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Influence of Shivpuran on Amish Tripathi: A Study



Brijraj Raval

Research Scholar,
VIDHYAYANA

Dept. of English & CLS,

Saurashtra University, Rajkot



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ABSTRACT

From the very ancient time writers have shown keen interest in the form of story. For the literary forms it is quite suitable content, as it is popular amongst common people. The Vedas have always remained a great source of reception for the literature. All the Puranas are no exception as they have Vedas as their source. The oral tradition and documented literature have created a new way. As a result, the modern narrative form like novel is one of the most popular, effective and powerful genres in literature to use these ancient sources. The chief objective of the literature is not only to entertain the audience but also to make them aware of certain realities of life. The present paper aims to explore the influence of Shivpuran in the writing of Amish Tripathi. The ideas and interpretations of the popular myth of Shiva is presented in such a way by Tripathi which appeals to mankind universally and passes the virtues and morals along with aesthetic pleasure.

Key Words: Shivpuran, Influence study, tradition, myth, reception

Introduction

India has a rich heritage of great heroic narratives like Ramayana and Mahabharata, in addition to these sacred texts of the respective religions. Mahabharata, for its narrative technique and art of characterization, is often considered to be the greatest of all the epics in the world. It covers almost every aspect of human life and speaks of all the individuals of its time in India. Everything it has. It also includes great Indian philosophical knowledge in the form of the most sacred Hindu text, the Bhagavad Gita. In his style and technique, Ramayana is equally grand, although his grandeur is little less than that of Mahabharata. For its grandeur, sublimity, characterization and narrative technique, Mahabharata is often compared with the Greek epic Iliad. And Ramayana has striking similarities to the Iliad's plot and characters.



Shivpuran: An Overview

Shiv Purana is a book based on various myths of Lord Shiva. Shiva, which means the auspicious one, is a popular Hindu deity and is considered in Hinduism to be one of the primary forms of god. In contemporary Hinduism, he is one of the three most influential gods and is considered within Shaivism as the supreme god.

The Shiva Purana is a historical text that provides knowledge of Lord Shiva. Shiva Purana is a wonderful scripture to learn about the great god Shiva's transcendental pastimes. Shiva Purana contains information that we need in order to live a perfect life that can improve our spiritual growth. It mentions Lord Shiva's history of their family, and events in which devotees are assisted by Lord Shiva. It's a wonderful pastime to hear that we feel love for Lord Shiva. The conversation between Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu is one of his pastimes. Lord Shiva says, "O Vishnu, in my heart you are. Lord Vishnu says, "O Shiva, in my heart you are." Both Shiva and Vishnu say that they liked each other's devotees, and if one devotee offends another, he'll go to hell. For one who wants to get higher levels of spirituality and devotion to Supreme Lord Shiva, Shiva Purana should read.

Influence of Shivpuran on Amish Tripathi

Amish Tripathi is one of India's most celebrated novelists today. His Shiva Trilogy is not merely the reworking of myth of Lord Shiva. It is in fact, reworking of whole of Hindu system of beliefs and ideas: its history, geography, philosophy, culture and literature. He attempts to provide validation for the stories of Lord Shiva.

The stories of mythical heroes fascinate the people but they become imaginations as their validity cannot be proved on logical grounds. Amish Tripathi's fictional world tries to provide validity to the stories



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of mythical heroes. He attempts their interpretation as that of the common human beings like us, who brought the society out of some devastating situations. 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. Shiva is portrayed as a common man who rises to the position of Mahadev by his honesty, valour and the urge for the welfare of the common people. He places Shiva in the times of 'Meluhan civilisation', another name for 'Harappa civilisation'.

Shiva Trilogy is also a commentary on the contemporary social conditions. It gives some useful insights for the students of History, Geography, Sociology and Polity. Meluha is a near perfect society established long ago by seventh Vishnu, Lord Ram who also laid down a code of conduct for its people. Words of Lord Ram are the law/s for Meluhans. However, Shiva observes that some people do not really remember the words of Lord Ram. They only remember his name. People forget the ideas and remember the names of great people. This is commonly seen in contemporary time. The ideas, rather than the names are important. Ideas need to be remembered and kept alive to make the great societies, not merely the names of the people who gave these ideas to the people. It is one's 'dharma' or duty towards the humanity in general and society in particular that makes the real difference. Therefore, Shiva reminds his people of the words of Lord Ram, "If you have to choose between my people and dharma, choose dharma! If you have to choose between my family and dharma, choose dharma! Even if you have to choose between me and dharma, choose dharma!" (Ibid 282)

Shiva intends to tell his people that we should understand our duties in relation to the society. An individual is defined as truly human by his/her objective understanding. People should understand that it is not about what I think but about what my duty is. Gopal comments on human nature. "People have a tendency to do what they want to do rather than what they should be doing" (Ibid 199). This tendency makes men morally corrupt without letting them know that they are becoming corrupt. They do not care to see if



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they are doing what they should be doing rather than what they want to do. Doing what one wants to do is personal matter in an individual's life but when it comes to the humanity in general and society in particular, one should be aware of the fact that one should do what one is supposed to do.

However, the stories continue to be told by victors as well as by the losers. And both versions survive. Same might have happened to the stories told in Indian mythology. 'Asuras' are being painted as evil by 'Suras' though they were not evil. They were only different as Lord Rudra realises after he destroys them and as Shiva too realises in case of 'Chandravanshis' when he defeats them. Projecting something as good or bad is the matter of politics and power. Those who remain in power distort original stories to paint others as evil but when the equation of power turns around, the other version is also told. Gopal enlightens Shiva with his understanding of the different versions of the narrative.

The power decides what is to be told to the people. But it should be noted that power never remains with the same group forever. It is subject shift from one person to another and from one group to another. As long as this shift takes place, new versions emerge. Even in the most rigid systems like "Chaturvarna" (classification of society in four classes), the change takes place. Though Amish Tripathi tries to show that the 'Chaturvarna' system of ancient Indian society was a perfect system, he also tells that it does not remain forever. Even the equations of power change with the passage of time. 'Brahmin', 'Kshatriya', 'Vaishya' and 'Shudra', the four 'Vernas' in which ancient Indian society was divided form the structural hierarchy that descends down from 'Brahmin' to Shudra. The 'Brahmin' becomes superior most while the 'Shudra' becomes inferior.

Amish Tripathi however, holds that 'Chaturvarna' system in ancient India was not based on the birth but on the abilities of an Individual. It was decided with the help of the principle 'right man for the right job'. In Meluha, in particular, according to Amish Tripathi's imagination, there was a rigid system to decide



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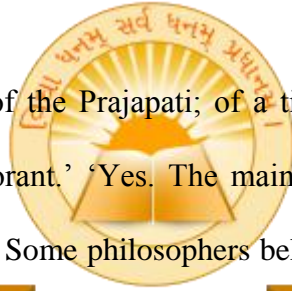
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if a child was potentially capable of being 'Brahmin', 'Kshatriya', 'Vaishya' or 'Shudra'. The essence of the system changed into a perverse form as per Tripathi's theory. Having seen the history of India from ancient time to present days, Amish Tripathi also predicts course of actions in the future. He believes in cyclic nature of life as ancient Indian system believed.

According to him the power shifts from one group to another with the passage of time. Through the conversation between Ganesh and Kartik, he tries to present the changes that society has undergone and the change that society would undergo in future. He also tries to make explicit comments on the principle that power shifted from one class to another with the passage of time and names it different ages as the age of Brahmin, Kshatriya, and Vaishya in relation to power which shifted from Brahmins to Kshatriya and from Kshatriyas to Vaishyas.



All of us have been told stories of the Prajapati; of a time of magic.' Kartik smiled. 'Of course! Knowledge seems like magic to the ignorant.' 'Yes. The main currency of the age of the Brahmin was knowledge. And in our age, it is violence. Some philosophers believe that after our epoch will be the age of the Vaishya.' 'And the people in that age will not use violence that establish their writ?' 'Violence will never die, Kartik. Neither will knowledge. But they will not be the determining factors, since it will be an age dominated by the way of the Vaishya, which is profit. They will use money.' 'I can't imagine a world like that, dada.' 222 'It will come. I pray that doesn't take too long. Not that I'm afraid of violence, but it leads to many grieving hearts in its wake.' 'Dada, even if I do believe that such a time will come, are you saying that money will cause less devastation than violence? Will there not be winners and losers even then? Will sadness disappear?' Ganesh raised his eyebrows, surprised. He smiled and patted his brother on his back. 'You are right. There will always be winners and losers. For that is the way of the world.' (Ibid 268)

Shiva Trilogy also discusses some other issues like 'dharma', luck and duty in a logical way. During



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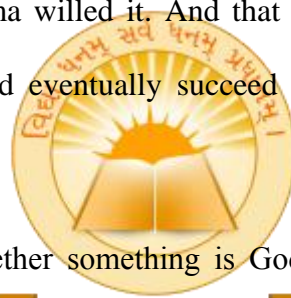
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his journey through India, Shiva is true to his own understandings and never says anything about anything not known to him. Rather, he tries to know it from those who know it. He has shown honesty of character and sincerity of purpose. He does not hate those who do not consider him Neelkanth. He believes in knowing the truth. Moreover, his behaviour is gentle and polite to others. He respects other and their knowledge. These are the qualities essential to become Mahadev. Nonetheless, Shiva thinks that it was the matter of luck that his throat turned blue after drinking 'Somras'. Gopal explains the meaning of luck as the wish of God to Shiva:

Great Neelkanth, a non-believer will credit luck for one's achievements. But a believer in the Paramatma, like me, will know that the Neelkanth has achieved all that because the Paramatma willed it. And that means that the Neelkanth will complete his journey and eventually succeed in taking Evil out of the equation. (Ibid 113)



Amish Tripathi does not tell whether something is God's wish or merely a coincident. It is not important to see whether it is God's wish or luck because exact signification of both the terms ultimately would lead to same meaning. However, it can be called the matter of difference in thinking because one who believes in God would call it God's wish and one who does not believe in God would call it luck or coincident. Though it is true that both these terms would communicate the same meaning, it does not clarify everything to a person as to what is the purpose of his life and what is/are the right way/s to achieve it. General Parvateshwar explains it to Anandmayi when she tries to confuse him in the matter of 'dharma'. When he tells her that he would go to Meluha and fight against Mahadev, she asks him if it is not his duty to serve Lord Neelkanth. He convincingly tells her, "Nobody in the world, not even God, can tell us what our duty is. Only our soul can. All we have to do is to surrender to the language of silence and listen to the



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whisper of our soul.... Meluha is my faith; protecting my motherland is my duty". (Ibid 127)

Shiva Trilogy also contains many comments on the contemporary world where lies are spread and easily believed. Amish Tripathi deliberately adds incidents in his novels to make it more realistic and fitting to contemporary conditions. There are no ways to prove the truth upon the people because there are no means and no ways available to do so. The evil will overpower, commit crimes and blame it onto others. This is quite commonly seen in the modern times. In an incident, Ganesh saves an innocent child and his mother from the evil intentions of cruel Prince of Magadh risking his own life but Magadhan king chooses to tell people that their prince was killed in a terrorist attack. Shiva explains the fact to Ganesh:

The ways of the world are really strange, said Shiva. You protected an innocent child and his mother from an immoral prince. The Magadhans though, did not hesitate to spread a lie that Ugreshen died defending Magadh from a 'Naga' terrorist attack. And people chose to believe that lie. (Ibid 140)

Ganesh and Kali are the examples of alienated individuals bent on to seek revenge on those who wronged them. Kali is more convinced of the sins of Meluhas and their hypocrisies while Ganesh is little sympathetic. Kali wants to kill both; Daksha and Sati in order to execute her plan of destroying the 'Somras' factory while Ganesh does not want to harm Sati. He just wants to kidnap her and tell her that she has wronged him. He does not know that Sati has also been deceived by his grandfather, Daksha. However, their reunion after Sati's marriage with Shiva brings some happiness in their lives. Commenting on the morality as the ultimate principle, Kali comments, "Didi, one who clings to moral arrogance even at the cost of the lives of others, is not necessarily the most moral person". (Ibid 418)

Thus, Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy comprising of three novels entitles The Immortals of Meluha, The Secret of the Nagas and The Oath of the Vayuputras reinterprets Indian myth to fit the modern world of



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logic and rationalism. It tells the story of mythical Lord Shiva considering him to be a common man who becomes Mahadev, the god of the gods. Amish has used myths in different parts of India to write his story of Shiva as a common tribal leader who rose to the position of Mahadev. Amish Tripathi deals with myth of Shiva in a logical way. Furthermore, he uses history and geography of India to make his story realistic. Amish Tripathi's knowledge and understanding of History and Geography is amazing. The conclusion of the novel also comes with the mythical/religious expression 'Om Namah Shivay' which Amish interprets as 'universe bows to Shiva'.

Conclusion

Shivpuran is a book based on various myths of Lord Shiva. Shiva, which means the auspicious one, is a popular Hindu deity and is considered in Hinduism to be one of the primary forms of god. In contemporary Hinduism, he is one of the three most influential gods and is considered within Shaivism as the supreme god. Amish uses the myth as his novel's main theme, which cannot be overlooked. These myths are, in a sense, an important part of novels. Gods are some of the principal characters, and some characters are super humans. Lord Ram is God in the Shivas Trilogy, though he is not an active character, but his presence and influence are reminded to the reader several times. Shiva, Brahaspati, Parashuram, Rudra, Daksha and many more are the other male mythical characters.



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