

Beyond Myth: The Human Face of ‘Shiva’ in Amish Tripathi’s ‘Trilogy’

Prof Ganji Bangla Bharathi

Department of English
Govt. Degree College
Sadasivpet, Telangana

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Abstract

Amish Tripathi’s *Shiva Trilogy* offers a mesmerizing reinterpretation of ancient Indian mythology by weaving together history, philosophy, and fantasy. The trilogy, comprising *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas*, and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, portrays Lord Shiva not as a distant deity, but as a deeply human hero whose destiny is intricately tied to the fate of his civilization. Central to the narrative are themes of destiny, choice, and the perpetual clash between good and evil. Tripathi uses Shiva’s epic journey to probe the tension between predetermined fate and free will, while also investigating the fluid nature of power, identity, and moral complexity. This article probes into these thematic layers, exploring how Tripathi reimagines timeless myths to comment on universal human struggles and the age-old battle between light and darkness.

The deities we worship are celebrated in myths that reflect the culture, customs, and lives of our ancestors. India stands out in the global context for its extensive and diverse heritage. Indian mythology consists of religious and cultural narratives that have been passed down through generations in diverse forms. Amish Tripathi, an Indian novelist writing in English, presents his interpretation of the Indian deity Lord Shiva by integrating social fantasies with scientific facts. He has extensively utilised mythical characters in his work to construct an ideal society. This research article examines how Tripathi has constructed Indian myth within the *Shiva Trilogy*.

Keywords: *Shiva Trilogy; destiny; power; identity; moral complexity; human struggles; myth; culture; customs; ancestors.*

Amish Tripathi’s *Shiva Trilogy* has captivated readers worldwide by transforming the legendary figure of Shiva into a relatable, fallible individual. Far from an untouchable god, Shiva emerges as a tribal warrior thrust into extraordinary circumstances, destined to shape the future of an ancient society. The trilogy’s rich setting, a highly evolved civilization called Meluha, located in the ancient Indian subcontinent combines mythological grandeur with grounded historical detail, offering readers an immersive experience layered with spirituality, philosophy, and political intrigue. The series stands out by framing the divine-human dynamic through a fresh lens: Shiva is both a man and a myth, grappling with his evolving identity and the immense expectations placed upon him. This approach breathes new life into mythology, making it accessible and relevant to contemporary readers who see in Shiva’s struggles reflections of their own quests for purpose and self-understanding.

Tripathi’s world-building is one of the trilogy’s most compelling features. Meluha is depicted as a utopian civilization governed by strict ethical codes that prioritize order, peace, and prosperity. Yet beneath this veneer of perfection lies a society wrestling with its own contradictions and vulnerabilities. By situating the story in a plausible ancient context, Tripathi blurs the lines between myth and reality, merging supernatural elements with historically grounded cultures, beliefs, and technologies. This setting allows the trilogy to explore profound questions about civilization, progress, and the role of mythology in shaping societal values. Shiva’s initial portrayal as an outsider to Meluha, a tribal leader

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from the distant land of Tibet sets the stage for his transformative journey, inviting readers to consider the interplay between tradition and change, and between the individual and the collective.

Individuals universally encounter rituals, dreams, customs, and religious beliefs throughout their lives. They manifest in various forms, each demonstrating uniqueness and realism for the individual capable of adopting or transforming it, whether consciously or subconsciously. Myth plays a crucial role in shaping individual psychology and influencing the broader cultural context of a society. The author of the Shiva trilogy has demonstrated proficiency in adapting original Indian myths and meticulously re-narrating them in his works. The way he presents the myths does not change the original beliefs or faith, but it provides an opportunity to examine these myths from a different perspective. *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas*, and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* constitute a series of books authored by him, collectively referred to as the *Shiva trilogy*. These books discuss Lord Shiva, a prominent Indian deity regarded as the destroyer of evil. The author has depicted Mahadev as an ordinary human being, embodying flesh and blood. The author emphasises that God Shiva achieved immortality not due to his name, but rather through his actions. In the novels, readers observe Lord Shiva achieving the status of Mahadev through his actions.

Indian myths clearly depict Lord Shiva as a deity embodying contradiction. His physical appearance is distinctive. He is inherently ascetic and consistently wears tiger skin. His body is covered in ash, and he consumes marijuana excessively. In a state of exuberance, he performs dances in the cremation ground. He is universally regarded as the supreme deity. He is universally recognised as Bholenath, representing an embodiment of innocence. He is referred to as Rudra, a formidable warrior. He is regarded as the creator of the Vedas. Despite his asceticism, he is represented by the phallic symbol, the Linga. The Yoga that harmonises physical and emotional health is widely regarded to have originated from him. Notwithstanding this acknowledgement, he is recognised for his consumption of intoxicating bhang and marijuana. Historically, individuals have perceived him as both a divine shaman and Ardhanareeswara. He is recognised for embodying two opposing forces, symbolised by fire, while also being associated with the expansive water body known as the river Ganga. The Shiva trilogy explores various divine contradictions. In the novels, readers perceive Shiva as an ordinary human rather than a magical hero. The protagonist in Amish Tripathi's work lacks magical abilities akin to the mythical Shiva; however, he ascends in significance through his intelligence, determination, and generosity.

In Indian mythology, Lord Shiva is depicted as the destroyer of evil, residing in Mount Kailash with his Ganas. Henrich Zimmer (2019) describes the disciples of Lord Shiva as likely representing the hosts or ganas of the deity, his followers and attendants, who share similarities in countenance, figure, attire, and attributes with the divinity himself.

Some individuals carry musical instruments, such as a tambour and a flute, which correspond to the five hosts of Shiva's followers, with each host represented by a single individual (133-134).

The associates of Shiva are consistently depicted as malevolent beings who engage in song and dance around the cremation pyre. Tripathi has revitalised them in his work as ordinary human beings identified by the tribal name Gunas. The author depicts them as individuals subjected to numerous assaults, humiliations, and tortures. They agree to relocate to Meluha and subsequently to Kashi for their livelihood. Shiva's leadership skills have enabled him to guide and protect them, while consistently refraining from any form of mistreatment. Tripathi emphasises the significance of Lord Shiva as the chief of Gunas, stating,

This respect for the chief was not merely conventional, but also rooted in Shiva's character. He guided the Gunas to their most significant military successes through his intellect and exceptional personal courage. (6).

Tripathi has reinterpreted demon Ganas as contemporary Gunas to highlight the significance of the mythical hero. He has depicted Shiva as an entity destined to eradicate evil forces. In the novels, he is depicted as an individual recognised for his valour and military exploits. Nonetheless, the circumstances compel him to leave his homeland. The readers may perceive him as an individual with inherent limitations, similar to all human beings; however, through his actions, he attains a status comparable to that of the divine. In her article titled "Shiva for All Times: A Study of Amish Tripathy's *The Immortals of Meluha*," Ritika Paul (2017) discusses the characterisation of Shiva as follows:

Indians worship God in four forms: Nirgun (formless God), Aakar (in a form, such as Lord Vishnu, etc.). Avatar refers to the incarnation of a deity, such as Lord Ram, among others. and an individual who attains divinity or realises the divine within himself (Gautama Buddha). Amish Tripathi adopts the fourth type, depicting Shiva as a tangible human, akin to an ordinary individual. (425-26).

The readers of the *Shiva trilogy* will recognise the author's proficiency in reinterpreting various characters and events from Indian mythology through the lens of scientific theories. A careful analysis will reveal notable similarities and differences between Lord Shiva, the Indian deity, and the character Shiva in the *Shiva Trilogy*.

According to Indian mythology, Lord Shiva possesses a third eye that serves to incinerate malevolent beings. His preferred weapon is the 'trishul', and he adorns himself with serpents as ornaments. He regularly consumes 'chillum' and rides a bull named Nandi. He is also known by other names such as Veerbhadra, Mahadev, and Pasupathi. The physical appearance of Lord Shiva is thoroughly described by Wolf-Deiter Storl (2013) in his article "Shiva: The Wild God of Power and Ecstasy." He notes that Shiva's tower of felted hair, stiffened with the juice of the banyan tree, is adorned with snakes, flowers, nuts (such as rudraksha or ustram beads), and the waxing crescent moon, resembling a crown or magician's hat. Shiva, akin to other shamans, is attired in the skins of wild animals such as the tiger, elephant, and gazelle (36). Conversely, the author depicts Shiva as an individual adorned in an orange dhoti. The tiger skin has been removed for cleaning purposes to ensure hygiene. A half-lit chillum rested neglected on the side table. Thus, Tripathi has skilfully blended myths to construct a novel interpretation of Shiva through creative imagination.

As a deity associated with ecstasy, Mahadev is linked to the smoke derived from Cannabis Indica, a substance classified as a narcotic and deemed illegal by numerous governments globally. The protagonist of Tripathi, Lord Shiva also consumes marijuana and escapes temporarily from his past, physical stress and mental agony. In the initial sections of the novel *The Immortals of Meluha*, readers observe Shiva using chillum in both ecstatic and depressive states. He consumes marijuana while contemplating the sudden and recurrent assaults by his adversaries known as 'Prakritis'. The author depicts Shiva's narcotic inhalation practice:

He brought the chillum crafted from yak bone to his lips and inhaled deeply. On other occasions, the marijuana would have alleviated his troubled mind, providing moments of solace. However, not today.
(2)

Neelkanth is an alternative designation for Lord Shiva, who serves as both the protector and destroyer of humanity. He has carried this name since consuming the poison released from the mouth of Vasuki. Vasuki is a serpent that releases poison during the churning of the ocean by the Devas and Asuras. Shiva is compelled to consume poison to protect the universe from the effects of toxic fumes. Parvati, the consort of Shiva, restrains his throat to prevent the poison from entering his stomach. Subsequently, his complexion turns blue, and he is universally recognised as Neelkanth, the saviour of the world. His followers consider him as AmmaiAppan, both father and mother. In this context, it is important to observe that Deiter has identified parallels between Shiva and Jesus Christ, both of whom endured suffering for the benefit of humanity. He states,

Like Christ, who took upon himself the bitter cup of perdition, so Shiva drank the poison of the world, which the activity of the Gods and titans churned from the depths of the primal ocean. (11).

The abundant grace of the Almighty and the profound blessings of Lord Shiva continuously bestow protection upon the pious and humble human soul, shielding them from various miseries.

Amish Tripathi presents his interpretation of Neelkanth, depicting him as a superhuman figure who attains a blue throat after consuming Somras, a beverage associated with immortality. It is important to note that the mythical figure Shiva consumed poison to protect the world. Conversely, the protagonist in Tripathi's work is coerced into consuming Somras without prior notification and is obligated to physically eradicate the malevolent force. Amish Tripathi has introduced a new plot in his *Shiva Trilogy*.

Legendary narratives of the Meluhans suggest that Neelkanth will manifest when their challenges exceed human resolution. Neelkanth is thought to be a non-native of SaptSindhu, with his throat turning blue upon consuming Somras. The Meluhans have pursued Somars for over a century since that time. In this process, they recruit

immigrants from remote locations, while maintaining the confidentiality of Neelkanth. Shiva, accompanied by the tribal people, travels to Meluha at the request of Nandi from Kailash. Nandi's invitation at Kailash was promptly accepted by Shiva, as he and his fellow tribes faced ongoing threats from their enemies, the Pakratists. The Meluhans offer Somras to the entire tribal team, who are taken aback by its reaction in Shiva's throat. His throat becomes entirely blue. This astonishes Shiva and allows him to gain the respect of the Meluhans. He is often surprised when his throat exhibits a blue colouration. In this context, Northrop Frye (1973) notes that the upper half of the natural cycle represents the realm of romance and the analogy of innocence, while the lower half signifies the domain of realism and the analogy of experience. Four primary types of mythical movement can be identified: within romance, within experience, downward, and upward. (162) The protagonist of the *Shiva Trilogy* exists in a state of innocence, despite possessing a blue neck. He is both shocked and surprised by the sudden respect and admiration displayed by the Meluhans. He cannot comprehend any rationale for the discolouration of his throat. (141)

Amish Tripathi presents the protagonist as an individual characterised by a modern and rational perspective, who rejects myth and seeks logical explanations for the events occurring in his life. The Vedas indicate that Lord Shiva was an experienced warrior, depicted as an archer wielding the Pinaka bow. Among Hindus, it is widely believed that Lord Shiva bestowed certain Devi Astras upon Arjuna in the Mahabharata. Arjuna is regarded as a formidable warrior and is identified as Rudra in the Yajur Veda. In this regard, it is important to note the remarks made by Deiter as follows:

Shiva's sceptre represents the primordial hunting weapon, the spear. The spear's tip has been multiplied by three, resulting in a trident. The trident holds significant importance in Shiva's iconography, to the extent that it can represent the deity itself. He possesses the most ancient weapons and tools of humanity: the axe (parasu), the hand drum (damru), the staff (danda), and the bow and arrow (pinaka and ajagava). (37)

Amish Tripathi's novel depicts Shiva as an experienced warrior, wielding the Trishul as his weapon of choice. He was the first to invent and utilise it among the Meluhans. The innovativeness demonstrated in the design of Trishul is widely admired by all Meluhans, particularly by General Pravateshwar. Shiva's respect for others is based on their actions rather than their birth or physical attributes. His bold actions on the battlefield against the Chandravanshis, along with his proficiency in the Tortoise technique, garnered him numerous admirers, including Parvateshwar of Meluha. His daring exploits at the battlefield are described as follows:

The Neelkanth charged into the sides of the Chandravanshi lines that were beating down on the tortoises. Engaged in a pincer manoeuvre between the trishuls and the assault from Shiva's side, the resolve of the Chandravanshis ultimately faltered (353).

Tripathi has presented Pinaka, the bow associated with Lord Shiva in Indian mythology. In the *Shiva trilogy*, Shiva receives the Pinaka from Parashuram. The author provides a detailed description of Pinaka, stating, Tripathi writes in the *Oath of Vayuputras* (2018)

It was ideal for an anchor to shoot arrows from, while riding a horse or a chariot. Parashuram named the bow Pinaka, referencing the legendary ancient longbow of Lord Rudra (541).

Novelists frequently depict mythical heroes as proficient warriors on the battlefield, esteemed by their comrades and fellow citizens. In this context, an analogy can be drawn from Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2004):

A hero departs from the ordinary world into a realm of supernatural wonder, encounters extraordinary forces, achieves a decisive victory, and returns from this enigmatic journey equipped to bestow benefits upon others. (28).

The protagonist of the *Shiva Trilogy* closely resembles Lord Rudra, the formidable warrior and Mahadev in Indian mythology. He is considered to possess the ability and potential to inspire others through his speech and actions. He excels in the battlefield. For instance, the conflict he engaged in against the Chandravanshis is referred to as "Dharmayudh," or the holy war, and the battle at Lothal demonstrates the hero's bravery and effectiveness. (343).

Conversely, Shiva has not been characterised as a bloodthirsty soldier. He examines all options to prevent conflict. The preparation he undertakes for the peace treaty and proclamation against Somras illustrates his commitment to peace. He articulates his profound regret regarding the conflict fought against the Chandravanshis, noting that no Naga participated in the engagement. Despite his side achieving victory in the war, he displays no joy; instead, he looks up, his eyes filled with devastation and tears of sorrow.

What have I done? ... an agonised whisper suffused the tent with its resonant grief (371).

Tripathi depicts his protagonist as a formidable warrior, demonstrating audacious feats on the battlefield despite lacking any supernatural or magical powers. Shiva comprehends the abilities of Parvateshwar, and the potential for defeat compels him to travel to Pariha, the location of the Vayuputras, to request their assistance and divine weaponry. The protagonist of Tripathi is characterised by benevolence and kindness. He is widely recognised for his extraordinary abilities and rapid responses.

Fire holds significant importance in Indian mythology. Many Indians hold the belief that sages can purify themselves of sins through the heat generated in their bodies as a result of their ascetic practices. Lord Shiva is recognised for manifesting his anger through his third eye. Shiva, the preeminent figure among ascetics, fakirs, and shamans, embodies the entirety of the universe's heat within his lingam. Shiva: The Wild God of Power and Ecstasy (23).

Shiva is depicted as experiencing a burning sensation between his brows when disturbed by external factors. The author effectively substantiates spirituality through scientific evidence. Readers frequently observe his nerves throbbing between the brows, a gesture that evokes the concept of the third eye of Lord Rudra. The intense nerve agitation experienced by Shiva following Sati's death is depicted in the Oath of Vayuputras (2018) as:

Shiva's brow throbbed desperately, as if a great fire raged within. A dark red mark had developed between his eyebrows. (490)

In this context, Shiva notes,

Whenever I became upset, my brow would begin to throb, and he also explains the cause of the burning sensation he experienced. The Chief of Vasudev, referred to as Lord Gopal, provides a detailed explanation and designates it as the third eye of Shiva. It is the area located between the eyebrows. Seven chakras, or vortices, are posited to exist within the human body, facilitating the reception and transmission of energy. The sixth chakra, known as the 'ajna' chakra, serves as the vortex of the third eye. Chakras are activated by yogis following extensive practice. (Oath of Vayuputras 111).

Amish Trivedi posits that individuals who practise yoga over extended periods may develop a third eye. However, it contrasts with the mythical Shiva, who has possessed a third eye since birth. The author does not characterise the third eye as a miracle or a benefit for the protagonist. He emphasises the significance of neurone blast to provide a scientific explanation. The region between his brows did not exhibit burning or throbbing sensations, possibly as a result of the neurone blast. However, it had assumed a darker shade, nearly black, which sharply contrasted with his fair complexion. It was neither an indistinct nor an indeterminate mark. The concept of the third eye was appropriated by Tripathi from mythology and is presented in a distinct manner in his trilogy. In Indian mythology, Mahadev's third eye is depicted as a source of destruction for his victims. Conversely, in the Shiva Trilogy, Shiva is portrayed as experiencing throbbing nerves between his brows when under stress. The throbbing of eyebrows may result from neuronal activity, which has the capacity to release the energy cultivated by the third eye sages through prolonged meditation practices. The third eye of Shiva serves as a reminder of the destructive potential of neurone activity.

The author's expertise, as demonstrated by Tripathi, is evident in his imaginative reinterpretation of characters drawn from our puranas. The author posits the following:

What if Lord Shiva were not merely a product of affluent imagination, but an individual of tangible existence? Similar to you and me. A man who ascended to a godlike status due to his Karma. The *Shiva Trilogy* presents an interpretation of ancient India's rich mythological heritage, integrating elements of fiction with historical facts. (xv)

The *Shiva trilogy* lacks celestial characters or incarnations. All characters exist solely in human form. Naas manifest as incarnate beings exhibiting physical deformities. Conversely, animals manifest in human form. The narrative incorporates the myths of Lord Ganesh and Lord Karthik. The novels also feature fictional characters, including Parvateshwar, Anandamayi, VasudevPandits, and Vayuputra Lords.

Indian myths depict women as loyal and devoted spouses. Upon the husband's death, the wife is traditionally expected to perform Sati as an expression of her devotion as a life partner. Devadutt Pattanaik (2011) notes that Sati follows Shiva out of unconditional love. She does not anticipate any change in him. She provides service to him without requesting any compensation. Shiva is characterised as the itinerant Tapasivin. She acknowledges him in his current state. The term 'Sati' denotes a devoted wife. (77). Amish Tripathi presents his female protagonist as a precise embodiment of the mythical figure, Sati. While she is recognised for her devotion, she demonstrates the courage to identify her husband's shortcomings when necessary. Sati serves as an advisor to her husband Shiva, urging him to arrest Parvateshwar in the interest of upholding justice. She asserts that a man attains divinity when his perspective transcends the limitations of victors and losers. The message of Shiva must endure indefinitely. This situation may arise if both the victors and the losers derive validation from him. It is essential that he wins. Equally important is the manner in which he achieves victory. In Indian mythology, Lord Shiva is referred to as Arthanareeswarar, as he embodies a duality by sharing half of his form with his consort. In contrast, Amish Tripathi's protagonist reveres his wife, heeds her counsel, and engages in combat against malevolent forces with her assistance. The Vedas advocate for educational equality for women and grant them autonomy in selecting their life partners and families. Women are revered as embodiments of Shakthi, Durga, and Kali.

In alignment with the portrayal of women in the Vedas, Amish Tripathi has created robust female characters in his novels. His female protagonists are revered as mythical deities and depicted as war princesses. In the novel, Sati, the female protagonist, is depicted as a formidable warrior throughout Meluha and meets a heroic death in her personal confrontation with the Egyptian assassin Swuth. The victor of the combat, Swuth, admires the heroic fight exhibited by Sati. According to the author, Swuth gazed at Sati, rendered speechless. Her eyes displayed no indication of fear whatsoever. She fixed her gaze on Swuth, displaying a singular expression. A demonstration of unfiltered defiance. Swuth's eyes filled with tears as he experienced a profound heaviness in his heart. He immediately understood the message of his heart. This was, in fact, his last kill. (*Oath of Vayuputras* 477). The female protagonist of the novel encounters a valiant death in a one-on-one confrontation, the duel of Aten. The *Oath of Vayuputras*, 470.

Hindus commonly perceive Goddess Kali as a deity associated with blood consumption. She is widely regarded as the incarnation of Shiva Sakthi. In this context, Wolf Dieter emphasises that Sati and Kali are avatars of Parvati, who has manifested in various incarnations to her devotees. Her audacious actions on the battlefield have earned her the titles of Durga and Chandi. In this context, Wolf Dieter (2013) asserts that "Chandi (Kali) was composed of the same poison that had discoloured Shiva's neck." (121).

In his work titled *7 Secrets of Shiva*, Devadutt Patanaik (2011) characterises Kali as the Goddess who embodies a duality, representing both the luminous Gauri, which produces light, and the dark Kali, which consumes light. She embodies Shakthi, representing energy and perpetual motion. (63). The novelist contrasts two fundamentally opposing aspects of Kali, integrating his own imagination to create a new character. The portrayal of Kali as the twin sister of Sati is supported by the assertion that Kali represents an incarnation of both Parvati and Sati.

Similarly, Amish Tripathi depicts Kali as a female character seeking the support of Shiva. Kali reflects on how different her life might have been had fate provided her with a partner like Shiva. Perhaps, similar to Didi, all negativity could have been eliminated from my life as well. The novelist has adopted the myth regarding the poison in Shiva's neck, which caused Kali to turn black, while the deity had originally created Kali with power. In the trilogy, the novelist depicts Somras as altering Shiva's colour, which serves as the primary cause of the external growths and physical deformities observed among the Nagas. It is evident that Somras has caused blue poisoning in Neelkanth and resulted in Kali's black complexion.

Tripathi depicts Kali as a warrior disowned by her parents due to her identity as a Naga child. Her strong determination and willpower enable her to emerge as the *Queen of Nagas*. In the novel, she is depicted as a courageous warrior and a sagacious queen. The novelist meticulously depicts Kali as closely aligned with the archetypal figure from Indian

mythology, enhancing this portrayal through his imaginative approach. Her face is characterised by small bony protrusions extending from her shoulders to her stomach, resembling a garland of skulls. Two small additional appendages were located on her shoulders, functioning as a third and fourth arm. One individual was in possession of a knife, which was jet black in colour. Their face bore an exact resemblance to that of Sati's (Secret of Nagas 223). The Kali character is developed through the integration of Indian mythology and imagination. Kali relocates to Egypt to pursue vengeance for Sati's murder. This approach connects her to feminine power, emphasising a previously dormant capability.

In India, Lord Ganesh, also referred to as Ganapati, is venerated universally and is recognised as the Lord of Ganas, a title attributed to him due to his father Shiva appointing him as the host for his companions. He is recognised for eliminating various obstacles that individuals encounter in life. Multiple accounts exist concerning his birth; however, it is established that he was formed from the dust of Parvati rather than by Shiva. In her work *Manifestations of Shiva*, Stella Kramrisch (1981) asserts, "After having bathed, she fashioned this son of hers out of the scurf and ointments from her skin and made him" (201). Wolf Deiter supports a comparable perspective, asserting that Parvati created Ganesh by "scraping some scum and dirt off her skin with her fingernails and mixing it with sandalwood and clay." (158) Amish Tripathi has presented his interpretation of Ganesh. Ganesh has also been formed from the dirt of Sati, known as Somras. His head resembled that of an elephant solely as a result of the effects of Somras. He is the son of Sati's first marriage, and Shiva is not his biological father. Although he is not his biological son, Shiva raises him as if he were his own. In the novel, he is depicted as exceptionally intelligent and courageous. The Prince of Magadah rescues damsels in distress from the monstrous Urgaesan. He protects his mother, Sati, and his brother, Karthik, from ligers. The novel depicts him as a child exhibiting maturity, yearning for love and compassion from his mother. The section of the novel in which he introduces himself to his mother illustrates his profound feelings regarding her absence and his sense of isolation.

Am I not unattractive? ... Is that the reason for your abandonment of me? Soft tears streamed down the Naga's cheeks, questioning, Is it because you could not even bear to look at me?" (Secret of Nagas 221).

Similar to Kali, Ganesh, the Lord of People in the *Shiva Trilogy*, is portrayed as a victim due to his identity as a Naga. Nonetheless, he successfully navigates all challenges and is depicted in the novel as a courageous fighter, endearing sibling, and devoted son. Tripathi's social consciousness motivated the creation of the Ganesh character in the *Shiva Trilogy*. He advocates for the necessity of granting women equal rights in the selection of their partners. By depicting Sati as a Vikrama woman, he articulates his concerns about social discrimination and advocates for the remarriage of widows.

Conclusion

The *Shiva Trilogy* demonstrates that the author Amish Tripathi utilises modernist myths to convey historical, philosophical, cultural, mythical, and imaginative perspectives. The *Shiva Trilogy* encompasses various elements, rich in mythology, history, philosophy, and religious concepts pertaining to God. The novelist has depicted various characters, including Shiva, Sati, Ganesh, Ram, and Sita, in a contemporary manner and has utilised several modernised myths to enhance the depth of his characters. At its heart, the *Shiva Trilogy* grapples with the age-old philosophical debate of destiny versus free will. Shiva is burdened with a prophecy that marks him as the Mahadev, the "Great God" destined to defeat evil and restore balance. However, the narrative continuously challenges the notion of a fixed fate. Instead, it emphasizes the power and consequences of personal choice.

Characters like Sati, the fiercely independent princess of Meluha, further enrich this exploration by embodying resistance against the confines of predestination. Her story highlights how even those seemingly trapped by fate can assert their agency, complicating traditional mythological roles assigned to women. Through Shiva's evolving identity from a warrior to a visionary leader, Tripathi invites readers to reflect on how our decisions define us, even as unseen forces shape our paths. This dynamic interplay suggests that while destiny may set the stage, it is the actors, the individuals that give the story its meaning.

Another major theme in the trilogy is the nature of power, its potential to corrupt, liberate, or redefine identity. Shiva himself embodies this complexity, initially reluctant to wield authority yet gradually learning that true leadership demands more than physical strength; it requires empathy, vision, and moral courage. Tripathi deftly avoids simplistic binaries of good versus evil. The antagonists, such as the Nagas and the Vayuputras, are portrayed with depth and nuance, each driven by their own convictions and struggles. This portrayal encourages readers to question easy judgments and recognize that morality often resides in a spectrum rather than in absolutes. By unpacking the motivations behind each faction, the trilogy offers a meditation on conflict, coexistence, and the multifaceted nature of truth topics highly relevant to today's complex world.

Conflict of Interest

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