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**MYTHOLOGICAL REVIVALISM: AN ANALYSIS OF AMISH TRIPATHI'S
NOVELS AS POPULAR LITERATURE**

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ABSTRACT

Amish Tripathi is an Indian author known for his contributions to the world of Indian fiction. He has gained prominence with his debut novel. *The Immortal of Meluha* is the first book of his ShivaTrilogy. This trilogy along with his subsequent works, has made him a bestselling author in India. Tripathi is recognised for his unique blend of mythology and fiction, reimagining Hindu mythological characters and events in a contemporary context. This research article entitled Mythological Revivalism: An Analysis of Amish Tripathi's Novels as Popular Literature focuses on The Shiva Trilogy. Amish Tripathi explores the themes of religion, philosophy and ethics simultaneously engaging readers with compelling story telling. Tripathi has taken the task of popularizing Indian mythology based fiction and have garnered a substantial in India and abroad. The Shiva trilogy re-imagines deities like Shiva and Sakthi and portrays them in a humanised form which is a significant departure from traditional portrayals. Though rooted in ancient mythology the Shiva trilogy also addresses contemporary issues such as leadership, ethics and societal structures. This allows readers to draw parallels between the past and present fostering thought provoking discussions.

Key Words: Contemporary, Ethics, Fiction, Mythology, Philosophy, Re-Imagining, Religion, Traditional.

Amish Tripathi, a prominent Indian author, was born in Mumbai, Maharashtra, and spent his formative years near Rourkela, Odisha. He hails from a family with a strong academic background and a deep appreciation for literature and culture. Tripathi's professional journey began in the banking industry, where he worked for 14 years in various roles. While his career in finance provided stability, his creative spirit yearned for expression. In 2010, Tripathi's debut novel, *The Immortals of Meluha* was published. This work marked the beginning of his immensely popular Shiva Trilogy, a series that re-imagines the legendary figure of Lord Shiva. The trilogy garnered widespread acclaim for its fresh narrative style, blending mythology, philosophy, and adventure. Its success propelled Tripathi to literary stardom and established him as a leading figure in Indian mythological fiction. It is considered popular literature because of its appeal to a wide audience and its use of imagination and creativity.

The Shiva trilogy is a fictional retelling of the myths of Shiva, but it also reflects on some contemporary issues of the 21st century, such as the effects of a pandemic, the challenges of multiculturalism, and the quest for harmony. Amish Tripathi, uses mythology as a frame of reference to explore the themes of good and evil, identity and destiny, and culture and religion. The trilogy has been praised for its creative and engaging storytelling, but also criticized for its historical and theological inaccuracies.

The art of rewriting the age old Mythology has given popularity to the writers of Myth and Amish Tripathi is such a writer. This phenomenal success of Amish's Shiva Trilogy is a milestone in the history of Indian Literature. Tripathi has contributed in popularizing the Indian culture both nationally and internationally. He has given a new perspective to the age old indigenous culture of India and has revived the rich tradition of the heroic age. Amish Tripathi contextualizes the Hindu puranas into fictional creation. *The Immortals of Meluha* is the first novel of Amish Tripathi. The story is set in the place where there is Meluha and starts with the appearance of the Shiva. Lord Shiva is considered to be a wild God. It is often debated that after the Aryan invasion, Aryans have domesticated Shiva, a Dravidian deity by giving the title of 'Rudra' to him. M. Kishwar says, "Puranic description of Shiva shows him as

the least domesticated and most rebellious of all the Gods, one whose appearance and adventures border on the weird” (206). Whereas the depiction of Shiva is totally different by Tripathi, he does not portray him as a wild person but a man of concern and goodness.

The story moves with Shiva’s entry to Devgiri, the capital of Meluha. Ayurvati, the chief doctor gives Somaras to Shiva and she finds his neck turn blue. She bows down to him as Neelkanth. The Meluhans accept Shiva as their famous guardian angel Neelkanth. Shiva helps the Meluhans in their war against the Chandravanshis, who had united with a reviled Nagas. Shiva gets to know from Nandi that “They are the cursed people; with hideous deformities because of the sins of their previous birth” (TIOM 59). Shiva figures out how his decisions in the battle that follow really reflect who he tries to be and how they lead to desperate results. The Meluhan Suryavanshis live by “Satya, Dharma, Maan’; Truth, Duty, Honour” (TIOM 62), which are the core values of Meluhan cultural Identity.

The major problem of the Meluhans is the belief system that the sins of the previous birth cause deformities. They think that the deformities of Nagas are the result of the sins of their previous births. In the same way he witnesses a procession of Vikarma women in the street. He again enquires Nandi about it. Nandi answers, “There are many rules that the Vikarma women have to follow. They have to pray for forgiveness every month to Lord Agni, the purifying Fire God, through specifically mandated puja. They are not allowed to marry since they may poison other with their bad fate. They are not allowed to touch any person who is not related to them or is not part of their normal duties. There are many other conditions as well” (TIOM 95).

Shiva questions this illogical custom, and he strongly protests against Vikarama custom, he says, “That sounds pretty ridiculous to me. A woman could have given birth to a still born child simply because she did not take proper care while she was pregnant, or it could just be a disease. How can anyone say that she is being punished for the sins of her previous birth?” (TIOM 93). Shiva tries to eradicate the old age practice. He touches a blind Vikarma man and asks him to bless him. The crowd is dumbstruck. Tripathi raises the voice for the marginalized through Shiva, “Forget the gravity of touching a Vikarma, The Neelkanth had just asked to be blessed by one. Shiva turned to see Parveteshwar’s enraged face. Shiva had broken the law.

Broken it brazenly and in public. Next to him stood Sati. Her face, her eyes, her entire demeanour expressionless” (TIOM 198-99).

Shiva also enquires against the Varna system of Meluha with Nandi. Nandi gives satisfactory answers to his questions. Shiva is astonished to know that all the children in Meluha are born in a hospital city called Maika. There all the mothers donate their children to the state and received the children after their training. The identities of the children are kept secret and after passing of the competitive examination of Varna the willing parents can choose any random child who qualifies the respective examination. The same view is also expressed in the Ram Chandra Series, wherein Sita wanted all the children to be trained by the state. Through this Tripathi tries to establish a utopian state free of discrimination “each person is given a position in society based only on his own abilities” (TIOM 99).

The Secret of Nagas is also remarkable for venting the voices of the marginalized communities like Brangas, Nagas and women. He learns from Parashuram that Nagas are angels. Shiva is surprised to know that Nagas are not evil. Parashuram also states that in the war against Brangas, Nagas helped him. They gave him medicine so that he could survive despite the unclean waters and food there. He reveals that “They [Nagas] never kill innocents. They fight for justice; despite the injustices they face. They help the oppressed whenever and where they can. They truly are the best of all” (TSN 266). This statement of Parashuram compels Shiva to rethink the notion about Nagas. The ideology of marginalization was manipulated by the Meluhans and Swadeepans. They declared them outcastes just because they were different from the Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis. Shiva understood the difference between them. It was the main reason for the subjugation of the Nagas. Foucault in his essays “The Order of Discourse” states that” in every society the production of discourses at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, or evade its ponderous, formidable materiality” (52). Foucault argues that the dominant discourse in the society produced knowledge about the subjugated classes. They are claimed to be different and are victimized as insane. Shiva rejects this notion by saying that being different is not evil.

In the same way in *The Oath of the Vaypautras*’ also Amish Tripathi represents the suffering of the physically challenged. The main reason for the deformity of the Nagas are the Meluhans. The Meluhans use the Somras – the drink of life, which is the main cause of the Naga’s birth. Brahaspathi in this regard states, “as the number of people consuming, he samras grew, so did the number of Nagas. One will find that most of the Nagas are born from Meluha. For that is where the Somaras is used most extensively” (TOV 17). Like the Nagas the Barangs also suffered. The diseases that spread among the Barangs were due to the garbage of Somras. The Meluhan authority though aware of it, did not take steps to stop the usage of Somras. This shows their selfish attitude as well. They even tried to persuade Shiva when he was about to stop the use of Somras. As Ganesh says, “Because Baba threatens them, Kartik. They are the elite. They are addicted to the benefits they derive from evil. . . it is obvious that the elite will want to stop him” (TOV 51). Amish Tripathi raises his voice for the voiceless through Shiva.

In the *Shiva Trilogy*, Tripathi tries to subvert the meta-narratives of gender, caste, nationality, religion and race. He focuses on the life of marginalized people in the myths related to Lord Shiva and tries to give a rationale to make their voices heard in the postmodern discourse. He reveals the fact that marginalization still exists in the society and it is through the Character of Shiva, Tripathi educates the masses. The *Shiva Trilogy* is the complete re-imagining of the original story portraying the same characters but in a new perspective and modern sensibilities. Through his works Tripathi gives a new rendition of a timeless epic. He is a wonderful story teller with terse, vivid write and a fact aced narrative making the book immensely readable.

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