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SYMBOL AND SCIENCE: A READING OF AMISH'S SHIVA TRILOGY

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Abstract: Similar to any other mythology, Indian mythology is founded on some archetypal signs, symbols, and rituals. Symbols and myths are related, and this relationship is constantly up for debate. It is best to think of symbols as tools that facilitate understanding and communication of concepts. Symbols can have multiple meanings and are always effective when used in context. The major symbols of Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy are examined in this article. Shiva trilogy is a compelling book series that explores religion and philosophy, the eternal conflict between good and evil, and the moral quandaries that frequently accompany such arguments. Amish have made an effort to use science and logic to interpret well-known symbols in the trilogy, a superb blend of myth and history. In the article, the metaphoric potency of symbols in both historical and contemporary human imagination is examined.

Index Terms – Myth, symbol, Science, Metaphor, Shiva, imagination

Every culture and civilization contains myth in some form or another. In his article, Alexander Altmann mentions J.J. Bachofen, who described myth as the deconstruction of the symbol. The symbol is not the late outcome; rather, it is the narrative's parent of myth. The myth simply reveals the meaning that is embedded in symbols. (162) The Indian Mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik opines about symbols in his well-known book *“Indian Mythology: Tales, Symbols and Rituals from the Heart of Indian subcontinent, “Some concepts can only be symbolically conveyed; they cannot be fully expressed in a story. Symbols can be realistic (a conch, a flower, a tree) or abstract. Symbols, as opposed to signs, can be perceived in countless ways. This makes them extremely potent and able to convey concepts that cannot be expressed in words.(19)”* Furthermore, people's perceptions of the most well-known and widespread symbols are drawn from their environment rather than from their own fantasies. Symbols appear in popular culture but are also concealed, making it necessary to see them via conceptual lenses that carry meaning beyond the literal nature of the thing. The social containers that reveal the symbol's profundity and its application to daily life are art and ritual. A mytho-logia is a framework of meaning in which symbols have always existed. It is also an important element in contemporary rituals of popular cinema, religion, and politics. The purpose of myth is to explain. It can be understood as the “the science of a pre-scientific age.”

Shiva trilogy is a bundle of three charismatic and magnanimous novels written by Amish Tripathi and titled as *“The immortals of Meluha, The Secrets of Nagas, and The Oath of Vayuputras.* The trilogy primarily centers on the narrative of Shiva, the most well-known Hindu god, and follows his transformation from a Tibetan immigrant to Mahadev, the Lord of Humanity. Even though Amish took inspiration for all of his characters from the Siva Purana and other old holy scriptures, his stories also offer a rationale and scientific explanation for the incidents and symbols. The current research will examine the scientific justification of well-known symbols in the Shiva trilogy.

Shiva's blue neck developing or becoming Neelkanth is an idea that Amish Tripathi wrote about in an extremely wonderful manner. According to a prevalent myth, the poison Halahal was also released with amrut during Samudra Manthan. Everyone prayed to Lord Shiva, who then squeezed the poison that was spreading over the area into the cavity of his palm and devoured it out of compassion. Even on Lord Shiva, the poison (which was a concentrated contaminant of oceanic water) demonstrated its potency and turned his throat blue, yet the place ended up becoming his unique jewel. "He has a blue neck because he drank deadly poison in order to protect the world from it, keeping it in his throat rather than swallowing it, and it made his neck turn blue. (Vanamali,25) However, in the novel, the reason of Shiva's blue neck is quite different. In an attempt to combine it with science, Amish explains that When Shiva was a young boy, his uncle Manobhu, a wise man and Vayu Putra, handed him a remedy that he had created with Lord Mithra. Shiva was selected by Uncle Manobhu to be Neelkantha, and he was then educated to become the somras, the savior and slayer of evil. When Daksha called the Shiva clan to Meluha via Nandi, they arrived with the Somras that Dr. Ayurvati had given to them. His neck became blue as a result of both medications reacting at the same moment.

In popular myth, Shiva is a God with three eyes. "The third eye on his forehead denotes him as the Lord of yoga. This inner eye distinguishes truth from illusion and conquers lust. (25 Vanamali). "The third eye is perhaps the greatest symbol of Shiva's transcendent nature, one that is unfettered by ideas that differentiate beauty from ugliness, left from right, top from bottom, past from future, men from women, minerals from plants, and plants from animals. This Uniting the self with the true Siva Tattva by the control of the senses is real wearing of Bhasma, because Lord Siva through His third eye of wisdom burnt passion to ashes" (28 Siva Puran) It is explained in Siva purana, that Siva has the fiery third eye. Constant Abhisheka cools this eye. It leads us on to the realisation of self and bestows on us eternal bliss and frees us from births and deaths. It shows us the light of life. It is the eye of intuition. It is the third eye of Siva. This third eye destroys all illusions and passions. (51,Siva Puran) Siva is called 'Tryambaka', because He has a third eye in his forehead, the eye of wisdom (Jnana Chakshus). 60 Siva Puran) Another myth says, one day, Parvati covers Shiva's eyes with her palms. The world is plunged in darkness. To get the sun to shine again, Shiva opens his third eye. So fiery is the glance of this eye that it causes Parvati's palms, placed over the left and right eye, to sweat. From this sweat is born a child called Andhaka, the one born in darkness. (129,7 Secrets of Shiva) In another philosophical version, the third eye of Shiva indicates transcendental wisdom. The third eye, therefore, embodies absence of discrimination and choice, hence absence of desire. (92, 7 Secrets of Shiva) A metaphorical explanation of the third eye is given by Sadhguru, "When we refer to the "third eye", we are symbolically talking about seeing something that the two sensory eyes cannot see. The sensory eyes are outward-oriented. The third eye is to see your interiority – the nature of yourself and your existence. It is not some extra appendage or crack in your forehead. That dimension of perception through which one can perceive that which is beyond the physical is referred to as the third eye."

This logic of Shiva's third eye is also explained in the Shiva Trilogy with reference to the theory of the brain and its hemispheres, and it was Neelkanth who helped people to understand it. As a young child, Shiva experienced a sharp discomfort between his eyes. His uncle Manobhu administered some sort of painkiller to him. The flaming portion resembled a vertical eye. The tale discusses Shiva's remarkable response to somras as well as the reasoning behind the third eye. Gopal explains, "[Third eye] 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. Of course, they can also be activated by medicines. The Vayuputras use medicines to activate the third eye of those amongst their young who are potential candidates. (The Oath of the Vayuputras, 111) But Lord Manobhu believed that Shiva was born with pre-active third eye. He, hence chose Shiva to be the recipient of the Vayuputra medicine which is more suitable for those candidates who have this eye active. The uncle smiled. 'It'll set you on the path of your destiny.' (The Secret of the Nagas, 143) Since the beginning of the book, Shiva has been biologically and psychologically groomed to play the role of Neelkanth.

Another symbol is Har Har Mahadev, the chant. Firstly, the chant is found in the ancient Veda - Rigveda. The chant has different meanings. In time of sorrow or suffering the devotees can chant 'Har Har Mahadev' to help them overcome their sufferings. The chant Har Har Mahadev is a chant related to Lord Shiva. 'Har' in Sanskrit means take away or destruction. 'Mahadev' means - Lord Shiva. So, the chant Har Har Mahadev's meaning is - Elimination of all distress, sorrows, and obstacles of the devotees by Lord Shiva. The explanation of the slogan Har Har Mahadev is given differently in the selected novel. 'A man becomes Mahadev when he fights for good. A Mahadev is not born as one from his mother's womb. He is forged in the heat of battle when he wages a war to destroy evil... "I am Mahadev, but I am not the only one! ... I am not the only one! For I see a hundred thousand Mahadevs in front of me! I see a hundred thousand men willing to fight on the side of the

good! I see a hundred thousand men willing to battle evil! I see a hundred thousand men capable of destroying evil! ... Har ek hai Mahadev! Har Har Mahadev' bellowed Shiva. The Meluhans roared. All of us are Mahadevs! (The Immortals of Meluha, 344-345)"

Popularly in India, the OM is the symbol of the almighty GOD. It is called Akshar Brhma. When Shree Krishana describes his own form in The Gita. He states, He is OM among the words. "Giram asmy ekam Aksharam" Om is described in Shiva Puran in detail. It is called Pranava here. 'Pra' denotes the ocean of the natural world originated from nature. 'Nav' is the ship for passing over the world. It means pranava (Om) is the means to reach ultimate God. It also has prohibitory meaning - castaway affairs. On another meaning of pranava-'Pra' is the eliminator of actions and 'Nav' is the giver of divine wisdom. It eliminates all actions and gives divine wisdom and knowledge. That is why yogis called it Pranava. In the Siva Purana, Siva is called pranav because he is free from 'Maya' and pure in nature. This Pranav makes pure in nature of his seeker. Here 'A' denotes Lord Shiva, 'U' denote Power and 'M' is the unity of both. 'Om' is also described in detail in Chandogya Upanishad. Upanishad says 'Om' is the nearest name of God. When we use 'Om', God becomes happy. Just a general person becomes happy when someone calls him by his nickname.

Therefore, by name and symbol, 'Om' refers to God. In Chandogya Upanishad, it has been said that – Earth is the extract all the creatures, Water is the extract of the earth, Medicines are the extract of the water, Man is the extract of the medicines, Man's extract is speech, Speech's extract is Sam, and Sam's extract is the 'Om.' So 'Om' is excellence and eligible to be a symbol of divine. Thus, 'Om' is an eloquent letter. Worship of the letter 'Om' seeks all desires. 'Om' is also a symbol of permission. When a person gives permission to another person says 'Om'. In starting studying Vedas it was used to say 'Om'. Further, Siva says, the letter A represents my northward face 'U' represents westward, 'M' stands for southern Face, the Bindu' connecting the three words A-U-M is the middle-faced Deva and the fifth face is over-awing.) A singular deity thus manifests as 'Omikakshara' or as Shiva Shakti which is all pervasive and omnipotent. Bhagavan Shiva declared that continuous recitation of the mantra raja 'OM' sums up all the Vedas and scriptures.

The symbol of 'Aum' which is translated in detail in the novel is significant. 'My Lord, Aum is the holiest word in our religion. It is considered to be the primeval sound of nature. The hymn of the universe. It was so holy that for many millennia, most people would not insult it by putting it down in written form.' In another case of mistaken identity, the word 'Om' in the novels is said to be a letter so holy that people were afraid to take it and even write it. It was only after many many millennia that it was finally put down on paper. This is also not true about 'Om' or any other word in Sanskrit. (The Immortals... 58) In fact, as anyone sufficiently familiar with Indian ethos would certify that 'Om' is a very sacred word for everyone in India and everyone takes it without fear. In fact, it is taken to be the words to be uttered with the least amount of fear and it is also written everywhere, on shops, at homes, on vehicles. And this has always been the case. (Muktananda 85)

King Bharat came up with this symbol of unity between the Suryavanshis and the Chandravanshis. The top half in white represented the Chandravanshis. The bottom half in red represented the Suryavanshis. The part in orange coming out of the meeting of these two parts represented the common path. The crescent moon to the right of the symbol was the existing Chandravanshi symbol. And the sun above it was the existing Suryavanshi symbol. To signify that this was a pact blessed by the gods, Lord Bharat got a mandate for the pronunciation of this symbol as the holy word Aum. (The Immortals... 59-60) There is another symbol Swastika that can be translated into "that which is associated with the well-being or very simply a lucky charm" (The Immortals of Meluha, 282).

The theory of Om presented in the Hindu texts is similar to the description of Om provided by Amish Tripathi in his book. This sign OM was addressed by Patanjali in his Yogasutra. Ideas and words go hand in hand. Since God is the fundamental truth of the cosmos, he must be portrayed by some fundamentally natural and all-inclusive sounds in order for us to have an understanding of him. Hindus consider this sound to be the OM. The initial letter of the alphabet, according to Swami Vivekananda, is the source of the sound since it can be uttered without using any of the tongue or palate. The closed lip makes the letter M, the final sound in the series, and the bottom of the mouth makes the letter U. Thus, we might conclude that OM is a symbol for the entire phenomenon of sound production. It is the oldest term for God that has ever transmitted to humankind. Numerous followers have used it, always referring to just one specific deity in the most Widespread manner. Therefore, the term "OM" is the most holy word of all if sanctity is applied to it.

Amish's utopian world Meluha represents the major trends of the culture of ancient India. It discussed not only Aum and Swastika but other symbols like trishul, animals, rivers, etc. having their own symbolic and scientific significance. Amish himself explains in one of the interviews, "Symbols are essentially words, designs or any structure which convey a complex meaning very easily and quickly. It is one of the core basis on which

cultures are based. The design itself does not matter as much as the meaning associated with the design.” He associated scientific and rational explanations with ancient myths. To conclude, Symbols can be viewed as multivalent, irreplaceable, shared to the extent that they have significance across cultures and times, and pointing to inner transformation, whether they appear in ancient myths, religions, or contemporary popular culture.

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