Critical Analysis Of Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy And Its Significance To Indian Literature

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Abstract:
The Present study would help the students of literature to know the elements of literary appeal in Amish Tripathi's novels. It will further validate or refute what Amish Tripathi has professed about India in general and about Lord Shiva in particular. The social significance of the study is far reaching. Shiva is the figure of tremendous importance in India. The present study compares the Shiva of Mythology with Shiva created by Amish Tripathi in his fictional world. It would be a valuable addition to the existing body of studies in mythological literature.

The analysis is carried out in terms of popular myths of Shiva and Shiva created by Amish Tripathi. It also analyses these three novels in terms of Amish Tripathi's compliance with the stories of Shiva in myth, culture and religion as well as in terms of differences between Amish Tripathi's Shiva and Shiva in Indian culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amish Tripathi is one of the most famous authors in this tradition who has tried to do more than what his predecessors and contemporaries tried. He has not only retold the myth but also tried to give it a validation in the modern world of logic and reasoning.[1] His Shiva Trilogy establishes the glorious Indian tradition of gods. He makes imaginative use of mythology for propelling the plot and for developing the theme of his texts. He tries to provide a validation to the mythological stories in order to make it concurrent with the contemporary world. 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. His intention is to present Indian mythology in a credible way.[2] He intermingles myth, culture, history, geography, religion and philosophy in order to create a new world. Amish Tripathi has tried to do more than what his predecessors and contemporaries tried. He has not only retold the myth but also tried to give it a validation in the modern world. His Shiva Trilogy establishes the glorious tradition of general welfare in ancient India and gives a validation to myths by placing characters in the history. His Shiva Trilogy establishes

the glorious tradition of general welfare in ancient India. It also gives a validation to the Indian mythical narratives.[3] He does so with his brilliant technique of placing the characters in the context of history. Amish Tripathi 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 a validation to the mythological reality in order to make it concurrent with the contemporary world of logic and reasoning. 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.[4] Though the story of Shiva told by Amish 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. Amish Tripathi deals with Geography of India in the context of its historical developments. The glorious past of India is romantically depicted as the best place in the world across the timeline. He builds his philosophy based on the divine principle of equality. He romanticized fictional Indian culture to place it in the line of best cultures ever established on this planet.[5]

2. SHIVA IN MYTH, CULTURE AND RELIGION

Most of the religions of the world are governed by the faith in 'The Ultimate One' who is considered as the omnipresent, the omnipotent and the omniscient. The largest religions of the world namely, Islam and Christian believe in the God as the creator of this universe. God is the Supreme Being and thus, the ruler of the whole universe. They believe in prophets as the messengers of the God. Indian religious tradition however, differs from that of Western tradition. Hindus believe in multiple gods as ancient Greeks did. The attempts have also been made to find Indian equivalents for Greek and Roman deities. Deities in Hinduism, like those in Greek and Roman mythology are personifications of natural objects, phenomenon or heavenly bodies. Vedas are full of prayers and offerings to these deities.[6] Later Vedic religion was marked by excessive ritualistic practices.

Shiva is mentioned as the Supreme God in many stories. Shiv Puran, Ling Puran, Markandeya Puran and Skand Puran are regarded as Puranas devoted to Lord Shiva. Garud Puran and Brahmand Puran are also the Puranas dealing with the story of Lord Shiva. The stories of Shiva and Vishnu are generally found to be positing the supremacy of one over the other.[16] There is also another version of the mythology which posits Shakti as the supreme deity and Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha as the secondary gods originated from her. Indian mythology thus, leaves us into slight confusion, if seen through the specks of sects. Its implied significance as narrated by Indian spiritual scholars is much like modern western philosophy that believes in plurality of truth.[7]

There is another sect called 'Shakt'. 'Shakt' are the people who believe not in the supremacy of any of these three gods but in the goddess Shakti. Shakti is identified with 'Prakriti' who along with 'Purusha' shouldered the responsibility of creation of the universe.[8] Shakti is commonly identified with goddess Parvati, Shiva's Consort. Sometime, she is regarded as Vaishnavi, the consort of Vishnu though more popularly and commonly she is identified with Sati or Parvati as she often worshiped with Shiva.

She completes Shiva and together, they become 'Shiv-Shakti', the 'Ardhnarishvar'. There is also a version of the story which calls Shiva the 'Purusha', and Shakti, the 'Prakriti'. There are many more versions of the story of almost every god. Nonetheless, every story is complimentary to another story supporting the existence of the earlier one, making it a rich and glorious tradition of mythology.[9]

3. PORTRAYAL OF SHIVA

Shiva is portrayed as a handsome young man. He wields a trident. His apparel includes a tiger skin wrapped around the waist. There is a serpent around his neck. He is decorated by garlands of human skulls and bones. He often sits on 'Sheela' (rock) with one folded leg placed on other that rests on the ground.[10] Most common pictures of Shiva in Hindu calendar art present him with his consort Parvati and his two sons, Kartikeya and Ganesha. Shiva's throat is painted blue. There is a third eye at the center of his forehead.[11]

The name 'Shiva' in Sanskrit means auspicious. Therefore, Shiva represents something that is auspicious. Being the wielder of the trident he is commonly known as 'Trishuldhari' (wielder of the trident). As he wraps a tiger skin around his waist, he is 'Vyaghracharmdhari' (one who is appareled in tiger skin). The serpent around his neck brings him the name 'Nagnath' (master of the serpent).[12] Being decorated with the garland of human skulls and bones, he is referred to as 'Kapali' (One who wears the skull). As he carries a drum with him he becomes 'Damrudhari' (Wielder of drum). The crescent moon on his head earns him the names 'Bhalchandra' (one with moon on the head) and 'Somnatha' (master of moon). His blue throat makes him 'Neelkantha' (blue throat). The stream of water fountain springing out of his locks is believed to be the origin of holy river Ganga on earth.[13] Therefore, Shiva is also called 'Gangadhar'. Third eye at the center of his forehead makes him 'Trinetra' (three eyed). His locks earn him the title of 'Jatadhari' (one with locks). He can create fierce warriors like Veerbhadra and Bhairava whenever he wishes.

Apart from the attributive names mentioned here, Shiva has name likes Mahesh, Mahadev, and Parmeshwar, Mahakaal, which literally mean the Great God or the Ultimate God and the Ultimate Destroyer.[14] He is also referred to as Bholenath (the innocent one), Shankar (the transformed one), Shambhu (self-created one), Hara (the remover of obstacles), Sadashiva (the permanent/perpetuating Shiva), Parvathinaath (Master of Parvati, the daughter of Parvat or mountain), Nandish (the god of Nandi), Rameshwar (the god of Ram), Bhootnath (master of ghosts), Natraj (King of dance), Mahamritunjaya (beyond death or subjugator of death) and so on. There is a mantra often enchanted by his devotees called 'Shiv Sahastra Naam' (thousand names of Shiva). Shiva is often termed as one who prefers to stay outside the culture. He is more of the nature than of the culture. He is fierce and fearless, kind and cruel, the protector as well as the destroyer, and household lover as well as a 'Sanyasi' (ascetic). He is one with a family and he is the one even without the family. He is also identified with 'Aum' (the universe). He is regarded as the creator as well as the creation.[15]

Shiva dwells in 'Kailash', a place in Himalayas. Himalaya (the house of ice) is a mountain which remains covered by the snow. It literally means house of ice. Therefore, he is called 'Kailashnath' or 'Kailaspathi' (master of Kailash). He lives in the company of ghosts and dead bodies. He smears ash on his body. He is the one who has discarded all the pleasures and luxuries of cultured life. He takes no interest in merry making. He is the protector of the orphans and neglected people. Shiva's wife Parvati is referred to as 'Annapoorna' (who feeds all). 'Aghori' sect of Shaivism believes in 'Tantric' practices. They smoke marijuana. Shiva is also believed to be the one who smokes marijuana. He indulges with all sorts of people. He does not conform to a single way of life. He is an ascetic as well as the man of family. He loves all and he also loves his family. He lives with his family and also goes in the state of 'Samadhi' for years together. He acts on his whims and also acts for the welfare of the humanity. He is the creator and the creation. He enjoys the worldy pleasure and yet remains indifferent to them. He protects all and despises none.[16]

4. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MYTH IN SHIVA TRILOGY:

Shiva Trilogy is not merely the reworking of myth/s of Lord Shiva. It is, in fact, reworking of whole of Hindu system of beliefs and ideas: its history, geography, philosophy, culture and literature. Amish Tripathi attempts to provide validation for the stories of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva who had been the mythical hero, almighty manifestation and Philosophical metaphor for Hindus becomes a historical figure in Amish Tripathi's fictional forte.[17 ,18]

Amish Tripathi redefines, rather recreates whole of the Hindu mythology to suit the modern world of rational thought and action. The stories of mythical heroes fascinate the people but they become imaginations as their validity cannot be proved on logical grounds. He attempts their interpretation as the common human beings who brought the society out of grave threats. Shiva is portrayed as a common man who rises to the position of 'Mahadev' by his honesty, valour and his commitment for welfare of people. He places Shiva in the times of Meluhan civilisation, another name for Harappa civilisation.[12]

The myth of 'Shiva as the Destroyer', 'Shiva's marriage with Sati', 'Sati's death', 'Daksha's death', 'Shiva's Wrath', 'Shiva as a Sanyasi', 'Shiva's Sons', 'Shiva as Mahadeva', 'Shiva - Shakti – Kaali', 'Shiva and Naga', 'Shiva and Halahal', 'Shiva and Ganga', 'Shiva's Jyoti', 'Nandi as Shiva's devotee' and 'Shiva as Tripurari', 'Shiva's 'devastating weapons', 'Shiva as Natraj' are interwoven into a single plot with post-Harrappan civilisation as the scene to make a coherent story.[19]

In order to destroy the 'Somras' factories, Shiva has to wage war against the most beautiful and developed city, Meluha, ruled by Daksha, the father to Shiva's wife, Sati. Shiva does not intend to destroy the city that looks like Tripur but to threaten them and to destroy its 'Somras' factories only. When Shiva returns with 'Pashupatiastra', he learns about Sati's death and laments for days together. Finally, he decides to destroy the city that has taken his wife away. He uses 'Pashupatiastra', the nuclear fusion weapon and destroys the Tripur like Devgiri.[20]

Shiva then chooses to go to forests and live there for the rest of his life. Kaali chooses to go to Branga and start her cult. Kartikeya travels to South India. Bhadra stays in Tibet with Shiva's people.

Amish Tipathi's sensational series of three novels entitled Shiva Trilogy hit Indian market at the beginning of the second decade of twenty first century. The first book of the series, The Immortals of Meluha was published in 2010 followed by other two entitled, The Secret of the Nagas published in 2011 and The Oath of the Vayuputras published in 2013 respectively. Shiva Trilogy became so popular that over four million copies of these books have been sold since its publication. It was first written in English and then translated into several other languages of the country. It has also been translated into some of the western languages like Estonia, Spanish, Portuguese, Indonesian, and Polish. Tripathi's marketing strategies are largely credited for the popularity of his books. He asserts that "It is a fallacy to think that a good book sells itself".

Nonetheless, mere marketing is not enough to make a book the best seller. There are many factors that contribute to the popularity of a book. One of the prominent reasons of the huge popularity of Shiva Trilogy is that it is the series of three books dealing with the story of Indian superhero worshipped by majority of Indians. Shiva, the subject of the book, has been the greatest superhero for Indians, especially, Hindus. He is not only the hero/superhero but also the Theo. Indian Theology revolves around Shiva as the 'Parbrahma', the essence of the universe. The deity that has been worshipped by people for nearly five thousand years obviously becomes an integral part of the culture and that of the psyche: of an individual as well as that of a society. The identity of a person is defined by the inputs received from the outer world. Shiva is the part of Hindu collective unconscious. It is true that an individual is governed by his own unconscious but it is also true that an individual's unconscious is largely shaped by the collective unconscious. Thus, Shiva becomes one of the major archetypes of Indian literary tradition as all other archetypes as mentioned by Carl Jung in his interpretation of literary archetypes.[12]

Mythical Shiva has become a mystery to the modern intellectuals. They try to find out the covert meaning of myths of Shiva. He is the metaphor for creation of the universe for some of the scholars while he is manifestation of journey of human beings from nature to culture for others. For the writers like Devdatta Pattanaik (Seven Secrets of Shiva 2007), who have tried to unveil the mystery of philosophy disguised under Hindu mythology of 'Tridev' and 'Shiva-Shakti', Shiva represents the mental state of an individual indifferent to worldly pleasures as the result of highest the wisdom and the enlightenment.

5. CONCLUSION

Shiva Trilogy is not merely the reworking of myth/s of Lord Shiva. It is, in fact, reworking of whole of Hindu system of beliefs and ideas: its history, geography, philosophy, culture and literature. Amish Tripathi attempts to provide validation for the stories of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva who had been the mythical hero, almighty

manifestation and Philosophical metaphor for Hindus becomes a historical figure in Amish Tripathi's fictional forte. For Amish Tripathi, great men are not born but chosen by the system for its general good. In the attempt to create a compelling narrative; he creates his own glorious traditions of ancient India which are no less than the ideal world.

The Shiva Trilogy tells the story of Shiva, a man who over time becomes into a legend and is eventually associated with the "Paramatma." Amish Tripathi, of course, does so with the help of his own imaginative powers and his understanding of the ancient history and geography. 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.

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