Deconstructing Myth In Amish Tripathi's Novel:The Immortals Of Meluha

¹Dr. (Prof.) Narendra Kumar , ²Dr. SumitaAshri , ³Ms. Kiran

¹Professor, Department of English, BM University, Rohtak, drbhamunk17@gmail.com
²Assistant Professor, Department of English, P.I.G. Govt. College for Women, Jind,
drsumitaashri@gmail.com
³Research Scholar, BM University, Rohtak, kiran.dangi2904@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The idea of truth is difficult to discover in the contemporary Post-Truth age. Now-a-days, when fake or half-truths look more rational and readily accepted with emotional and personal belief than the original and pure truth. In light of this idea, this paper intends to examine how AmishTripathi depicted 'Lord Shiva', who is revered by Hindus everywhere as the 'God of Gods', as a human with flesh and blood with ordinary traits alike all humans in his first and debut book of the Shiva Trilogy,The Immortals of Meluha.The paper explores the post-truth concept concealed in the development of myths and fables about Lord Shiva and the other Indian deities and presents Lord Shiva as human who raised himself to the stature of God through his karma. Postmodern and post-truth ideas and viewpoints have been used to analyse the book under consideration.

Keywords: Dismantle,myth,post-truth,Shiva.

INTRODUCTION

Amish Tripathi released debut novel of his trilogy, The Immortals of Meluhain 2010,which was followed by The Secret of the Nagas in 2011 and The Oath of the Vayuputrasin 2013. He pioneered the new genre of Postmodern Mythological Fiction and AshwinSanghi, Kavita Kane, AnandNeelakantan, Krishna Udayasankar, VamseeJuluri, and AnujaChandramouli all followed his footsteps. Amish Tripathi has retold captivating tales in a contemporary manner by examining ancient mythology from a different perspective to fascinate the readers with a feel of freshness.

Backdrop of The Immortals of Meluha

In The Immortals of Meluha, Lord Shiva is represented as human with flesh and blood who is twenty-oneyearold leader of the Guna tribe. His tribe battles with the Pakratis every month for survival on Mount Kailash (Tibet) around 1900 BC. Nandi was one of the Meluhan army captain who visitedKailash to persuade the Guna tribeto immigrate to Meluha, where a better life was awaiting him.During fight between Gunas and PakratisNandi sided with Shiva and fought against the Pakratis and thus earned Shiva's trust who readily agreed to migrate to Meluha. Upon their arrival, Shiva and his tribe was offeredsomraswith astonishing effects that resulted in setting his whole life turn upside down. He turned out to be their fabled rescuer, Neelkanth, destroyer of evil. His meeting was arranged with the King of MeluhaDaksha who urged that his destiny is to fight evil and as perDaksha, Chandravanshis are evil who are assumed to be allied with Nagas. After keenly observing the Meluhan society and faceing the terrorist attacks he was getting convinced that Meluha needs him and he has fight for them to uproot evil. Death of his friend Brahaspatinot only shakes him but prompts him to fight with Chandravanshis which led to the death of thousands of men. But Anandmayi, the Chandravanshi princess arrests

his attention to the factthat Chandravanshis are also waiting for their Neelkanth.This traps him in dilemma and bewildered Shiva gets confused and guilty-striven that the war that seemed to be a Holy war has now turned into a massacre. After consulting with the Vasudev of Ayodhya temple, he got the courage of carrying the burden of guilt of numerous deaths. The tale concludes with Shiva going to rescue Sati from the Nagas who assaulted her while she was waiting for Shiva outdoors.

Deconstruction

Deconstruction is a strategy to devise some "rules for reading, interpretation, and writing" (Dobie, 2012) of the text from several viewpoints, according to Jacques Derrida, the creator of the idea. Understanding that a book may be interpreted in several ways is made more accessible by deconstruction. He cited Saussure as the source of the concepts of a sign, signifier, and signified and claimed that a signifier would result in several signified.

Post-truth

After being chosen by Oxford English Dictionary as the word of the year for 2016, 'Post-Truth' received media attention. In his 1992 article The Watergate Syndrome: A Government of Lies for The Nation magazine, Steve Tesich used the phrase for the first time. He spoke on how public submissively believe all lies of Bush. Then this term again came to surface in 2016 same year when Donald Trump was elected as President. He was the main offender behind the popularity of this phrase.

In his post titled "Is Post-Truth the Same as Myth?" (Pattanaik2018) remarked that although in Indian mythology, there were numerous alternative narratives which are called "Post-Truth" to conceal the actual truth from the public. He said that people in the Middle East and America had a monotheistic view of God, which led to a linear and unified outlook on all aspects of life. Like colonizers called this word as "myth" to reject everything to conquer every land they wished.Puffery, confirmation bias, and alternative truths are

crucial ideas that will be utilised to analyse the book.

DISCUSSIONS

Mythology

Myth "is a cultural inheritance, a tradition handed down from one generation to another, and therefore invested with communal values"(Mills 4). This describes the connection between a community's mythology and its folklore. In contrast, mythology is the study and interpretation of myths, sacred tales or fables of a culture. It deals with a variety of themes related to how human came into existence, concept of heaven and hell, origin of a certain place, pain and happiness and about spirit and afterlife. Every civilization has its own myths which are abundant with tales of gods or individuals resembling gods. Numerous gods and goddesses are mentioned in Hindu mythology as well. Lord Shiva is among them, and both North (Aryan/Vedic culture) and South (Dravidian culture) India have a variety of tales around him.

Evolutionof Lord Shiva in HinduMythology

The Indus Valley Civilization is where Lord Shiva first appeared. Between 200 BC and 100 AD is probably when Shaivism or Siva traditions first emerged. The Dravidians (South Indians) practised religion and had a belief system similar to Shaivism during the Prehistoric/Non-Aryan era.According to a few academics, the "Pashupati seal" from the Indus Valley Civilization served as the foundation for Shaivism during the Non-Aryan era. The Dravidian forms of Hinduism in South India have many ties to the Indus Valley Civilization. The seated bull images found in early Elamite seals from 3000 to 2750 BC are nearly identical to those in the Proto-Siva (Flood & Flood, 1996).

Iyengar (1989), in his book Dravidian India, cited a few distinguished scholars who firmly believed Shiva to be a Tamil deity, including Ragozin, Fergusson, and Steveson. Although Pre-Historic/Non-Aryan Proto-Siva

religious beliefs were of Dravidian origin, during the Aryan invasion, the Dravidian Proto-Siva adopted many ideas from Aryan Vedic writings, which caused Shaivism to develop into its distinct cult.

In the Vedic writings, including the Yajur-Veda and the Svetasvatara Upanishads, he is referred to as God Rudra.Aryan culturewhich is seen as an ancestor of Shiva, served to foster the development of Shaivism.(Flood, 2003).Iyengar (1989) suggested that Siva worship predated the Stone Age and took the form of "Linga worship," which the Aryans continued to practise between 1500 and 500 BCE.

The Hindu epics The Mahabharata and the Ramayana both mention Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva is referred to in the Shiva Puranas as the Supreme Being or God of Gods. Some historians assert that the Tamil word Chivan or Shivan, which means "red in colour," is the source of the English word "Shiva." The mythology of the Dravidian people includes Punyakshi, a young woman with unique abilities who desired to wed Lord Shiva. Shiva travelled to South India to wed her, but he could not do so because of the deception her community members pulled. Punyakshi, unable to endure the torture, abandoned her corpse at a location later known as "Kanyakumari" in her honour (Sadhguru, 2016). As a result, Lord Shiva is the subject of many stories in Hindu mythology.

The Immortals of Meluha in the Light ofDeconstruction Perspective

Comparison of Actual Myth and AmishTripathi's Novel.

Lord Shiva and other Indian deities are the subjects of many stories and fables, but the author of The Immortals of Meluha has dissected the main ones. Amish Tripathi has changed such misconceptions from a new angle. Below are a few stories about Lord Shiva and other Indian deities that are mostly accepted as true myths and fables.

Shiva

There is a common misconception that a Primordial Goddess was born only three days before the earth and world were created. She quickly became a lady and sought a male to fulfil her desires. When she could not find a partner, the Primordial Goddess gave birth to Lord Brahma. Brahma was the oldest of them and grew up pretty quickly. He declined the Goddess' request to sleep with her since she was his mother and had given birth to him. The Goddess' fire eye, which was located in the palm of her hand, was opened in rage. Brahma was destroyed by the fire, reduced to a pile of ashes. She produced Lord Vishnu the next day, but he also suffered a similar fate (Ramanujan, 1990).She finally made Shiva on the third day. She begged him to sleep with her after she had produced him. She also warned him by displaying the remains of the other two. He agreed to sleep with her after learning about what happened to his siblings, but with certain restrictions. In order to make him equal to her, he requested that she teach him all she knew. If not, he would be less than her. Additionally, he added that no woman would want to marry an inferior man, so he urged her to impart all of her abilities and knowledge to him so that, when they were united, they would complement one another. The Goddess consented to those terms and gave Shiva access to her strength, expertise, and wisdom (Ramanujan, 1990).

However, in The Immortals of Meluha, the author depicts Shiva as a youthful warrior of 21 years old and the leader of the Guna tribe, who lived in Tibet about 1900 BC at the foot of Mount Kailash. In order to live peaceful and better life, as promised to them by Nandi and other Meluhan authorities, Shiva and his Guna tribal people are migrated to Meluha.He was a common leader of a tribe with basic human traits and he made the best out of them, and agreed to uplift his life by becoming the living God to whole nation. He was not having any divine powers like our mythical Gods, infact he got confused, anxious and doubtful in many situations like a common human being. Shiva gained the stature of Mahadev by virtue of his

qualities, gained trust of many great persons due to his strong character, thoughts and his adherence to values. Vasudevs guided him throughout his journey and he decided what is evil after understanding every aspect because he knew his decision will change the course of history and exhibited immense responsibility towards the cause that was bestowed on him despite his misgivings.

NeelkanthavsNeelkanth

The "blue-throated one," or Neelkantha, is another name for Lord Shiva. When Devas (Gods) and Asuras (Demons) were churning the ocean (SamudraManthan) to get the elixir of life, this is when the legend of Shiva's neck becoming blue first appeared (Amrit). Halahala, the first mixture to emerge from the churning, was a foamy, inky substance that was sticky and black. Halahala has the power to end the cosmos. Shiva swallowed it to preserve the world, and as he did, Goddess Parvati hold Shiva's neck to stop the poison from entering his body. The poison became lodged in his throat, turning his neck blue. Shiva's neck becomes blue is the myth mentioned above's original version when he ingests the poison Halahala as the ocean is stirred, but Amish Tripathi has recreated the tale differently in his book. Shiva, in his account, is a warrior and the leader of the Guna Tribe on Mount Kailash in Tibet. After being convinced by Nandi, Shiva migrated to Meluha with his tribe. They were quarintined in Srinagar for a week for medical evaluation and rehabilitation under Meluha Immigration regulations. There Shiva was given Somras and the other members of the Guna tribe during this time. Except for Shiva, all Gunas have an abrupt, severe fever after consuming the Somras. But it causes his neck

Nandi

Nandi was considered as a symbol of patience who always shown in Indian temples facing Shiva lingaas he is waiting for Shiva. He is considered as the most ardent devotee of Shiva and no one enters Kailash without his

blue and made him their fabled savior Neelkanth.

Sati

Dakshayani is another name for Sati, who was Daksha's daughter. The tale claims that Daksha was opposed to Sati and Shiva's marriage. Dakshaorganised an auspicious yagya to which all the gods were invited, except Shiva, as an act of retribution. Sati got to know that and she went to his father's yagya against Lord Shiva's will. There she was humiliated by Daksha and she got furious when Daksha insulted Mahadev infront of her. She could not take that insult and immolates herself in the holy fire of yagya.After learning of her death, Shiva made Virabhadra and decapitated Daksha and caused havoc during the ritual. Shiva was requested by other Gods, who begged him to end the devastation. Shiva, at their request revived Daksha but witha goat's head. Sati was reborn asParvati many years later. When evil threatens to rule the world, Parvati often adopts the forms of Kali and Durga (Cartwright, 2018).

In the creative world of Amish, Sati is a daughter of King Daksha but married to someone else before Shiva's marriage to her. However, she is a member of the Vikrama class in the book, which is thought to be cursed because of the misdeeds committed in their previous incarnation, since Sati gave birth to a stillborn child and her first husband gotdrowned in the river just after her child was born. Sati was also described as a strong combatant warrior in the book. Daksha is pleased to learn that Shiva is in love with Sati, whereas, in the original mythology, Daksha was against their relationship. In this tale also Sati died in end but by bravely fighting to the end not by immolating herself.

permission. Nandi was born to Surabi who was the cows' mother residing in heaven. She suddenly began giving birth to an excessive number of calves. Consequently, milk from every one of these cows leaked out and filled Shiva's meditation space. Shiva set all the cows on fire with his third eye because he was upset

and enraged by the animals' behaviour. The Gods quickly subdued Shiva's wrath and rage, presenting him with the majestic bull Nandi. Surabi and Kasyapa's coupling produced Nandi. Shiva welcomed him and mounted him. Nandi was also given the blessing that anybody who speaks their desires into his ear would instantly reach Shiva. Nandi thereby assumed the role of animal protector (Chauhan, 2016). Amish Tripathi's portrayal of Nandi as a human being depicts him as a captain in the Meluhan Army. He is regarded as a brutal warrior. The story introduces Nandi as an official who aids in the relocation of the Shiva and Guna tribal people to the city of Meluha. Shiva values Nandi as a close friend and most trusted by him. He follows Shiva everywhere and chose him over his country. He fought alongside Sati in absence of Shiva to protect her but got brutally injured in end.

The Immortals of Meluhain the Light ofPost-TruthPerspective

Puffery

Ralph Keyes wrote a book The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life (2004).It spot-lighted only on the American culture and society, although Post-Truth aspects and traits today are pervasive and not limited to specific regions or countries. Keyes observed that "puffery" had developed into a distinct art form in America.The Oxford English Dictionary defines puffery as "exaggerated or false praise". Individuals, organisations, or groups repackage outdated ideologies, ideas, resources, or topics to get high notoriety or for commercial goals. Similarly, Keyes expressed that people exaggerated the truth to elevate themselves in society.

Former banker Amish Tripathi aspired to write a philosophical thesis on the essence of evil before turning to literary books. Because it was the popular literary style at the time, his family members, notably his brother and sister, requested to create an adventure book with a philosophical undertone. Tripathi employed the ancient myths and tales about Lord Shiva, but he dismantled them with a rationale that said Shiva attained godhood due to his deeds and karma.

"Thisworkis,therefore,attributetoLordShivaandt helessonthathislifeteachesus. A lesson lost in the recesses of timeand ignorance. A lesson that all of uscan rise to become better human being if we work of the philosophy of Karma. A lesson is that there exists a potential god in everyhumanbeing"(Tripathi,2010).Tripathihad decentredShiva-theLordtoanordinaryhumanbeingwithextraord inary human traitswhohadraisedhimself to the destroyer of evil and thus was adored worldwide.

Confirmation Bias

Sebastian Dieguez (2017) examined Post-Truth from a psychological standpoint in her piece Post-Truth: The Dark Side of the Brain. In her discussion of confirmation bias, Dieguez said that the human brain had powerful affirmations and a few categories of accepted ideas. Confirmation bias is a cognitive bias that occurs when the human brain receives new beliefs or information about an existing standard belief it holds. The brain analyses beliefs and information and retains only those sets of beliefs or information that match or correlate with the existing sets of beliefs or information.Politicians have greater licence to say in the post-truth age, which is a complete nonsense, and false news areaired quickly, according to Dieguez (2017). According to her, the worst thing about quickly spreading false informationis that people prefer it over the real news.

Because Tripathi portrayed Lord Shiva as a human being and rewrote the story with logic, The Immortals of Meluha and the other two books drew much criticism. The fact that the true myth was reversed led to heated remarks and critiques. Shiva is often considered God due to "confirmation bias" among many people. They cannot accept Amish Tripathi's interpretation of Lord Shiva as a warrior who advanced from the level of a human to Lord because of their firm conviction in Lord Shiva as God."But,what if we are wrong? What ifLord Shiva was not a figment of a richimagination but a person of flesh andblood? Like you and me. A man whorosetobecomegod-likebecauseofhis karma. That is the premise of theShivaTrilogy,whichinterprets

therichmythologicalheritageofancientIndia,blendingfictionwithhistoricalfact"(Tripathi,2010).

Post-truth byIndifference

In their article titled Between Post-truth and Epistemocracy: Positioning aDemocratic Politics, Monod and Lipetz (2017)discussed two types of "post-truth": the first type occurs when a person, group, or institution's beliefs are upheld and considered more important than the truth that could be proven logically, and the second type was "Post-Truth by Indifference," which was the deliberate fabrication of facts, principles, and beliefs.

Tripathi examined all of the traditional Shiva mythology and built his newly created tale of Shiva on these traditions. He possessed extensive knowledge of stories and Gods, which he heard from his grandfaher. He based his tale on our beliefs, our myths and our oral folktales.Shiva is shown as a democratic leader rather than an authoritarian. Before migrating to Meluha, he consults the tribe members indicating that he respects the opionion of others also even though they trust him like anything.This demonstrates Amish Tripathi's disregard for the Shiva myth, in which he is revered as an Ultimate.

CONCLUSION

The original Shiva tale, which is hard to believe as factual and accurate, has been demolished by Amish Tripathi in his book The Immortals of Meluha. Tripathi presented Shiva as a relatable human being who critically remarks on Meluha's pervasive class structure. In the book, Shiva did not appreciate being called Lord. Tripathi has dismantled several beliefs that individuals widely hold. In order to show Shiva, Sati, Nandi, and Neelkanth as humans rather than as mythological deities, their personas are deconstructed. Similar to how Tripathi employed myth in the post-truth worldview, releasing mythical books that allowed him to advance socially. He was praised for his innovative literary work but also criticizedfor portraying Lord Shiva as anindividual. He argued that everyone has an inner voice that helps them navigate challenging circumstances. People can achieve the status of God like Shiva when they pay attention to their inner voice. Amish Tripathi has valiantly dismantled the Lord Shiva myth in the modern Post-Truth Era.

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