



# Myth and Reality: A Critical Analysis of Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

**Garima Sharma**, Research Scholar, Department of English, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut  
(India)

## ABSTRACT:

The many oral traditions, folklore, and folktales that comprise each community and culture throughout the world may be utilized to determine the ideological beliefs that shape them. A specific race has made tremendous efforts, both intentionally and subconsciously, to generate, maintain, and pass them down from generation to generation. These legends and myths have grown in importance as a topic of study for academics in a variety of fields, including literature. Myths have always inspired authors throughout history. Myths impact the meaning of literature to the full depth and breadth of its collective meaning. Myths and legends give a literary artist with a wealth of inspiration and chances. If a writer believes the tale is accurate, he or she may opt to utilize portions of it. Amish Tripathi, a popular Indian author, writes in English and explains mythological tales so that modern audiences might accept them. The author's *The Immortals of* (2010), *The Secret of Nagas* (2012), and *The Oath of Vayuputras* (2013) comprise the *Shiva Trilogy*. This research paper focuses on Amish Tripathi's *Shiva* trilogy, in which he combines mythology with current concerns. It includes attentively reading the text and analysing the plots and settings that merge mythology with modernity.

**KEY WORDS:** Modernity, Myths, Trilogy, Folklore, Folktales, Culture, Metamorphoses, Generation, Humanity, Civilization.

Myths have been at the heart of every society throughout history. There is no country that is devoid of history, secrets, traditions, and stories, all of which inspire a nation to create his own mythology. Myths serve as the cornerstone of any civilization, and hence play a significant role in the construction of that society's social, cultural, psychological, and moral substructure. Myths differ across the eastern and western worlds. The majority of Western literature is based on Greek and Roman mythology. The Gods and Goddesses are personified and seen as vital to the survival of both nature and humanity. These mythology have undergone several changes from generation to generation. Myths are used to alter people's lives by teaching moral lessons and changing human behaviour. Myth plays an important role in man's daily existence through rituals, dreams, customs, religious beliefs, and so on. It has numerous aspects for varied reasons, and each facets is

distinct and realistic to the perceiver who adopts or alters it consciously or subconsciously. Myth governs and defines not just the individual mind, but also the people's entire cultural element. Amish Tripathi has taken Indian mythology and re-narrated it in his writings. The author's presentation of myth does not change the original's belief or religion, but it does provide an opportunity to review Shiva stories from other angles. Mythology is crucial for understanding and society in comprehending any civilization. We can gain a deeper understanding of a culture's ideological beliefs by studying its mythology, folklore, and folktales. Mythology emerged as a literary tendency in the 18th century Western literary tradition. Much of its content has been adapted from Greek and Roman classics. Classical Greek and Roman literature. The term myth is derived from the Greek word *mythos*, which means "which has a range, from "word," through "speaking," and "tale," to "fiction"; the unquestionable validity of *mythos* can be contrasted with *logos*, the word whose validity or truth can be argued and demonstrated (Buxton, web)." Literary writers have taken information from these classics and reinvented it in their own manner. These masterpieces have been used in various types of art as well as literature. The ancient Roman poet Ovid's retelling of Greek myths, *Metamorphoses*, had a significant impact on succeeding authors and painters. Ovid's poetic impact may also be found in the Latin poets Dante and Petrarch in Italy, and Chaucer in England. La Fontaine, a French poet, based many of his stories on Aesop's Fables. For many centuries after Homer's *Odyssey*, James Joyce's masterwork *Ulysses* was written as a modern adaptation. Shakespeare's writings contain numerous references to Greek and Roman mythology. Greek mythical stories and characters inspired the writings of John Keats, William Butler Yeats, and PB Shelley in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Taking into consideration India's mythological framework, we discovered a great range of folktales, mythology, and myths. India, the holy nation, has always been immensely rich in culture and civilization. Among all the world's literature, Vedic literature is believed to be of the highest calibre. The Veda, Puranas, and Upanishads are works of Indian literature that are rich in mythical themes. These Scriptures offer the Gods, Goddesses, Demi-Gods, and Demons in such a way that they provide a huge choice of subject matter for a literary artist. When it comes to Indian mythologies, two major epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, have always been prominent. Their storylines, subplots, characters, and presentation all have a deep resonance with modern Indian culture. Indian myths and their superhuman figures have left a lasting impression on readers all across the world. Mythological topics in English Indian literature have captivated audiences.

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is the subject of this study. His work with myth and how he used myth with modernity to give his compositions a nice twist. *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010), *The Secret of Nagas* (2011), and *The Oath of Vayuputras* (2013) compose the *Shiva Trilogy*. Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* has been named one of the best-selling books in Indian publishing. It has been translated into a number of national and international languages. Amish Tripathi is a well-known graduate of the famous Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in Calcutta. Before turning to literature, he worked as a finance professional. In the early days of his career, Amish Tripathi's writings revolutionized the literary world. Over 6 million copies of his writings have been sold worldwide. He is currently a government official in the United Kingdom and the Director of the Nehru Centre. He has also hosted a show on Discovery T.V. called *Legends of the Ramayana*. He is the author of several fictional and nonfiction books, including the *Shiva Trilogy*, *Ram Chandra Series*

Immortal India (2017), Dharma (2020), and Legends of Suheldev (2020). The way he vividly conveys our great history and mythologies has captivated a new generation of readers: “Today’s young Indian is generally unaware of her rich mythological heritage.” She has a foggy, hazy understanding of her own mythology. Western myths and tales, on the other hand, abound in the short stories, poetry, and novels that youngsters read as they grow up. In this trilogy, Shiva is portrayed as a human being with flesh and blood who, through his actions, elevates himself to the status of a godlike saviour. Amish Tripathi created a new style of narrative by combining history, myth, and science. His narratives also include references to modern civilization, cultural values, and kinship. It is vital to examine how these themes are employed throughout the work critically.

Tripathi’s Shiva Trilogy combines Indian Gods and mythology with modernity. According to Gaurav Vasudev of The Statesman, “the book is a gripping mythological story written in modern style” (Wikipedia). Specific examples will demonstrate how these two factors interact. In the novel, Shiva is not depicted as a divinity; rather, he is depicted as a powerful, moral man whose conflicts and attempts to build an egalitarian society have made him eternal. The Immortals of Meluha, which was released in 2010, opens with a magnificent description of the landscape that introduces the main character, Shiva: “Shiva looked up at the orange sky.” The clouds over Mansarovar had just parted, revealing the setting sun. “The brilliant giver of life had called it another day...” Meluha (2001).

Amish Tripathi’s approach of blending myth and fiction included Hindu gods. He assisted Shiva in attaining the leadership of the Guna tribe. In Hindu mythology, Shiva is known as the destroyer. In legends, Shiva is also associated with the strength that subdues evil. Despite alterations to the plot, the substance of the work stays the same. In the opening chapter of the book, we learn about a new narrative of how Shiva came to be known as Neelkantha. According to the primary concept of the narrative, Neelkantha will appear and save the Meluhans from evil. “The Neelkantha will be a foreigner,” according to tradition. He can’t possibly be from Sapt-Sindhu, “And that when he drinks the Somras, his neck would become blue” (Meluha, 119).

According to some scholars, the trilogy comprises Amish Tripathi’s Meluha and Swadeep narrative. Meluha describes the entire region of the Indian subcontinent’s North West, from Gujarat in the south to Kashmir and Afghanistan in the north, Punjab in the east, and Sindh in the west. Meluha encompasses the entire country of Pakistan as well as the Indian states of Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat. Eastern Afghanistan is also included. As a result, the book’s description appears to apply to Indus Valley. The first volume of the trilogy contains a wealth of information on the Indus Valley civilization. We learn about the city’s well-planned structure and working drainage system, personal restrooms, perfect government, and severe cleanliness measures to stave off illnesses as we read the book. When Shiva comes with his gunas, he is astounded at the city’s cutting-edge amenities: Each room featured an attached bathroom with a sloping floor that let water to naturally flow to a hole that was inculcated in a huge hole. The side walls include a mechanism that, when cranked, allows water to flow through (Meluha, 14). The book also relates another instance in which the tribe was transported to modern aided quarters and confronted a slew of brand-new and rich goods that were foreign to the Guna tribe, including as furniture, clean linen bed sheets, towels, and mirrors. The softness of the beds made available to them enchanted them. “A befuddled Shiva asked,

what is this material?" said the assigned orientation executive. Cotton Shiva, Chitraangadh responded heartily. "The plant is grown in our lands and woven into the cloth you are holding" (Meluha, 14). Modern elements such as soap and the bathroom's built-in faucet have been used into books such as these: "he turned the magical device on the wall to increase the flow of water. He rubbed the body clean with the weird cake-like material that the Meluhans said was soap" (Meluha, 22). The table's decorations and accessories have a more modern feel to it. The dinnerware and food, while rich, convey the sense that the gathering is taking place in a palace while yet retaining the essence of the present. Shiva believed it was a great arrangement since, being from a primitive background, nothing made sense to him: Sati looked over the arrangements. A formal table and chairs for breakfast rather than the preferred low table and floor cushions that Meluhans normally sat upon to eat. The beloved banana tree leaf had been replaced by gold plates. The taste enhancing kullads or mud cups, had been replaced by refined silver glasses. (Meluha, 147)

The novel's cited words demonstrate how new arrangements influenced all old formalities. When Brahaspati analyzes the entire scenario with Shiva and Nagas in the third volume of the series, the Naga mythology will be explained. His detailed analysis has shown how the Somras affects both the population of Baranga and the surrounding region. Amish Tripathi draws attention to the disastrous impacts of technical and scientific advancement on natural resource depletion. Brahaspati asserts, "When Somras was being made for just a few thousand, the amount of Saraswati water used didn't matter. But when we started mass producing Somras for eight million people the dynamics changed. The waters started getting depleted slowly by the giant manufacturing facility at Mount Mandar" (Nagas, 17). Those who have been drinking Somras for a long time notice various changes in their bodies as a result of its use. The villagers of Baranga are presently coping with a horrible sickness in which their children die as a result of the discharge of Somras' waste in the river Tsangpo, which flows into and meets the Branga water, contributing to the Saraswati River's depletion. Shiva hears Brahaspati's thorough explanation of this: "Nagas were born with deformities as a result of the Somras. The Somras randomly has this impact on a few babies when in the womb, if the parents have been consuming it for a long period" (Nagas, 14). Following this, Brahaspati deals with how the body's Somras mechanism functions. He explains: "we use to believe the Somras blessed one with a long life by removing poisonous oxidants from one's body. But that is not the only way it works" (Nagas, 15). He wishes to contrast the current situation or state of the rivers flowing in India by discussing the scenario of the rivers Saraswati and Somras. The way Amish has portrayed the women in the book is fantastic, and he has mesmerizingly combined the ideas of mythology and contemporary. And finally, he is impartial when it comes to the female characters in the book. According to Osho, "women can be a huge help in creating an organic society; they are different from men but not equal; they are as equal to men as any other man" (9). In the Shiva Trilogy, women have equal opportunities everywhere, not only in the classroom. Nine female characters total—Ayurvati, Sati, Kali, Anandamayi, Kritika, Uma, Tara, and Veerini—are featured in the trilogy. They take their own positions and have a big part in the story. They are all equally compatible with their male spouses and skilled in self-defence. Kshatriya princess Sati was born into a royal family. Sati is famed for her Kshatriya dharma, just as Kshatriyas are renowned for their military might; her first appearance is depicted as being atop a chariot, "guiding the horses expertly into the courtyard while a lady champion by her side held on the railings"(Meluha, 48). The

Shiva Trilogy also illustrates mythological astras and weaponry by establishing parallels between them and modern military technologies. The novels contain multiple fights and arguments from the beginning to the end of each chapter. Numerous additional confrontations have been described, such as those between Shiva and the Nagas and the Gunas and Parakritiks. Specific names of astras such as Brahmastra and Pashupatinath Astra are referenced in the books, which are also used in Hindu epics such as the Ramayana and Mahabharata to eradicate any evil on the battlefield.

Most daivi astras only kill men. But there are some, like the Brahmastra, that can destroy any city if not kingdom...the Brahmastra is the weapon of absolute destruction, my friend; a destroyer of cities and a mass killer. When fired on some terrain a giant mushroom cloud will rise, high enough to touch enough the enough. Everyone and everything in the targeted places would be instantly vaporized. Beyond the inner circle of destruction will be those who are unfortunate enough to survive, for they will suffer for generation. The water of the land will be poisoned for the decades. The land will be unusable for centuries: no crops will grow on it. The weapon will not kill once it kills again and again, for centuries after it has been used. (Oath, 342-343)

The following description clearly shows that Amish Tripathi is referring to the atomic bomb catastrophe that occurred during World War II. We can see how history and myth are interwoven in this way, mirroring our modern society with its newly emerging illnesses and environmental issues. The voyage of the novel begins with the hunt for evil in others, but as it unfolds, it appears that there is no evil in others—rather, it is inside ourselves. Amish Tripathi has approached the contemporary political, social, and environmental issues in a far more engaging manner that keeps the reader's attention from beginning to end.

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