

## Mythological Matrix in Amish Tripathi's '*The Immortals of Meluha*'

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### Abstract

Realism becomes a mode for dealing with the present. It deals with the current problems of man and society. The complexities of modern society can truly be analysed in a realistic mode of writing. Myth is commonly said to be an existence, which seems to be due to the urge of seeking answers for certain curious observations upon the universe or nature or man or the religious stability prevailing in the society. Andrew Lang, in *Custom and Myth*, defines mythology as "the quest for a historical condition of the human intellect to which the element in myths, regarded by us as irrational, shall seem rational enough." (1886, 38). Lord Shiva is the protagonist of the novel. The protagonist is depicted as a helpless person. Throughout the latest author, Shiva continues to retain his identity as humanly as possible. The novel starts with Shiva being seen as an entity. His body has a lot of war injuries. It is a great beginning to display God as a guy, for God's wounds would heal immediately through their energies. He's an average guy here who wants to fix his dreams. He is a guy who wants an answer to the citizen's dilemma in the novel. He is a guy who needs support from those who wish him help. Bhadra the boyfriend of Shiva's childhood becomes alien, as Shiva is now the tribal head. The Shiva group is named Gunas. Gunas, Their tribe is a great guy, a frightening martial clan and a survival attempt in a rugged, hostile land.

**Keywords:** Myth, Re-reading, Religion, Cultural bias, Myth-making

Myth is commonly said to be an existence, which seems to be due to the urge of seeking answers for certain curious observations upon the universe or nature or man or the religious stability prevailing in the society. This would happen only by the societal control using certain traditional customs and rituals. By the meaning to the definition of the word 'Myth', it is understood that the word has been widely spread across a huge mass, along with the seeds sewn by eminent thinkers, anthropologists, mythographers, philosophers, psychologists to writers, and scientists. Further clarity upon myth could be apprehended in various forms as ballads, fairy tales, folklore, legends, mythic, or sometimes sacred stories through some philosophies and theories.

Andrew Lang, in *Custom and Myth*, defines mythology as "the quest for a historical condition of the human intellect to which the element in myths, regarded by us as irrational, shall seem rational enough." (1886, 38) As for the impact of myth on Human psyche,

American psychoanalyst, Jacob Arlow in his article, Ego psychology and the study of Mythology observes that "myth contributes more to the normal development than fantasy or imagination or mind". (Arlow 375) Dealing with myth is a kind of communal experience and also a special form of fantasy, which is shared. It aims at bringing the individual into a relationship with members of one's cultural group based on common human needs.

Accordingly, the study of myth can pertain to the analysis from the point of view of its function in psychic integration, i.e., (i) how myth plays a vital role in warding off the feelings of a mixture of guilty and anxiety, (ii) how it constitutes to adapt to reality and to the group where an individual lives and (iii) how it influences the crystallization of the individual identity and formation of the superego in oneself. In general, the myth stories of one particular clan or cult hold a belief system, which is also spread among the crew. This belief system has a certain magnitude of pompousness both in language as well as situations. Myth as per Merriam-Webster dictionary is a story that is usually of unknown origin and at least partially traditional that ostensibly relates historical events usually of such description "as to serve to explain some particular event, institution or natural phenomenon" (Merriam Webster). Hence, the study of Mythical concepts and the study of Mythology is frequently treated as timeless and universal.

The purpose of this paper is to establish a mythical perspective and re-read a tale. Mythopoeia (also called "Mythopoesis") is the act of making ('or producing') mythologies. It has its origin in Greek, meaning "myth-making". It is a narrative genre in modern literature where fictional or artificial mythology is created by the writer of prose or other fiction. Mythopoeia, in other words, called 'Mythopoesis', is the act of creating mythologies. It takes its origin from Greek, which means "myth-making". It is a narrative genre, where fictional or artificial mythology is created by the writer of prose or other fiction. In earlier uses, it referred to the making of myths in ancient times and was adopted as well as used by Tolkien, in one of his poems. The poem popularized the word mythopoeia as a literary and artistic endeavor and genre. Works of mythopoeia are often categorized as fantasy or science fiction but fill a niche for mythology in the modern world, according to Joseph Campbell, a famous student of world mythology. Campbell spoke of a Nietzschean world that has today outlived much of the mythology of the past. He claimed that new myths must be created, but he believed that present culture is changing too rapidly for society to be completely described by any such mythological framework until a later age. Mythopoeia is sometimes called artificial mythology. It emphasizes its origin, which has not evolved naturally and is an artificial product.

Realism becomes a mode for dealing with the present. It deals with the current problems of man and society. The complexities of modern society can truly be analyzed in a realistic model of writing because "the literature of realism, aiming at the truthful reflection of reality, must demonstrate both the concrete and abstract potentialities of human beings in extreme situations." (Lukacs 23)

On that basis, this paper deals with Amish Tripathi's *The Immortals of Meluha*, which has been analyzed in a mythical vision. It is the first book of Amish verse and also the first book of the Shiva Trilogy of Amish Tripathi. The story lands on the terrain of Meluha and starts with the arrival of Shiva

The well-known Tamil myth of how Lord Shiva acquired the name 'Neelakandan', has been retold in this fiction in Amish's style.

Meluha is an imaginary land, which can be compared with the 'Utopia' of Thomas More. It was created many centuries earlier by Lord Ram, who was one of the greatest kings ever lived. The heritage of Lord Ram has a proud ancestry, commonly called the "Suryavanshis". These rulers, having once a proud empire, had now been facing a severe crisis. Its primary river, Saraswati, started drying due to extinction. They also face many devastating attacks from their enemies "Chandravanshis". This empire has joined its hands with the Nagas, a cursed race of people with some physical deformities. These two kingdoms had been revenging the Suryavanshis. Daksha was the then king of Meluha. He sent his emissaries to North India in Tibet, to invite the local tribes back to Meluha.

Lord Shiva is the protagonist of the novel. The protagonist is depicted as a helpless person. Throughout the latest author Shiva continues to retain his identity as humanly as possible. The novel starts with Shiva being seen as an entity. His body has a lot of war injuries. It is a great beginning to display God as a guy, for God's wounds would heal immediately through their energies. He's an average guy here who wants to fix his dreams. He is a guy who wants an answer to the citizen's dilemma in the novel. He is a guy who needs support from those who wish him help. Bhadra the boyfriend of Shiva's childhood becomes alien, as Shiva is now the tribal head. The Shiva group is named Gunas. Gunas, Their tribe is a great guy, a frightening martial clan, and a survival attempt in a rugged, hostile land.

Shiva is the protagonist who belongs to the Guna tribe. He accepts the proposal of Daksha and moves to Meluha along with his people. After they reach their destination, they were received by Ayurvati, the Chief Physician of the Meluhans. The Guna tribes were completely impressed by the Meluhan lifestyle. During the first night of their stay, all the tribes woke up with a high degree of fever and sweating. The Meluhan doctors came forward to medicate the tribes. While all the other tribes face severe complications, Shiva was the only person devoid of the undetectable disease. He did not have any of the symptoms noticed in other tribes, but his throat had turned blue. From this incident, Shiva was claimed as their savior Neelkanth. Everyone believed that he had arrived there just to liberate them from their curse. Shiva was then taken to Devagiri, the capital of Meluha.

Shiva stayed in Meluha along with his comrades, Nandi and Veerbhadra. During his stay in Devagiri, he encountered Princess Sati, the daughter of the Meluhan King Daksha. Shiva fell in love with Sati and tried to court her. But she rejected his proposal acclaiming that she was born as a Vikarma, an untouchable. As a curse of the sins committed in her previous births, Sati was born as a Vikarma. Abiding by the traditional customs of her race, she abandoned the courtship and marriage with Shiva. She strongly condemned and rejected his advances. But, Shiva had won in wooing Sati. Even though the Vikarma rule prohibits them to undergo inter-caste marriage, Shiva had a firm belief in his love and took a vow. He promised to dissolve the rule of the Vikarma and assured that he would marry Sati with the blessings of her natives. This incident can be interpreted with the incarnation of Goddess Sakthi, who was born as the daughter of a fisherman, after having an argument with Lord Shiva and being destroyed by the latter using His 'Third Eye'.

The myth has been recreated by Amish in his style. On the course of his stay in Devagiri, Shiva analyzed the native tribes and the war with the Chandravanshis against the Meluhans. Shiva further got acquainted with Brahaspati, the Chief inventor of the Meluhans. Brahaspati later invited the royal family as well as Shiva on an expedition to Mount Mandar. Mandar is the place where the legendary drink Somras is being manufactured. According to Hindu mythology, it is assumed that Somras is a kind of liquor that sedates the consumer. The war between the celestials and the asuras was performed for whom to consume this nectar for getting long life. With the help of Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu, the celestials won and obtained the nectar, whereas the asuras obtained the poison. To protect the people of the earth from the venomous drink, Lord Siva himself drank the poisoned potion. To save Lord Siva, Goddess Sakthi caught hold of the neck of Lord Siva, thereby preventing the poison from entering His stomach. Thus, the poison stuck in his throat, which turned his neck blue.

In Amish's novel, Somras was manufactured at Mount Mandar using the waters of River Saraswati. After drinking the Somras, Shiva came to know that the potion which he drank was undiluted Somras. While this potion was taken in its pure form, it could be lethal. But as he was safe, he was shown to the Meluhans as their savior, who was sent by the Lord to protect their country and people. Somras, indeed has anti-aging properties, which would make the Meluhans live for many years. Days pass by and the friendship between Brahaspati and Shiva grew to a greater extent.

One morning, the Meluhans woke up and to their surprise, they noted that a blast took place at Mandar, which destroyed several parts of the mountain and also killed various scientists living there. Shiva was consistent for some time and only later, he catch hold of the point that Brahaspati was not there. To his shock, there were the symbols and motifs of the Nagas, the cursed race, and the enemies of the Meluhans. By placing their emblem in the Mandar Mount, they affirmed their companionship with the Chandravanshis. This enraged Shiva, which made him declare war on the Chandravanshis.

After consulting with Kanakhala, the Chief Minister of Devagiri, and Parvateshwar, the Head of the Meluhan Army, Shiva declared the war against the Chandravanshis at Swadweep. The battle continued for quite a long period, which sought victory for the Meluhans. The Chandravanshi King was captured by the Meluhan army under the leadership of Shiva. After the defeat of the Chandravanshis, Anandmayi, the Chandravanshi princess also claimed that their kingdom too had a similar kind of oracle and legend that a Neelkanth would appear to protect them. She pointed out that the Neelkanth would be their savior. He would save their land by launching an assault against their enemies Suryavanshis, whom she considered as 'evil force'.

Shiva remained speechless at once he heard these words from the Chandravanshi Princess. He sought the advice of Sati and decided to visit the famous Ram Temple at Ayodhya. At the temple, Shiva had an intellectual and philosophical deliberation with a priest about his karma and fate. He requests a suggestion about how to get clarified about the doubts in the present life and guidance for his future. He had a detailed discussion with the priest. When he turned back after getting clarified with the priest, he found Sati missing. He came to know that Sati was kidnapped by a Naga, as an act of revenge.

He went in search of Sati and there he had a spell and some challenges to be faced, which are explained by Amish in *The Secret of the Nagas*, the next novel in the Shiva Trilogy.

This paper further connects the term "Mythopoeia" with the fiction of Amish in a mythological perspective. The term 'Mythopoeia' means retelling the prevailing myth in the author's way. The well-known myth of Hindu religion is retold in this fiction. The famous story of churning the Mandara Hill by the Celestials, to obtain the nectar, is re-modeled by Amish in his style. The appreciations owe to his creation of the characters portrayed as mortals. In the original myth heard by Indians, the celestials and the Gods perform a drama to cheat the Asuras, whereas, in Amish's mythopoeic creation of *The Immortals of Meluha*, it is known that Neelkanth, a mortal strives to retrieve an unknown land caught in the hands of an unknown disease.

Myth holds beliefs with a certain amount of truth hidden. This very tendency makes it more bend towards fantasy and falsehood. The factual content needs probing rather than an intellectual realization which then enables to witness new endowed light of imagination filled with valuable lessons. Myth-making skill is inherent in man's nature. Human dispose of one myth for another, sometimes even add to the prevailing myth and sometimes modifies it. The mythic stories hold so vast amount of treasure, one accumulates as much can hold.

A piece of literature is the depiction of the social and political facts – the realities of the times. Reality refers to, firstly the knowledge of life's development in general and secondly to its concrete phenomena at a given time. To reflect this reality in his works, a writer captures the strength as well as weaknesses of the epoch's great events. The portrayal of reality involves highlighting the important problems of the people and new aspects of life. It is an act that serves as a bridge, linking the writer with the society not only at a given time but across time and social divisions.

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