilogy* suffers a lot since he is a Naga. Yet he overcomes his struggles with determination and is portrayed as a brave warrior, lovable brother and a devoted son in *The Shiva Trilogy*. The scene in which Ganesh introduces himself to his mother clearly picturises his agony:

'Ugly, aren't I?' whispered the Naga, his eyes wet, teeth gritted

'Is that why you abandoned me?' whispered the Naga, ignoring what Sati had said Soft tears were rolling down the Naga's cheeks.

'Because you couldn't even bear to look at me?' (SN 223)

Ganesh is portrayed as a brilliant and brave warrior and so Shiva makes him the leader of his warriors.

Tripathi's social consciousness makes him to create Ganesh in *Shiva Trilogy*. He believes that women must be given equal rights in selecting their partners. Sati is portrayed as a widow by Tripathi and Ganesh as her son. Shiva is generous enough to accept another man's son as his own only to wipe away the social discriminations against women prevailing in the present society as stated by Tripathi himself, "The best way to bring about a change in human beings is to tap into the very beliefs that are central to their being, instead of attacking those beliefs. By respectfully showcasing an alternative perspective as to who we are, we allow for the flow of natural transformation" (Immortal India 23-24).

Kartikeya, the son of Shiva and Parvati is widely worshipped in Tamilnadu as Murugan or Kumaran. He is known as a child warrior. So Kartik is known as the son of Parvati and Shiva encompassing all the four elements of the universe as Deiter in *Shiva: The Wild God of Power and Ecstasy* comments that, "...his mother include all the elements: Parvati (earth), Agni (fire), Ganga (water), and the Pleiades (air and cosmic space)" (30). The child is a born warrior because as a six-day-old child, he fights to destroy Taraka and Surapadman.

Tripathi has reshaped the plot of Kartik's birth and interwoven it in *The Shiva Trilogy*. Kartik is the son of Sati and Shiva and Shiva names him Kartik to honour Krittika, the friend and maid of Sati. Krittika is childless hence she nurses Kartik as Lord Muruga is nursed by Krittika. He appears to be a special child walking at the sixth month and speaks as Sati says, "That was surprising. But maybe that's simply because he is a special boy! That he is. I have never seen a baby who could walk at

six months” (SN 144). Kartik practices sword fight when he is two years old. He hunts animals in his childhood and fights with Surapadman cruelly when he is just six years old and wins the battle. The way he fights, makes others tremble in fear. Kartik is depicted as a brilliant young warrior. His advice on, “dividing their enemies capabilities” prove his intelligence. Tripathi has portrayed Kartik as a special child who is calm, intelligent and proves to be a passionate warrior.

Somras, which is considered as a miraculous and heavenly drink of the immortality, acts as an element creating pain and anguish for the Nagas and Brangas. It is like some of the scientific inventions which can be a boon and a bane to the society causing hazards. Tripathi focuses on both Ganesh and Kartik as differently-abled children, because both of them are affected by Somras, the immortal drink of Meluhans. Ganesh has been harmed by Somras whereas Kartik has a positive effect on him. Somras is considered as an important beverage which is mainly responsible for the deformity of Ganesh and on the contrary, for the superiority of Kartik. The writer himself shares it in an interview,

A very strong medicine can do good for some and also cause serious damage to others, including making some differently-abled. That was an idea that remained in my mind and helped inspire this idea in my books. And as for Lord Ganesh and Lord Kartik being warriors, well they are great warriors in our traditional myth as well. (Immortal India 30)

Tripathi has created both Ganesh and Kartik as special children to express the blessings and curses of Somras. He has mixed the myth with his imagination.

‘Om’ or ‘Aum’ is the pious symbol in Hindu religion, culture and myth. It has been interpreted as the most sacred mantra. The recitation of all holy mantras in Hinduism begins with ‘Aum’. According to him, the sound 'Aum' is the primordial sound of the cosmos. “Aum is the song of the universe,” Nandi tells Shiva about the meaning of ‘Aum’. As Nandi explains to curious Shiva, the written ‘Aum’ is:

The top half in the white represented the Chandravanshi. The bottom half in the red represented ‘Suryavanshi’. The amalgam of these is the emergent common path represented in orange. The crescent moon to the right of the symbol was pre-existing Chandravanshi symbol. And the sun above it was the pre-existing Suryavanshi symbol. In order to signify that this was the pact blessed by the gods, Lord Bharata mandated the representation of this symbols the holy word Aum. (IM 44)

Aum is regarded as the essence of three worlds; the upper world, the earth and the nether world which are believed to be representing three basic Vedas, the most sacred texts of ancient Hindu religion. It is interpreted as the sound that create the existing universe.

Amish Tripathi explores the significance of ‘Aum’ in both spoken and written form. Amish’s novel’s primary subject is myth, which cannot be ignored. In certain ways, myths play an essential role in fiction. Some of the central characters are gods, while others are superhumans. Though Lord Ram is not an active character in *The Shiva Trilogy*, his existence and impact are shown in the novel. Other masculine legendary figures include Shiva, Brahaspati, Parashuram, Rudra, Daksha, and many more.

In Tripathi's imaginary world, the mythological Shiva, the Mahadev, is transformed into the real Shiva. Nonetheless, the real Shiva of Tripathi's fictional world is not the same as the Shiva of religion and mythology. It is not Tripathi's intention, as he acknowledges in his preface to the first book, "to reduce the Lord to the status of a common human being," nor is it his intention "to weaken the faith of the people in Lord Shiva". In *The Shiva Trilogy*, Indian culture is elevated to great culture, and India is elevated to the status of truly holy place. Lord Shiva and his family are specifically mentioned in the novel to provide justification for the mythical stories and create new myths about India as a holy land, its people, the political systems and the history and geography in general. As a result, Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy* is transformed into a tale of myths or a reinterpretation of myth. The Trilogy is a blend of fiction and history, which seeks to interpret ancient myth.

Chapter III

Representation of Culture and Modernity

Culture is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects of human life. It refers to the shared beliefs, values, behaviours and practices that define a particular group of people. Culture is not innate but rather acquired through socialization and learning. It plays a significant role in shaping human identity, influences people's perspective and guides their actions. For an individual, culture refers to personal values and beliefs. At the societal level, it refers to the shared beliefs and practices of a particular community and it reflects the values and traditions of a country. One of the fundamental aspects of culture is language. Language is a tool for communication and is an essential part of cultural identity. It enables individuals to share their thoughts, feelings, experiences and helps to define their cultural identity. The way in which language is used also reflects cultural values and beliefs.

Religion is another essential aspect of culture. It is a set of beliefs, practices and rituals that guide the behaviour of individuals within a community. It is an integral part of cultural identity and shapes the worldview of individuals. Religion also influences social norms, ethical values and attitudes towards social issues. Art, music and literature are also important components of culture. They reflect the values and beliefs of the community and provide a medium for expressing cultural identity. They are also used to convey messages and share stories that reflect the cultural heritage of a community. Culture also influences behaviour, including social norms, etiquette and values. It guides the way in which individuals interact with others and shapes their attitude towards different social issues. Cultural norms are often unspoken rules that dictate appropriate behaviour and individuals who violate these

norms may face social stigma. It is important to appreciate and respect different cultures to promote mutual understanding and tolerance. Culture helps the people of the society to learn from each other and enrich their lives with diverse experiences.

The culture is a cultivated behaviour transmitted from one generation to another. It is a way of life of a particular group with its behaviours, beliefs, values, and symbols often accepted by thinking and consists of patterns of behaviour acquired and transmitted through ages. Traditional ideas and values are respected with greater zeal and innermost spirit in culture. Human nature is determined by the ideas, meanings, beliefs and values learnt by human. The concept of culture is the most influential factor in shaping human psychology. Superiority or inferiority of any social group cannot be measured on scientific standards because no culture can boast of being scientific and rational to the core. There can be cultural differences without beings judged as superior or inferior. Cultural ethnocentrism is nothing but the reductionism to present the culture of others as the distorted form of culture.

There are different ways and levels of manifestation of different cultures. The symbols in cultures often represent most superfluous and the deepest values in culture. They are generally seen through heroes and rituals lying between the superfluous values and deepest values of a particular culture. Cultural interaction is bound to influence the cultural manifestations in all the cultures. Symbols are only the outermost layers of the culture. Heroes are the models to be followed in culture while rituals are collective activities thought to be essential by the society. Values form the core of a culture. Values are broad factors of judging between good and evil, right and wrong, and natural and unnatural. Therefore, they cannot be discussed, nor they can be directly observed by others. Superstitions are generally regarded as the beliefs or

practices explained to be caused by supernatural causality. If the belief or practice is not in contradiction to modern science, it ceases to be called a superstition.

Superstition is always in contradiction to modern science and skepticism. In cultural practices of all the social groups of the world it is generally seen as a natural tendency of the people to think of their beliefs and practices as faith and not as the superstition. The thin line between faith and superstition is actually imaginary.

Among the age long traditional superstitions in India, black magic, the land of snake charmers, witchcraft, ghosts and spirits have often been observed to be prevalent.

Indian intellectuals especially, those who belong to Indian elite class, being inseparable part of Indian culture, do not give up their cultural tradition or discard it for the sake of modern British culture. However, they do not believe that what formed the then Indian culture is good for the general welfare of Indian society. English education in the wake of science and technological advancements does not let them give up their rationalism for their age old cultural traditions.

Culture is defined as the abstract values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world.. It encompasses all that is man-made and is transmitted from one generation to another and gets modified with the passage of time. Most of the culture is transmitted through language biologically because the human perception of the world in most of the cases comes through the language. Humans perceive the world in linguistic terms.

Language is most important aspect of human beings without which it would have been impossible to imagine life in its progressive form. It might have existed but would have been stagnant as that of other animals and plants. People are not born with a culture; but learns through the process of 'enculturation' which consists of multiple factors, working together to teach an individual and shape the human brain. People

develop and maintain culture because it is their need as it helps them to deal with basic problems like survival and other issues that concern them.

Culture takes root and survives by satisfying the basic needs of people who live by its rules, develop means to ensure its transmission and continuity across generations, and provide an orderly existence for members of the society. It develops viable ways to balance individuals' self-interests with the needs of community. The needs of individuals and that of the community can be a formidable challenge because societies are made up of individuals and groups with varied interests, natures and needs. The culture that understands the needs, interests and natures of all the members forming a particular community survives for a long time without fail. Others who do not do so are bound to differ and thus, deviate from its own ways of harmony and order. The interest of the dominant groups are most influential and better served by a culture's worldview. The ways of the dominant groups within a culture are often held important than the ways of common people whose interests are often subordinated within a culture. The ways, traditions and rituals of a culture are designed to serve the interests of the members of the same group. They cannot create the rules for the sake of rules and are not the primordial set of principles governing the universe. Therefore, successful cultures are often seen to be dynamic, rather than static.

The long survival of a culture requires that a culture must keep changing in order to adapt to new circumstances and influences. It should also accept the changes according to people's changing perceptions of the world. It should consider the developments and adopt it as a part of life practice. Culture is created and followed for a long time by people. Therefore, culture should change its values and its practices according to the time. Culture is often reflected in social practices of the people. It can

be understood through rituals and literature. Myth and culture are interconnected. They intermingle with each other and become one with the passage of time.

In *The Shiva Trilogy*, there are many incidents where conflict between two different cultures are depicted. It is not a rising issue but one can see its roots right from the beginning of any civilization. The conflict occurs for many reasons, either for power or for property or for natural resources or for anything. In the novels, there is struggle between Gunas and Prakratis, Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis, Nagas and non-Nagas and so on. Gunas incessantly fight with the Prakratis as they want to live next to the holy lake. On the other hand, Prakratis form allies with other mountain tribe and become stronger. Therefore, Shiva has decided to leave his abode along with his tribe. Being a clan leader, he thinks it is better to leave than, to fight everyday just to stay alive. He thinks that by moving out of Meluha, they can escape the meaningless violence and live a life of comfort. He does not like the idea to move out, as he knows that Yakhya, the chief of the Prakrati would falsely announce that he has defeated Shiva's Gunas and has won the land, but, he discards the idea knowing the futility of the war. Thus, Shiva and his community's sole access to the water of Mansarovar Lake becomes the cause of continuous conflict between Prakratis and Gunas. Being a tribal, Shiva is uncouth and unsophisticated, as he does not know how the civilized people lead their lives. He is ignorant about the rules of battle that the Meluhans follow. Shiva symbolises an uncultured savage whom Nandi educates. Formerly Shiva is portrayed a savage and a brutal slayer who never showers mercy on his enemies but after Nandi's edification, he changes his mind and spares Yakhya. Nandi teaches him the Kshatriya Dharma as well as the rules and the codes of conduct followed by the Meluhans.

Meluha is a highly civilized society and hence Ayurvati, the chief doctor of Meluha calls Shiva and his tribe “uncouth immigrants” when they first came to Meluha. Even Sati calls him ‘uncouth’ and ‘barbarian’ when he stares at her, “These uncouth immigrants! As if we’ll find our saviours from amongst these barbarians!” (IM 49). Daksha, Naga and Kali also label Shiva as ‘barbarian’. Nevertheless, when Shiva becomes Neelkanth, they adore him like a god. They change his outfits by offering him new costumes, ornaments and herb treatment to make him look like a civilised Meluhan. Shiva’s tiger skin skirt is replaced by new costumes appropriate for cultured people. The process of Shiva’s transformation from uncivilized barbarian to civilized Neelkanth is described as,

His hair had been oiled and smoothened. Lines of expensive clothes, attractive ear-rings, necklaces and other jewellery were used to adorn his muscular frame. His fair face had been scrubbed clean with special Ayurvedic herbs to remove years old dead skin and decay. (IM 29)

Culture conflict is further described by the clash between the Suryavanshis and the Chandravanshis. At Devagiri, Daksha tells Shiva about the agonies of Meluha – terrorist attacks, shortage of Somras and extinction of the Saraswati. He says that the Chandravanshis are solely accountable for all the problems and under the leadership of Neelkanth, the issues would end forever. Daksha effectively convinces Shiva to support Meluha in his plan of attacking Swadweep, an empire of Chandravanshis. He misleads Shiva by giving him wrong information about the legend as well as about the Chandravanshis. He says owing to jealousy, the Chandravanshis cannot see the superiority of Meluha and detest their happy and peaceful lives as they lead an unhappy life. He even calls the rulers of Swadweep evil. Daksha says,

Save them from the evil philosophy that infects their soul. Save them from their treacherous rulers. Save them from their sorry, meaningless existence. And we can do this by giving them the benefits of the superior Suryavanshi way of life... it is the unfinished task of Lord Ram. (IM 116- 117)

Daksha's imperialistic approach is observed in his feat of reforming Chandravanshis. He wants to conquer Chandravanshis and give them the Suryavanshi lifestyle. He misleads Shiva calling them evil. Daksha's activities remind one of the past imperialist approach of Britishers, who have extended their boundaries by military power and missionaries. The same thing is also confirmed by Shiva who says, "You will need soldiers to defeat their armies and missionaries to bring them to your side" (IM 117). Daksha likewise wants to reform the Swadweepans and give them Suryavanshi lifestyle and to expand the boundaries of his empire. The task is not easy to perform and so he takes the benefit of the legend of Neelkanth to fulfil his selfish purpose. He misleads naive Shiva by calling him Neelkanth, their saviour and asks him to lead and help them in defeating evil Chandravanshis. Thus, Daksha believes that their culture is superior and other cultures are inferior. He says, "We are going to bring to you our superior way of life" and "we are going to reform you" (IM 359).

Defeating Chandravanshis in the war of Dharmakhet, Shiva meets Dilipa and Anandmayi. Shiva witnesses a heated debate between Parvateshwar and Anandmayi regarding superiority of culture. Parvateshwar praises the government of Meluha saying that the people in Ayodhya are hungry, the children are abandoned on the side of potholed highways, the old forlorn women beg for alms while the rich people of Ayodhya live a superior life even better than Meluhan emperor. In this regard, Anandmayi replies though they are not perfect, they give liberty to their people; the

people in Swadweep are not forced to pursue stupid laws created and mandated by elite people. Dilipa, the Emperor of Swadweep assures that neither he nor his command has anything to do with the devious attack on Mandar. He even assures Meluha that his empire would have full support in the investigation. However, Shiva understands at last that neither Meluha nor Swadweep is perfect as both have good qualities as well as some weaknesses.

Shiva understands the fact that being different does not mean being evil. Besides Chandravanshis, Daksha has strong detestation for Nagas, which is seen in his representation of Nagas. About Nagas, he says no Naga can be a leader. They are cursed people born with horrific deformities and diseases as a punishment for terrible crimes that they have committed in their previous birth. The Nagas are embarrassed to face people. Similarly, Kali hates Daksha and calls him a repulsive goat.

Culture conflict is also represented through the symbol of the confluence of Ganga and Sarayu. Using the symbol, Ganesh discusses the reason behind the culture clash. After defeating Magadh, Ganesh becomes sad as half of the adult population of Magadh have been killed. Pointing towards the confluence of Ganga and Sarayu, he teaches Kartik the philosophy that in the beginning when two worlds meet for the first time, a lot of chaos is created but at the end, the two worlds always unite and bring tranquility. Showing the sangam or confluence of Ganga and Sarayu he says, “The rivers fight with each other with the only currency that they know: water. We humans fight with the only currency that we know in this age: violence” (OV 267). According to Ganesh, they are living in the age of Kshatriya and it is the main reason why all of them think that the only currency to bring about change is violence. Ganesh elaborately explains the characteristics of each age. He says in the age of the Brahmin, the main currency is knowledge but in the age of the Kshatriya it is replaced with

violence. In the age of the Vaishya, there are chances for replacement with other currency and it would be money although violence and knowledge will never die. Thus, culture conflict is observed throughout the story wherein the followers of each culture think they are superior and try to subjugate others.

Charles Baudelaire in the essay, *The Painter of Modern Life* uses the term 'Modernity' for first time in mid nineteenth century. He says,

By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the immutable. Every old master has had his own modernity; the great majority of fine portraits that have come down to us from former generations are clothed in the costume of their own period. (81)

Modernity is both – the culmination of the past and the messenger of the future pointing to the breakdown in socio-cultural relations and artistic representation. It covers the western history from the Renaissance, or the era that begins with the seventeenth century scientific revolutions of Galileo, Hobbes, Newton and Descartes. Modernity according to the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* is, "... the condition that results from being modern. For example there is a contrast between tradition and modernity on the street of the city." (n.p). Modernity is considered to describe a way of living and of experiencing life which has arisen with the changes by industrialization, urbanization and secularization; its characteristics are disintegration and reformation, fragmentation and rapid change and insecurity. It involves new understandings of time and space – speed, mobility, communication, travel, dynamism, chaos and cultural revolution.

Modernism is differently discussed to be a period, style genre or combination of all but first a word from which it has risen. The root word is modo, which means 'current'. So, the word modern is deeper in meaning than Modernism. Modern English is differentiated from the Middle English, and the modern period in literature is from the sixteenth century. More generally 'Modern' has been used to refer to the avant-garde. Modernist is comparatively an old word which in the late sixteenth century refers to a modern person, but by the eighteenth century is referred to as a follower of modern ways and a supporter of modern literature. Modernism on the other hand is first used in the early eighteenth century to denote trends and characteristic of modern times and in the nineteenth century it includes the meaning of all the modern opinions styles or expressions. Modernist writing is famous for its experimentation, ambiguity and attempt to create a tradition of the new.

In *The Shiva Trilogy*, Amish uses the concept of modernisation. Amish changes the characters, buildings and concepts according to his own interest. He makes the changes to make the story interesting. Although the theme of the novel is mythical and historical, at many places the characters and concepts have changed which do not seem to appear at that time. The background showcases the ancient time of the Meluhan civilization. The story begins with the migration of Shiva and his men from Kailash to the modern city. Shiva and his men are tribal people, who have never seen modern amenities before. When they reach the camp they are welcomed by Chitraangath, who introduces himself as an Orientation Executive. Chitraangath says that if they need advice for anything they should consult him. He is the only person who can help them and solve their problems. This type of post does not exist during the Meluhan civilization or during Shiva's age.

The camp is full of many modern facilities – the streets are decorated, the underground drains are covered with different coloured stones running through the centre of the road. The rooms, which are built on the third storey is full of luxury. There are clean linen bed sheets, towels and even some clothes. The material of the bed sheets is cotton, which Shiva has never seen before. When Shiva enquires about the material, he learns that the clothes are made from a plant that is grown in their land. Everything appears modern – notches, metal rods with lamps. The beds, which are in the rooms, are unnaturally soft, that they have never seen before. The bathrooms in the camp appear to be ultra-modern.

The other major scientific invention is the radio waves, which is impossible to that age to have such modern invention although the Indus valley civilization is much developed. Shiva realizes that while communicating with the pundit at Kashi Vishwanath temple he could read his mind. When Shiva asks about the secret, the pundit discloses to him that every human being emits certain signal through his body's electronic waves but very few are capable of decoding them to understand and it requires rigorous training. The pundit explains to Shiva about the science of the radio waves:

‘This is certainly not a theory. This is a fact. Just like light which helps you see, there are radio waves to help you hear. While all human can easily use the properties of light to see, most don't know how to use radio waves to hear. We are dependent on sound waves to hear. Sound waves travel much slower through the air and for much shorter distances. Radio waves travels far and fast, just like light.’ (SN 104-105)

Shiva, in a conversation with the pundit in Brahma temple narrates about his dream. The pundit tells him about the theory of colour – that the light has all the seven colours just like the rainbow and he asks Shiva about the colour of the leaf which is green in colour. Then the Pundit explains to him that the leaf absorbs all the colours out of seven except green which makes it appear green.

Modernity gets visible through the presence of the Nagas and the reason is given for their deformed bodies. There are two main Naga characters in *The Shiva Trilogy* who are the major contributor and influencer in the novels, Kali and Ganesh. Brahaspati explains to Shiva about the functions of Somras. He says that human body is a composition of innumerable tiny cells and they keep dying on a daily basis and get replaced with new ones. Somras stretches this process to quite a longer time which results in long age but in few cases when the division of such cells gets uncontrolled, it results in causing the deformity and unwanted growth of an organ. Kali has extra hands and Ganesh has long nose like an elephant. Usually the process automatically stops and it results in aging and diseases. A couple, who consume the Somras for quite a long time is expected to have a child with deformity.

Nagas are a class who live on an alienated land much away from Meluha because they are considered as the carrier of bad omen who are punished for the sins committed in their previous birth. In reality, they are the victims of a wonderful invention, which has shaped and developed the complete civilization to its peak. Somras produces the side effects which get evident through the deformities of Nagas and plague in the people of Branga.

In Indian literature the origin of Varna from Vrinj dhatu, means to adept or to choose. It means the man chooses his occupation according to his ability and interest

as he is free to choose an occupation as a he likes, which becomes his Varna. Varna system is based on qualification, ability and interest. In Bhagavad Gita Shri Krishna says,

“Caturvarnyam maya srstam gunakarmavibhagsah I

Tasya kartarmapi mam viddhya kartaramavyayam II” (Geeta, 4/13)

In ancient India it is assumed that being the children of Brahma, all are Brahman. In the age of Rig-Veda, Varna system did not exist in India. According to *Ramayana*, all the people belong to the same Varna. Some historians have said that, at the beginning of Rig Veda age, there were two categories (class) of people. These categories are based on colour. In the *Mahabharata*, it is said that there is only one class at first but owing to different causes, various classes came into existence. These were the Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas but the fourth Varna is not mentioned. At the end of Rig Vedic age, the four categories have been listed which are based on karma. In *Mahabharata*, it is written that the origin of Varna is related with colour. Brahma created four Varnas according to their colour – White, Lohit (red), Peet (yellow) and Black, which does not denote the skin colour, but the colours are related to their qualities, traits and their work.

Amish Tripathi uses the modern perspective based on historical, philosophical, cultural as well as subjective and imaginative views. *The Shiva Trilogy* covers on many concepts like mythology, philosophy, history, religious concept of God, good and bad, masculine and feminine. In the area of modernity, he depicts many of the characters like Shiva, Sati and Ganesh in modern ways. The author represents the scientific phenomenon and production of Somras which pollutes the river, Saraswati. He brings in the concept of modernity to the readers of the present age.

Chapter IV

The Philosophy of Karma

The Hindu religion believes in the concept of rebirth and has its own philosophy to support the logic of the cycles of birth. The theory of salvation posits that future birth, the conditions and actions performed during one's life are the accumulated effects of the performance of the previous birth whether good or bad. The ultimate aim of any soul is to find the salvation from the cycles of birth and be with the omnipotent. Classic Indian literatures like *Ramayana and Mahabharata* encapsulate the philosophical hypothesis of 'Karma'. Karma is the basic dominant concept in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, though the religion like Christianity does not have any concept like Karma, as it is related to reincarnation. The conceptions of 'sowing and reaping' is found in the Bible; Islam insists that one's actions is rewarded by God and not by Karma.

The word Karma is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Karman' which means 'Act'. Thus the word karma can be defined as the total sum of the action, deed or work done by a person through his body or by the thoughts either in the present life or in the previous life. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines Karma as, "the sum of someone's good and bad actions in one of their lives, believed to decide what will happen to them in the next life." (n.p.) The first manifestation of Karma is in the ancient Indian literature, Rig Veda.

Any action a person does is called karma and it is impossible for any human being to live without doing any karma. Hirabhai Thakkar in the book, *Theory of Karma* (1994) defines karma as, "Each and every physical action or deed that you

perform with the co-operation of the mind, right from morning to evening...during the whole of your life right from birth to death is called Karma” (29).

Philosophy is the science of knowing the truth beneath the layers of what one feels and observes. Indian philosophy believes in the concept of soul and cycles of birth and it is the study of decoding the mystery of reaching the ultimate crossing of all the hurdles of material charms and distractions. The Indian school of philosophy is mainly divided into two – the first one is *Astik* and the second is *Nastik*. Indian philosophy gives much value to the Vedas and its roots is found in the Vedas. The philosophy of Vedic tradition has two aspects; knowledge or *Jnana Kanda* and ritualism which is called *Karma Kanda*. The most distinct feature of Indian philosophy is its theory of karma which gives immense importance to a person’s actions and propagates that it should be given more importance than anything else in life. The Indian philosophy believes on the aspect that the right karma can bring peace and ultimate freedom if done in the right way, without the influences of the personal emotions, relations and conditions. Though the idea of karma has been discussed in many of the earliest Indian literatures, only *Bhagavad Gita*, tries to explain in detail the different folds of Karma. Arjuna is advised by Lord Krishna to resurrect dharma by performing his karma.

The Indian philosophy explains karma as the science of cause and effect or action and reaction. Whatever a person does, they get the consequence of the same and the philosophy of karma says that the man is only the architect of his destiny. The law of karma is unquestionable because it functions equally for all without any discrimination of any sort. God cannot be present everywhere, so the system is established which is capable of functioning on its own. The law of karma is universal which functions under all circumstances and conditions across the world. The law is

controlling the whole universe equally with the same guiding light of their own karma. The deed, whether good or bad gets credited into one's karma as 'Sanchit karma', which ripens in the next birth as 'Prarabdha karma' which can be said luck, fate or chance. The philosophy of Karma is moreover equal to Newton's third law of gravity, which is, 'for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction'. The law of action and reaction spares no one, the highest gods and the lowest mortals are all bound by the rules of karma.

There is no escape from the doctrine of karma. Unconscious acts are not the part of karma and bear no fruit or consequences. There is no reservation in the law of karma. It is an exact and accurate regulation of actions and their results. The karma is such in nature that people get good fortune because of the good deeds of previous life. Misfortunes in people's present life are the result of acts that people have committed in the past. In the same way, people's actions determine their fate in the next birth. Hindus, therefore, aim to live in a way that may cause each of their lives to be better than the life before. Hindus believe that a person's present living depends on the karma of their previous life. They might not like their role in society, but they learn to accept their duties rather than complain about their expectations. Lama Anagarika Govinda in *Good Karma and Bad Karma* (1978) states that, "All the suffering of this world arises from a wrong attitude. The world is neither good nor bad. It is only the relation to our ego that makes it seem the one or the other" (11). Good Karma is determined by good intentions such as compassion, loving-kindness, and wisdom. Bad Karma arises when a person acts upon three defilements anger, greed, and delusion. While enjoying the fruits of the same, one keeps on performing the new karma which causes new stock of karma. For the sake of bearing the result, the soul has to take new birth and the chain continues endlessly.

The end objective of every soul is to get salvation or to get rid of the eternal cycle of birth and death. After one attains the 'State of Realisation', they become unconscious of their karma. Human beings misunderstand information to knowledge, one may acquire all the possible information about the world related to science, history, maths, geography and culture. But until he realises 'who he is', it is impossible for him to attain salvation from the ever ending process of birth and death. Hirabhai Thakkar in the book *Theory of Karma* says that, "The person so self-realized in his complete knowledge, becomes free from the cycle of birth and death which is the ultimate goal of having human body by the grace of God" (31). Indian philosophy proclaims that doing right karma can free people from the constant cycles of life.

Amish Tripathi effectively presents the philosophy of karma from different points of view through various characters in the novels. As Indian philosophy perceives, Amish too presents individual psyche and society as a system that undergoes the process of self-creation and self-generation as opposed to a deliberate construction. Each character is given its own way of looking at the event and shares their beliefs about the same. In the novel, the protagonist, Shiva is the main spokesperson to deliver the philosophy or any idea that is to be conveyed. Though, it is declared that all the characters are a part of fiction, their dealings and behaviour is god-like. The novels dive deep into their psychology and provide reasons for the decision they take which is considered philosophical in their nature. Amish Tripathi represents Shiva as a 'Karma yogi'. The term Karma yogi means a person who ceaselessly crusades for the benefits of the others, without expecting the fruit of the action. Shiva's character is painted with the colours of Karma and Karma yogi. He believes in the present birth and not the previous birth. He discards the theory of rebirth and the concept of sin of previous birth upon which the karma philosophy is

based. He abolishes the law of Vikarma which is based on the concept of past life sins.

A person who suffers mis-happening could spoil the balance of society and for the benefit of such people, a law called 'Vikarma' is formed. Vikarmas are the subdued group in Meluha. The system of labelling Vikarma is not based on caste for which Nandi, the captain of Meluha Kingdom explains 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. . . . They are not allowed to marry since they may poison others with their bad fate. They are not allowed to touch any person who are not related to them or is not part of their normal duties. (IM 94-95)

It says that if a person suffers in the present life with any disease or giving birth to a still born child or the husband or wife of any person dies, then he or she is considered a Vikarma. It is thought that the unfortunate event happens only because of the past life sins. Vikarma is described as,

A woman gives birth to a still born child, why would she be punished thus unless she had committed some terrible sin in her previous birth? Or if a man suddenly contracts an incurable disease and gets paralysed, why would it happen to him unless the universe was penalising him for the sins of his previous life? (IM 95)

Shiva does not believe in past life and being the Neelkanth, he discontinues the system. Shiva propagates the philosophy that a man is responsible for the events that happen in his life and that he can control them or change them to a great extent.

As far as the unfortunate incidents are concerned, it should be tolerated because he thinks that it can happen with anyone and it should not be considered as the will of the Almighty. One must try all the possible ways to bring the positive change by their own efforts. The main sufferer of the Vikarma law is Sati, who emerges free from the sufferings after Shiva abolishes the law. Shiva says to Sati that, “There are no past life sins, Sati! There is only this life. That is the only reality. Everything else is a theory” (IM 112).

Karma does not spare Sati, just because she is the Princess of Meluha and the only daughter of the Emperor. Sati shares a different opinion about the Vikarma system as she believes in the concept of rebirth. She is presented as a Vikarma as per the law of Meluha and she has been living a life of penance to get rid of past life sins to live a good life in her next birth. She never shows any resistance to the law and suffers silently because of her firm belief in the concept of Vikarma until Shiva abolishes the entire system from the country. This allows Sati to lead a normal and happy life considering the situation to be the part of her destiny. It is Sati, who chooses to oppose her father after realizing that he works against the humanity and being a conscious person, she considers it as her karma to raise her voice for the people who are unable to fight for themselves.

The novels portray how the society deals with the people who are not able to keep themselves in the main stream of the society. It is due to the disease or some unfortunate incidents that take place which leave them wretched and distressed. They are no longer considered healthy people. These people are called the Vikarma in the Meluhan society. The Vikarma people are supposed to follow a separate code of conduct in their daily life which is not normal and have many restrictions. When Shiva, the Neelkanth encounters the issue of the Vikarmas, he is not able to

understand the relevance of the system. The Pandit of Mohan-Jo-Daro explains to Shiva that the Vikarma system is required to maintain the balance in the society. The system easily convinces the people with the explanation that what they are going through is the result of their sins committed in the previous birth and God has given them an opportunity to atone and try to undo the wrong that they have done in the past life. The Pandit explains to Shiva that it is an easy psychiatry to keep them engaged in the belief that the suffering they go through is because of their actions and they are responsible for it. By following the system, the balance of the society is maintained. The Pandit admits that the system may be unjust but the philosophy functions successfully.

The author presents another perspective based on the past life sins. There are other major characters, Kali, Ganesh and Maya who have physical deformities like extra hands, long nose or two heads in one body respectively. They are labelled as Naga in Meluha. They are given separate land where they live with the people of the same kind to avoid disturbing the normal life of healthy people. Kali is a very influential character in *The Shiva Trilogy*. She is presented as an independent person with her own thought process. Kali discards such philosophy which professes that a person is born Naga because of the past lives sins. She believes that a man should take charge of his destiny and reject the depressive idea of enduring the pain being born as a Naga. She believes in changing the complete perspective of the attitude shown towards the Nagas. In the end, her approach is justified when it is disclosed that the Nagas are born because of the side effect of Somras and not by the sins committed in their previous birth.

Shiva decides to accept the proposal of an unknown foreigner, Nandi to migrate to Meluha, the modern city not due to fear but to avoid the bloodshed and

provide his clan, Gunas with better living. He realises futility of constant battles with his enemies, the Prakrits. Shiva fights many battles in his lifetime and realises the fact that it is an exercise in vain to fight any war and advocates that one must try to avoid it as much as possible. He says to Parvateshwar, “If I have learnt one thing from the pointless battles of my land, it is that wars should be the last resort” (IM 231).

The Shiva Trilogy describes the creation of the legend of the Neelkanth. The author skilfully presents how the Vayuputras, the group of people who choose the Neelkanth, systematically produce or create the Neelkanth by utilizing the faith of the people. Through the Neelkanth, the evil is annihilated from the society. He says, “Evil had been removed and the knowledge of the Somras is saved. India has rejuvenated itself as the malevolent effects of evil are removed. The Neelkanth has succeeded in his mission, and in that lay the success of Vasudevs” (OV 558). The legend serves a great purpose, brings back the order and balance in the society. The legend talks of bringing a positive change in the society and requests the people to give up their attachment with their favourite possession which in due course of time has turned evil. It would take his lifetime and there is no guarantee that he would get success. But when a belief is created among the masses that a particular tribe has the sacred power to choose the God for them, the task becomes quite easy. In the novel, the person who is chosen as the Neelkanth has the power to pass the order and the common people readily agree to give up the attachment to their favourite possession, the Somras. The unique philosophy successfully functions in the novels and the mindset of common Indian could be easily understood that once one believes in anything totally, the wonders are done. The legend after successfully accomplishing the task retires and allows the society to flourish and whenever the evil rises the same process is repeated to deal with it.

Shiva is a simple tribal man from Tibet who just happens to have blue throat and the Meluhans follow and worship him like a God. He finds this act very uncomfortable. Shiva also believes in the philosophy that a person becomes great only by his deeds. He says to Daksha, “What difference will I make? I am no miracle worker” (IM 54). Shiva shows remarkable capability of transforming the mindset of common people. He motivates all the fellow soldiers who fight for the cause of destroying evil; he propounds the philosophy that each one who fights for a good cause is a ‘Mahadev’. According to Shiva, a Mahadev is not born but a person becomes Mahadev by his actions. So all the persons who are fighting to kill evil are Mahadevs. He says, “A man becomes a Mahadev when he fights for good . . . ‘Har Ek Hai Mahadev’ . . . ‘Har Har Mahadev!’” (IM 100). Being a very pragmatic person, Shiva is doubtful about the thought of perfect society, he doesn’t believe in the philosophy of perfection and preaches that the perfection is a constant process of improvement and it is not the destination because whichever height of standard a society achieves, there will always be a room for improvement into it. He holds the same opinion for the Meluhan society which seems quite close to perfection but is surely not the perfect society.

Amish Tripathi’s *The Shiva Trilogy*, presents the prominent question, ‘What is Evil?’ and throughout the novels the story goes through various series of events to come to final conclusion. The principal philosophy of *The Shiva Trilogy* is to find what is evil. Though the answer might seem very simple and easy, it does not appear so in reality. Finding the evil in the society takes a complete tour into the realm of spiritualism and being detached is the basic requirement of the search. Evil is not present directly and the attachment to anything particular makes it evil. Once the bond is established it leads to the decay and deterioration of the society and people in the

long run. The novels convey a very interesting and candid philosophy that the thing which appears the best and serves the humanity to the best possible manner, results into the worst enemy in due course of time. Somras serves as the main pillar and is considered as the boon to the growth of the Meluhan society. When Daksha discloses to Shiva the secret behind the long and youthful life of the Meluhan people, he mentions, 'The drink belongs to the gods' (IM 97). Daksha never realises that it is because of the Somras, children are born with deformities and are doomed to live the life of Naga. He does not realise that the Somras are the reason for the Plague in Branga which results in the death of thousands of people every year. The manufacturing process of Somras needs lot of Saraswati water which further causes its depletion. As the story moves on, even after knowing the truth, many are not ready to give up their personal gain and in this stage, the Somras bring evil to the society. The philosophy proves itself very truthful that one thing which serves a particular purpose of goodness has to end at a point. As time passes, the people do not realise that they have to control it at one point of time. This is the human nature that once they start squeezing the pleasure out of something, they never stop and so they fail.

The novels have abundance of philosophy about the ways of life and code of the conduct that the society should follow. When the Emperor Daksha and Prime Minister Kankhala have accepted Shiva as the Neelkanth according to the legend, Parvateshwar a staunch follower of the ideals and laws of Lord Ram avoid to follow any such person as their Lord just because he has the blue throat. He reminds both of them the core philosophy of Lord Ram that a person becomes great because of his deeds and not because of a legend. Parvateshwar says, "Only Karma is important. Not your birth. Not your sex. And certainly not the colour of your throat" (IM 57). As the story moves on, he decides to fight for his motherland being duty bound and considers

it more important than following Shiva, the person whom he worships like a God. He is fully aware of the fact that what he does may not be right from other's perspective. But he has firm thought that, as per the law of karma nothing is more important than doing karma to save the motherland. In the end of the novel, when he gets the opportunity to escape, he refuses and chooses to die with his nation which is above everything to him in life. Parvateshwar says to Nandi, “It is only the very unfortunate who must choose between their God and their Swadharma” (OV 196). The same philosophy is conveyed when Uma, a mere in-charge of gates of Branga, does not acknowledge their old friendship at the time of duty, denies the entry to the Neelkanth and his group because Divodas, the chief-incharge of the group is not able to explain to her the purpose of the visit.

There are other characters in the novel who have given more importance to their dharma after realizing what is good. Nandi, a sincere citizen and captain of Meluhan Army decides to support Shiva against Daksha in the holy war because he understands that he has to perform karma which is favourable and brings good to people. He is even ready to bear the consequences of going against his motherland. He holds his karma for the whole country which is more important than his kingdom. In the same way, the renowned doctor, Ayurvati also determines to favour Shiva because he is on side of public's interest. There are two women characters in the novel who chooses to die out of no compulsion but because of their sense of commitment to their duty or karma. The first is Queen Veerini, the Empress of Meluha who has the option to leave the capital Devagiri before Shiva shoots the Daivi Astra which is also known as Pashupathi Astra to destroy the evil. She denies Kali's offer to leave the city by saying that it is her duty being a queen to die with her people. It shows the highest level of commitment which develops a great sense of

respect for her. The second lady is Anandmayi who also opts to go to Devagiri with her husband Parvateshwar knowing fully well that it would be a one way journey. She being a wife decides to be with her husband in all ups and downs. This gesture fills everyone with great esteem for her. Both the ladies are governed by the thought that they are to behave in a manner as it is their karma which guides them to behave with such great dignity. Amish achieves success in conveying the message that Indian women naturally follow their course of conduct.

The novels in *The Shiva Trilogy* convey one philosophy with great emphasis that the dignity and dharma towards the duty is given the utmost importance and people of Meluha seem to take lots of pride in following the law towards their duty. They are ready to sacrifice themselves for the purpose. Sati, in the last act of her life chooses duty over life and to save her soldiers, she jumps into the battle knowing the fact that it is one way journey, which is not just an act of valour but a belief and philosophy which governs their life, sense of duty and dharma which they consider more important than life itself.

The Shiva Trilogy presents another philosophy very strongly that the feminine is no less gender. Throughout the novels, the women are seen doing all the possible jobs on the earth with great commitment and dedication whether it is of a warrior, a queen, a doctor, a prime minister or an intelligent life partner. Sati being a warrior gets ready to sacrifice herself for saving the villagers of Icchawar, and says, “I am a Kshatriya. It is my dharma to protect the weak. Dharma comes before anything else” (SN 193). Kali being the queen of the Nagas, for the safety of her people denies sharing the secret path way to Panchvati. Queen Veerini gets ready to die with her people being the queen of Meluha. Ayurvati is a proficient and dedicated doctor who leaves no stone unturned to serve her patients. Kankhala proves herself a paragon to

imitate by following her dharma and sacrificing herself to pursue her true duty for her nation.

The Shiva Trilogy propounds the philosophy of masculine and feminine way of life. The structure of the novels is built around the juxtaposition or interrelationship between the two worlds of Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis. The Masculine concept is found in the Meluhan way of living. Meluha runs along the lines of Ram Rajya and strictly follows the laws of Lord Ram. The Suryavanshi motto is “*Satya, Dharma, Maan*” (IM 123). Devagiri, the capital of Meluha. The masculine way is to live a life of order and discipline. Disciplined life helps the society to reach the peak of development because of the fixed life style and ethics but when it decays, it results in fanaticism and anarchy. It proves torturous for the weak people and provide little scope for them to come up in life. On the other hand the feminine way of life is represented through the lives of the people of Ayodhya. They follow the code of “*Shringar, Saundarya, Swatantrata*” (IM 124). This life style provides enough space to every individual, does not give much emphasis on order and discipline. Rather, it believes that too much of order makes life dull and boring. It believes in having discussion on every topic for making the solution instead of dictating the decision. The life flourishes in its natural form but it does have some weaknesses when it declines, it results in complete mess, disorder and corruption. To reach common agreement takes a long time that it becomes almost irrelevant.

In *The Shiva Trilogy*, a distinctive system of parenting the children is followed and it is called ‘Maika System’ where the mother has to leave her child in Maika, a place specially created to keep the children away from their biological parents. They take care of the child’s future including parenting, education until the age of sixteen. Once the child comes to the age of sixteen, he or she is given the amulet according to

his/her skills. They provide the best people in all segments of life. The system advocates that the caste should not be based on birth of the child instead it should be entirely based upon the merit based performance. The people get the scope to do the job they like and not the job they inherit from their parents. It is very useful technique that provides the best to society and on the other hand it keeps people free from frustrations. Life values are inculcated in children which helps them to adjust and live in harmony. Being away from their parents, they learn to live independently and they do not feel the pressure of the expectations of anyone. They learn to choose their own lives and make decisions and are fully aware that they are responsible for their success and failures. Shiva says “Each person is given a position in the society based only on his own abilities. The efficiency and the fairness of this system is astounding” (IM 99). *The Shiva Trilogy* conveys that a child’s future is based on their upbringing. Through the philosophies of karma and life values, Amish Tripathi stresses on the importance of correct upbringing by parents and the code of conduct a person should follow.

Chapter V

Conclusion

'Myth' usually involves the supernatural elements to explain some of the natural phenomenon, traditions and practices of a particular culture. It has become an important term in contemporary literary analysis. Mythology has been perpetually fascinating the human race and it has been an element of great emotional appeal for the people of all the religions. Culture and Literature are influenced by the mythology and the contemporary authors have revisited the mythological world through their literary contributions.

Literature and myth is representative of a culture. Culture and myth of a community are interconnected and is reflected in literature. Myth has been the constant companion of philosophy in the ancient world. Ancient philosophers have recorded, interpreted and reinvented mythological tales for philosophical purposes. There is a strong connection between myth, culture and literature. They reflect on the relationship between myths and discourse and between mythos and logos. Myth is intimately related to philosophy. Philosophers in the ancient world chose to express themselves in a wide variety of literary forms: poems, dialogues, treatises, and commentaries, while reflecting on the significance of such choices. Literature is one of the fields in which myth is protected. There is a mutual relationship between myth and literature because myth provides the foundation to literature and literature through its perpetual existence protects myth. Literature has also nourished, enriched, and enlivened myth from ancient times to the present age.

The epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are a rich source of religious beliefs and cultural norms. It is because of the epics that one has their own culture and a way

of life. In Indian mythology, Shruti and Smriti are the foundation. They are passed from generation to generation, ensuring that legendary works remain relevant to the contemporary age. The Hindu mythology has been reworked by several authors in the modern era. Many stories and legendary characters may be found in Indian folklore. Indian mythology is revered over the world. Readers, authors, and publishers have all been open to the idea of rewriting God. Although it is not a brand-new idea, the idea of interpreting Indian mythology is nothing new. Amish Tripathi is another author, who has attempted to retell the Hindu mythology. He has a unique writing style.

Amish Tripathi has been successful in making most of the modern literary trend of recreating myth within modern premises. His books have been received well by the young reading audience, largely due to the relatable way in which he portrays the mythical elements. The novels have ample amount of modern day connotations of politics and technology which have become an integral part of man's existence. The balance that Amish Tripathi manages to create between antiquity and modernity is accepted by the readers. Amish Tripathi is perceived as a representative of modernist fiction writer in India who presents a myth-inspired writing beyond the confines of moral or religious connotations. His writings blur the borders dividing science and religion, inspiring the readers to look beyond the diversity of the people. *The Shiva Trilogy* exemplifies some of the postcolonial attributes of people such as identity, diaspora, and acculturalisation through the characters and the setting.

There is no effortless way to distinguish between myth and legend, folklore, and the reality of a distant past after studying Amish Tripathi's *The Shiva Trilogy* thoroughly. Myths, legends, and folklore tell stories, yet they all differ from each other, even though they share many similarities. According to anthropology, sociology, psychology, and history, there is little doubt that mythology gives plenty of

material for writing. There is a lot of Western literature based on the mythologies of their own countries when it comes to Indian literature or any other literature in any other language. But on the other hand, it is not a novel occurrence in Indian writing. Myths like *Ramayana*, and *Shivpurarana* are the subject of folk literature. Distinct Indian writers are used to writing works in different languages. Tripathi's modern perspective is informed by a variety of sources including historical and philosophical texts, popular culture, as well as the subjective and speculative perception.

Literary works are analysed in terms of themes and techniques. Art of characterization, narrative technique and the content of the plot contribute to the success of any literary work. The subject matter or the major themes that the author deals with, are important to the success of a literary work. Amish Tripathi is one of celebrated and popular writers of twenty-first century. The three books form a single story narrated in an extremely interesting style. The three novels are together called *The Shiva Trilogy*, describes the story of Shiva, a man who becomes a legend over the time and finally is being identified with the 'Paramatma'. Amish Tripathi blends the novels with his own imaginative powers and his understanding of the ancient history and geography. His fictional story is written in a brilliant style and understanding that readers do not feel it to be fictional but real. His technique of blending his characters with historical events and using places, rivers and mountains make it a different world, away from the world of mythical stories.

The people and the incidents in the novels are inspired by the mythical Lord Shiva, the Mahadev. Amish Tripathi looks at the myth in a different way which gives him deep insights to think of mythical Shiva as the common man, who is regarded as the Lord Mahadev, the most revered God of Indians. He blends the historical incidents with the flaws of modern human beings which make his characters sustain

throughout the timeline. They do not seem to be the characters of ancient times but they become characters of the contemporary times placed in the good old times. The nature of politics narrated by Amish Tripathi transcends the boundaries of time and place as it becomes universal. Thus, he revives the tradition of faith. He creates a different and more authentic version of mythology than his predecessors and contemporaries. He tries to provide a validation to the mythological reality in order to make it concurrent with the contemporary world of logic and reasoning and tries to build a logical argument for his incidents, characters and their actions. Thus, he has not only retold the myth but also tried to give a validation in the modern world of logic.

The Shiva Trilogy establishes the glorious tradition of governance for the welfare of people in ancient India. The author makes imaginative use of mythology for propelling the plot and for developing the theme. He retells the fictional stories, setting them into a particular historical context, well defined geographical areas and popular mythological characters using modern techniques, lucid style and elaborate descriptions. He has chosen to write about the Indian superhero with a different perspective. His imagination is finely blended with logic and the contemporary impulse. The story of Shiva told by Amish Tripathi in *The Shiva Trilogy* is totally different from the mythological stories of Lord Shiva. Its foundation lies in the myths of Lord Shiva of Indian mythology. While narrating the story of Shiva, the glorious past of India is greatly depicted as the best socio-political system ever developed in the world. He builds his philosophy based on the divine principle of equality. He romanticizes fictional Indian culture and places it in the line of best cultures ever established on this planet.

The Shiva Trilogy series of three different novels entitled, *Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* narrates the story of Lord Shiva, the Mahadev not as the divine being but as a common man, who becomes a God by his actions and with the passage of time is identified with the Supreme Being, the omnipotent, the omniscient and the Almighty Lord. The series is fictional history created by Tripathi's imagination where the mythical Shiva, the Mahadev becomes the real Shiva. Nonetheless, real Shiva of Tripathi's fictional world does not remain Shiva of religion and myth. Tripathi's attempt, as he himself admits in his introduction of the first book is not to reduce the Lord to the status of a common human being, or to reduce the faith of people in Lord Shiva. In fact, he believes that the respect for Lord Shiva is strengthened in *The Shiva Trilogy*.

Indian culture becomes great culture and the land becomes truly holy in *The Shiva Trilogy*. The book gives justification for the mythical stories and creates new myths about India as a holy land, its people, Indian political system/s, its history and geography in general and Lord Shiva and his family in particular. Thus, Amish Tripathi's, *The Shiva Trilogy* becomes the myth of myths or reinterpretation of myth. The trilogy can be interpreted as a myth fiction in the mould of an epic story involving a hero's journey which follows a specific path. Popular myths from across cultures and even fairy tales explicate the path of the protagonists who take up the challenges coming their way and travel to unknown destinations. Their journey is often a quest, a search which serves a purpose.

Joseph Campbell's division of the phases of quest has been mapped to *The Shiva Trilogy* to highlight the nature of journey by Shiva and Sati and the great purpose behind it. Joseph Campbell, in the book, *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) carries out an extensive study on the heroes of different myths and brings out the

common pattern in their quests. The various phases of a hero's travel is divided into different stages and maps the events in the life. The three major phases – Call, Initiation and Return – provide the broad pattern in which a hero travels through his life. The three phases are applied to Amish Tripathi's myth fiction *The Shiva Trilogy* comprising the three books – *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* respectively. Shiva and Sati, the protagonists of the texts, are the protagonists who embark on a quest which takes them towards a greater purpose in life, even beyond their own perceptions. Shiva and Sati are individuals who have a calling to accomplish which is to eradicate the evil from the country. Their lives become entangled at a particular point from where their mission becomes the same. Their quest has been interpreted not as a personal feat but as one with larger implications for the society in which they live and travel and, on the whole, for the betterment of all humanity.

The Immortals of Meluha, the first novel in the trilogy, is read as the first phase of the quest – 'the call'. Shiva and Sati are seen living a life which is fixed into a routine with no room for any change. Shiva's life as a tribal leader is filled with trepidations about his tribe's safety and the possible attacks looming from his enemies, the Pakratris. Sati's life as a princess contains bondage to traditions and fate, which have taken away the basic happiness entitled to every human being. Both are seen living a life from which there is no obvious escape or change. Every human being perceives his or her own life in this manner and sinks into an apprehension that life will be the same. Their lives are jolted out of monotony when the call comes in different forms. Shiva's calling displaces him geographically, whereas Sati's calling is a displacement of belief. The fact that they identify it as a call and respond to it is what makes their life a meaningful quest. Responding to the call happens to be

beginning of a series of adventures which, though relieve them from the existent situation, take them further into a much intricate path. As the novel moves on, they cross various thresholds and enter the epicentre of the new life. Shiva and Sati find themselves in unfamiliar territories, facing unusual situations, yet they march on with a determined mind to travel further. Shiva and Sati are bewildered about the many things that happen around them, yet they begin to sense that their contribution to the Meluhan society is important and develop an open yet inquisitive mind.

The Secret of the Nagas portrays how Shiva and Sati have been well initiated into the quest. The newness and unfamiliarity of their surroundings have faded, but doubts arise about the people and circumstances causing them to falter mildly in their path. Their beliefs about good and evil are shaken. Shiva's impression of the Meluhans as good and Chandravanshis as evil is challenged, and he begins his search which requires searching his own soul for answers before he could arrive at any conclusion. Sati struggles to come to terms with the changes happening in her life, yet she embraces the removal of the Vikarma law and matrimony to Shiva with an open mind. They begin to understand that the perception about good and evil changes from culture to culture and sometimes from individual to individual. New people, relationships, countries, and cultures help in widening the perceptions about various facets of life. The mystery intensifies with the revelation of characters like Kali and Ganesh, who are initially perceived as villains and now have emerged as one's own blood and flesh. Both Shiva and Sati travel through a road of trial, meet long lost family members, make new friends, confront conflicting relationships, reach the vortex of issues which culminates in new knowledge and understanding. From this point onwards, both are burdened with an overwhelming sense to find out the truth, and they put in their heart and soul and travel further to bring their quest to fruition.

The Oath of the Vayuputras presents the final phase of the quest ‘the return’ and shows how both of them go far and beyond to obtain help for the establishment of truth or good. They risk everything, including life, in order to find the path of truth. Shiva and Sati wages war with Meluha even if it means their loved ones will be in the enemy camp. Setbacks and losses bring them down, but Shiva and Sati are undeterred and intend to learn from mistakes. They obtain the necessary assistance, both moral and materialistic in their battle against evil. Shiva travels extensively to meet the Vasudevs and Vayuputras to learn more and equip himself better for the quest. Treachery and guilt change the way the war game is played, resulting in the loss of innocent lives. A guilt-ridden Sati dies by falling prey to the ruse of peace set by her father. Shiva avenges the death of his beloved wife, which results in the fall of the Meluhan Empire along with its erring royals and faithful citizens. Once the quest is complete, Shiva, returns to Mount Kailash from where his journey begins.

The study thus traces the path travelled by Shiva and Sati in accordance with that of Campbell’s hero. Shiva and Sati are individuals with strong personal traits of honesty, dignity, and self-respect, and they exhibit leadership qualities seeking the betterment of fellowmen and society. Though the characters of Shiva and Sati are inspired from divinity, the author makes them as human as possible. He at the same time invests them with the ability to rise above the confines of common life and emerge as gods. They are very much like every other human being on this earth, but prove their unique identity by seeking to follow the truth and establish it in the world. The novels are written with plenty of mythical and imaginative elements, but the characters are real. Every common man can relate to these experiences and follow the path of the hero.

Based on the study of the characters of Shiva and Sati, it can be summed up that it is important for every human being to be alert to the calling for quest. While many complain about the monotony or instability of life, a few develop the inner potential to identify the calling that can come from different quarters of life. Great personalities who have accomplished extraordinary feats both in personal and public sphere have all once heeded to the voice that called them. They choose to displace themselves from their comfort zone and try to move and travel to unknown destinations in search of truth. Answering the call entitles a person to quest, but it involves taking up dangerous pathways and encountering new people. These experiences enhance or change the perception of reality for the questing hero; yet they resolve not to swerve from the path of good deeds, which is maintained despite all adversities. The ability to look for the greater benefit of the society is important for an individual to be a true hero. One who accomplishes the first two phases of call and initiation merely undergoes a spiritual transition, while the one who embarks on the third and returns with victory emerges as the hero. Tripathi's books raise the question whether all can be heroes. While every person may not be etched to accomplish feats akin to Shiva or Sati, there is a calling to quest for all. The calling to live as good human beings shunning the path of evil and not causing harm to fellow humans is the true quest for all. Human existence is based on the notions of good and evil. Mythology, legend, fable, scriptures, and even philosophy seem to dwell on the truth.

Eccentricities are unique to life wherein one cannot predict the way. The life of great persons and their wise words remain as the only guidelines for all. Every life on this earth take up the journey of living while the lives of some people are designed to achieve more than mere living. Their lives derive meaning only when lived for others, for which they would scale any difficult path. Such a person evolves as a

unique individual and everyone looks up to them for guidance. Every tale, whether belonging to myth or fantasy, captures the journey of a person who has lived a gallant life. The journey is unique to each individual, but it invariably follows a particular path common to all.

Amish Tripathi brings out the importance of retelling of mythology to the modern readers. He upholds the tradition but brings the mythological concepts in a modern way for the readers. The true story of Lord Shiva is considered to be superficial but Amish Tripathi has changed it into an interesting story for the current day scenario. He portrays Lord Shiva as a simple tribal man, who is worshipped as a God due to his actions. The author also gives a detailed description on the living style and the culture of the Meluhan people. He introduces modern amenities like bathroom, soft mattresses and weapons. Even though the novel is based on tradition and mythology, Amish brings in many modern day concepts. He also highlights the major issues in the society including untouchability and caste system. The philosophy of Karma is also portrayed in detail in the novel. In a modern way without taking off the essence, Amish Tripathi tries to make the readers know their culture through the trilogy.

Mankind has drifted away considerably from the cultural codes dictated by religion and myths, considering the obvious destruction that are caused by the scientific advancements, yet the people find a way to control the damage done and prevent the future crisis. Developing environmental consciousness is one way to address the ongoing conflicts between nature and man. Though this may not be the age of reincarnations and saviours, it has become necessary that every individual has to realize their doings and save it from being consumed by the evils of modern times. In an age where religious beliefs and values are questioned citing scientific

improbabilities, myth helps to recall and refresh the memories concerning one's culture. In the individual's quest for life, the stronger ones accept the challenge and conquer; the weaker ones refuse, make easy choices, and quit. The research is an attempt to show how individuals can be active and powerful in the world through the study of mythology, modernity and philosophy.

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