

Refashioning Myths : A Study of the Aspects of Lord Shiva's Mythology in Amish Tripathi's
Shiva Trilogy through the Lens of *Shivapurana*

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled *Refashioning Myths : A Study of the Aspects of Lord Shiva's Mythology in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy through the Lens of Shivapurana* is a bona fide record of sincere work done by, Keerthana S, Register Number: 210011004030, Bharata Mata College, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature under the Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam during the year 2021- 2023.

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Declaration

I, hereby declare that the presented dissertation *Refashioning Myths : A Study of the Aspects of Lord Shiva's Mythology in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy through the Lens of Shivapurana* is based on the research that I did under the supervision and guidance of Ms.Sreelakshmi P, Guest Faculty, Postgraduate Department of English, Bharata Mata College, in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam. This is a report of my hands based on the research done on the selected topic and it is my original work and interpretations drawn therein are based on material collected by myself. It has not been previously formed basis for the award of any degree, diploma or fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Shiva is atman (soul)

A pathologist diagnoses correctly,

and cures illness through medicines.

Similarly, Shiva is called the physician of the world,

by those who know the nature of the principles.

Shiva is the great atman,

because he is the atman of all,

he is forever endowed with the great qualities,

there is no greater atman than him.

- *-Shiva purana, Kailasa Samhita, chapter 9.17-22*

(abridged version, translated by: JL Shastri)

Lord Shiva is one of the principal gods of Hinduism. He is also ‘the destroyer’ in the holy trinity, known as *trimurti* (“*trimurti*” meaning “three forms”) with Brahma and Vishnu doing the duties of creation, sustenance, and Shiva of destruction respectively. In the *Shivapurana*, it is stated that the three deities, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha, are born of Shiva. According to the *Shivapurana*, Vishnu was born from the left side, Brahma from the

right side, and Rudra from the heart of Shiva. While Brahma became the creator, Vishnu became the reason for sustenance and Rudra became the master of dissolution. Thus, Shiva manifested in three forms. In Sanskrit, the word *Shiva* means ‘The Auspicious One’. He is also known as *Mahadeva* or ‘The Great God’. Lord Shiva has several names, some of which are *Viswanatha* (lord of the universe), *Mahadeva* (great god) , *Ghrneshwar*, *Mahandeo*, *Parameshwara*, *Mahasu*, *Rudra*, *Trilokanatha*, *Neelkantha*, *Shambhu*, *Mahesha*, etc. Along with these popular monikers, Lord Shiva is also known as the God of Time, the Lord of the Yogis and a patron of yoga, meditation and the arts. Shiva is also known as *Adiyogi* or the very first yogi. Known as a cosmic dancer unparalleled, Lord Shiva’s famous *Nataraja* pose is the very symbol for dance in Hinduism. Shiva’s divine dance is called *Tandava*, *Tandavam* or *Tandava Natyam*. The *Natya Shastra* , a Sanskrit treatise on performing arts by sage Bharata, describes Tandava dance in detail. Shiva is also the Master of Poison and Medicine and the Supreme Being in Shaivism (one of the major traditions within Hinduism). Shiva’s vehicle of choice or his *vahana* is the bull Nandikeshwara, or Nandi. A Nandi sculpture is featured facing the main sanctuary in most Shiva temples. Shiva is also venerated as a phallic image or *lingam*. There are four major sects within Hinduism, which are Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktism and Smartism. Shaivism is a Hindu sect, which has about 253 million followers and fits the description of an autonomous religion in itself. The followers of Shaivism are known as “Shaivas”. *Sahasranamas* are songs of praise, medieval Sanskrit texts which remember deities by a thousand (*sahasra*) names based on their attributes and epithets. The Sanskrit hymn *Shiva Sahasranama* contains one thousand names of Lord Shiva. *Dasha Sahasranama* containing ten thousand names and the *Shri Rudram Chamakam*, are two other significant Hindu texts that hail the many forms of Lord Shiva.

In the Shivapurana, Lord Brahma extols Lord Shiva in the following words-

That from whom words recede, not approaching him even with the mind; that from whom this entire universe beginning with Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra and Indra, along with all elements and all sense-organs, is evolved at first; he is the lord Mahadeva the omniscient, the lord of the universe. He can be realized by supreme devotion and not by other means. (Shastri 44)

Shiva is a deity who is known for his benevolence as well as his fiery temper, denoted by the terms *kshipraprasadi* (one who is easily pleased) and *kshiprakopi* (one who is short-tempered) respectively. He has two personas, one of the omniscient recluse Yogi who lives a quiet and happy life as a loving husband and a doting father with his wife Parvati and his two sons, Ganesha and Karthikeya in Kailas, the area believed to be the center of the Himalayan region. Some identify Kailas with a peak of the Hemakuta mountain (this peak is also called *Shiva-parvata* and *Gana-Parvata*. It is situated to the left of Manasarovar). While this narrative shows Shiva's benevolence, his fearsome wrath is a common legend involving his creation of Bhairava, a demon he created from the region between his eyebrows to cut off Brahma's fifth head, and the ferocious goddess Kali, a version of Parvati, originated from him, his burning of Kamadeva, the cupid equivalent of Hinduism, to ashes by opening his "third-eye", his beheading of Ganesha, his revenge on Daksha, and so on. This duality of attributes in Shiva are signified by his names Rudra and Shiva. The Sanskrit word *Rudra* has its etymology in the root word *rud-* which signifies crying or howling, and the adjective *raudra* means the quality of being wild or fierce. The British scholar Monier Monier-Williams, who studied Asian languages, says that the Sanskrit word *Shiva* corresponds to the one who is auspicious, kind, friendly, gracious, etc. The root word *si-* means "pervasiveness" and *va* means "grace embodied". (Williams 1074-1076)

Gavin Flood, a British scholar of comparative mythology who particularly specializes in Shaivism stated- “Shiva is a god of ambiguity and paradox”. (Flood 152)

Iconographically, Lord Shiva is usually portrayed as sitting in a meditative pose on tiger skin with his eyelids half closed, his hair long and matted (*jatamukta*) and adorned by the crescent moon, the holy Ganges flowing from his hair, the third eye on his forehead and the serpent king Vasuki around his neck. Vasuki is the second king of the *nagas* (the first king is Shesha, the bed on which Lord Vishnu rests). Legends proclaim that he brought down the holy Ganga from the sky, where she was originally the Milky way, to earth by letting the river to flow through his hair. His body is covered with ashes. The ash is interpreted as signifying the impermanence of material experience, signifying the importance of spiritual liberation. In some paintings as well as sculptures, Shiva is portrayed as white from the ashes of the dead applied on his body. His weapon, the trident or *trishula* and a *damaru*, a small two-headed drum, shaped like an hourglass, believed to be created by Shiva to produce spiritual sounds which create and regulate the universe) can also be seen lying near him. Shiva is seen either garlanded with or carrying a string of rosary beads, made of *Rudraksha*. Lord Shiva is worshipped in a phallic form (anticonic) form of *linga*. Shiva’s abode Mount Kailash is interpreted as holding resemblance to a *linga*. Shiva’s throat is depicted as blue in hue. There is a legend behind this that when the devas and the asuras churned the ocean of milk to obtain the life-giving elixir called amrita, they also churned out a lethal poison called *halahala* or *kalakuta*. In order to save the world from its’ effects. His wife, Parvati was alarmed seeing this and gripped his throat to stop the poison from spreading across his body, and the poison is said to have turned his throat blue, earning him the epithet Neelkanth.

The androgynous picturization of Shiva and Parvati as halves of each other, known as *Ardhanareeshwara* is widely popular. This particular picturization is derived from a concept in the *Shakta* belief system, where the Supreme Goddess or Devi is revered as energy and as the equal complementary partner of Shiva, causing a yin-yang like universal balance of masculine and feminine energies. According to the *Shivapurana*, when Shiva is separated from Shakti, he becomes pure consciousness. In that state, he exists sans any attributes, free of alternatives, formless and beyond the scopes of the existent or the non-existent. It is when he is united with Shakti that he is assigned attributes, adopts specific forms as well as certain divine features. This can be the reason why he is pictorially represented alongside Uma in several sketches.

Historically, Shiva has pre-Vedic and tribal roots, with evidences of origin seen in primitive signs, symbols and tribes. It is believed that the form of Shiva emerged as a confluence of several older deities, both Vedic and non-Vedic in nature. Precisely how this process of amalgamation occurred remains undocumented and poses a challenge to historians to this day. The Sankritization process and the Hindu synthesis of post-Vedic periods is commonly touted to be the causative agents behind the formation a single deity from several belief-systems. Some prehistoric sketches at the Bhimbetka rock caves have been interpreted by scholars as depicting Shiva engaged in his dance, depicting his trident and his bull *vahana* or mount Nandikeshvara. The steatite seal retrieved from Mohenjo-daro, a site of Indus Valley Civilization (now in Pakistan) in 1928 by Ernest J.H. Mackay, is believed to be a *Pashupati-Shiva* or proto-Shiva seal by historians. The seal represents a tricephalic seated figure with a horned headdress with animals surrounding him. The Rigvedic Storm-God Rudra, who also has non-Vedic origins, is considered to be an older version of Shiva. The

term *Rudra* means “the roarer”. Shiva and Rudra are similar to the to Odin, the Germanic God of frenzy and rage. Lord Shiva and his retinue of *ganas* resemble the wild hunt motif in folklores, which involve a mythological figure engaged in hunting, escorted by a supernatural group comprising the souls of the departed. Shiva is venerated and revered universally by Hindus in India and also in neighboring countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Indonesia (mainly in Java and Bali) and Sri Lanka. Thus Shiva is a pan-Hindu deity. The Prambanan temple in Java, Indonesia, Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu, Nepal, Munneswaram temple in Sri Lanka, Arulmigu Sri Raja Kalliamman temple in Johor Baru, Malaysia are some famous Shiva temples in other countries.

The Sanskrit word *Purana* literally signifies the condition of antiquity. This term is used to refer to Indian literature which throws light on traditional lores and legends. Purana literature is a feature of Hinduism and Jainism. These texts employ symbolism to convey philosophical meanings. Mainly, Puranas are named after Hindu gods like Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva and Shakti. There are two kinds of Puranas, namely, the *Mahapuranas* and the *Upapuranas*. Each broad category includes eighteen texts each, which makes the total number of existing Puranas to be thirtysix. The *Mahapuranas* are divided into different groups based on the particular Hindu deity they accord preferential treatment to. The *Shivapurana* celebrates the glory and greatness of Lord Shiva. *Shivapurana* expounds the rituals of the Shaiva cult and the philosophical meanings behind them in detail, describes his attributes, narrates his exploits and incarnations, dwells on the phallic image, its’ origin and importance and the merits of consecrating the phallic image. Devotees consider the manuscript of *Shivapurana* to be a form of Shiva himself. *Shivapurana* consists of a total of twentyfour thousand verses which are divided into seven compendiums or *samhitas*. Chapter

one of *Shivapurana-Mahatmyam* , which extols the greatness of the *Shivapurana* claims that any person who reads the entire text without leaving out any *Samhita* can be called a living liberated soul or *Jivanmukta* (one who has crossed the ocean of wordly existence). The entire essence of Vedanta is said to be contained in the *Shivapurana*. The *Shivapurana* includes topics like the battle between Brahma and Vishnu and the subsequent proclamation of Lord Shiva as the great lord, the importance of the *Omkara* mantra, the mode of worshipping the *linga* or the phallic form of Shiva, the narrative of Shiva's temples and holy centres, greatness of the holy ashes and the *Rudraksha*, a summary of Sati's life, marriage of Shiva and Sati, Daksha's sacrifice, Sati's casting off of her body and the subsequent disorder which ensued, the removal of Daksha's misery, Sati's rebirth as Himavat's daughter Parvati, her reunion with Shiva, tales of their sons Karthikeya and Ganesh and other such legendary tales. The *Shivapurana* is said to be expounded by Lord Shiva and later condensed by Ved Vyas, Shiva's ardent devotee. The text is considered as the queller of the three kinds of calamities- physical, extraneous and divine. The text is divided into seven samhitas – *Vidyeshvara, Rudra, Satarudra, Kotirudra, Uma, Kailasa and Vayaviya*.

Shiva enjoys the ardent fandom of millions of youngsters who are inspired by his teachings, his lifestyle, and his charismatic personality. Even the symbols associated with Lord Shiva has been turned into fashion-statements by Gen-next as well as visiting Europeans who are fascinated by Orientalism. Culturally, the impact of the legend of Shiva on the literary and entertainment industry is significant. Several authors and filmmakers have presented myths related to Shiva in their works. Some notable film examples are the S.S. Rajamouli directed megahit “Bahubali” films, the Ayan Mukerji directed “Brahmastra: Part One-Shiva” released in 2022, “Oh My God 2” in which Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar

plays the role of Shiva, is a 2023 release. Ajay Devgn starrer “Shivaay” (2016), “Kedarnath” (2018), “Nagin” (1976), “Akhandha” (2021), “Satellite Shankar” (2019), and the children’s animated “Bal Ganesh” films (2007, 2009, 2017).

In literature, books pertaining to Lord Shiva are too numerous to count. *The Immortal Secret Mantra* by Vivek Shukla, *Shiva Origins: The Son of Ganga* by Dinesh Veera, *Siva : The Siva Purana Retold* by Ramesh Menon, *The Book of Shiva* by Ravi Shankar Etteth, *Kailashh : Mysteries Unfolding* by S.T. Selve Singh, and *The Call of Mahadev* by Amit Bansal are a few recent examples. The most commercially successful of the books inspired by ancient Indian mythology has been Amish Tripathi’s books on Shiva. Tripathi captured the imagination of millions with his *Shiva Trilogy*. The Shiva Trilogy is a series of three fantasy fiction novels in which Lord Shiva appears as the protagonist. The novels are: *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010), *The secret of the Nagas* (2011) and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* (2013). Amish Tripathi is an Indian banker turned author from Mumbai who published his first book *The Immortals of Meluha* in 2010 which was the first installment in his *Shiva Trilogy*- followed by *The secret of the Nagas* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*. Amish began his mythology novel series with the publication of *The Immortala of Meluha* in February 2010 and later went on to create his *Ramchandra* series – *Ram – Scion of Ikshvaku*, *Sita : Warrior of Mithila*, *Raavan : Enemy of Aryavarta* and *War of Lanka*. In 2020, he released *Legend of Suheldev: The King who saved India*. “Amishverse”, as his literary universe is touted by fans, seeks to give logical, historical explanations for popular Hindu mythological stories. Amish’s books are based on the radical thought that gods were flesh and blood human beings who achieved their “godly”, elevated, exalted status by virtue of their karma, or deeds. His representation of Shiva as a young man who is as human as the rest of us,

struggling through all the trials (if not more), tribulations and emotions a young man his age would undergo puts forth the possibility of Puranic tales being a factual possibility. The Shiva Trilogy is as much a philosophical book as a racy, thrilling read with plot twists. *The Hindustan Times* referred to *The Shiva Trilogy* as India's *Lord of the Rings*. What contributes much to the appeal of these works is that Amish has managed to capture the human urge to find rationality in the face of what appears to be superstitious folklores. Amish also successfully adds in all the necessary ingredients to make his novels a commercial and contemporary bestseller, which will be analyzed in the coming chapters. This project aims to study the reasons for the success of this series which clearly struck a chord with its' readers and to analyze its points of convergence and departure from the mythology of Shiva as presented in the Hindu text *Shivapurana*. The project also aims to analyze the refashioning of a religious deity into a popular culture icon and the contemporary socio-cultural factors which made it possible. This project follows MLA 9 format.

Chapter 2

Theorizing Mythology

Mythology refers to a collection of myths, usually part of particular religious or cultural canons. The term 'mythology' also means the study of myths. The term Mythology has its etymology in the Ancient Greek words *mythos* which means 'the story of the people' and *logos* which refers to word or speech. Hence the term Mythology means the spoken story of the people. It is a thing of such infinite complexity that it can be observed and studied from.

A myth is fundamentally a traditional story, concerning the early history of a section of people or supernatural explanations for a natural or social phenomenon, involving supernatural beings or events. These gods or supernatural entities get involved in incredible events. Even though the time remains unspecified, these narratives are understood as existing outside the ordinary human experience. Gods, demigods, angels, demons, spirits and other such supernatural figures form the main characters of myths. Though there may be, at times, overlaps between myths and some folklores at times, myths are still considered distinct from other genres of legends or folklores since neither legends nor folklores are considered to be sacred, unlike in the case of myths. There are several reasons for this difference in status. Some genres of folktales, fairy tales for instance, are not considered authentic by anyone. While the main characters of myths are supernatural entities, legends generally feature ordinary human beings as their protagonists. Works like *Iliad*, *Odessey* and *Aenid* are notable exceptions to these general rules. As time passed and stories spread among different communities far and wide, these stories survived cultural changes and faith changes, resulting in a blend of sorts. Some myths started

being seen as folktales, and their seraphic characters were recast as either humans or demihumans like giants, elves and fairies.

According to the very popular definition given by Finnish folklorist Lauri Honko, a myth is defined thus:

Myth, a story of the gods, a religious account of the beginning of the world, the creation, fundamental events, the exemplary deeds of the gods as a result of which the world, nature and culture were created together with all parts thereof and given their order, which still obtains. A myth expresses and confirms society's religious values and norms, it provides a pattern of behavior to be imitated, testifies to the efficacy of ritual with its practical ends and establishes the sanctity of cult. (Honko 1)

Another definition of a myth given by myth criticism theorist and professor Jose Manuel Losada is "a functional, symbolic and thematic narrative of one or several extraordinary events with a transcendent, sacred and supernatural referent; that lacks, in principle, historical testimony; and that refers to an individual or collective, but always absolute, cosmogony or eschatology." (Losada 1).

Colloquially, myth can also point to a collectively held axiom which has no factual basis. They are also closely linked to aspects like religion and spirituality. Many communities consider myths and legends to be true accounts of their history. Myths are an integral feature of every culture in the world. They are used to explain how a particular civilization developed, how a certain community took birth, and provide explanations for things being the way they are. They play a foundational role in any given society. They present fantastic events but do not provide any proof, thus prompting many to dismiss myths as false, made-up stories. Thus, it becomes

imperative to distinguish between myths and stories that are blatantly conjured up. Moreover, as is typical with all religious symbolism, mythical narratives make no effort to render themselves as plausible. No matter how much a given myth is at odds with the standard human experience, it will still present itself to be an authoritative, credible source of information. Mircea Eliade, Romanian historian of religion and fiction, stated that one of the primary functions of a myth is to establish certain models for human behavior. It was also a belief that by speaking of or reenacting myths, people detach themselves temporarily from the present and travel back to a mythical, bygone age, thereby getting closer to the divine.

Myths, in a way, bring a sense of comfort to people by attempting to provide a reason for the events which occur in what can otherwise appear as a chaotic world. According to Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, a myth is a cardinal aspect of the human psyche as it craves to find some sense of meaning and order in the world.

The psyche, as a reflection of the world and man, is a thing of such infinite complexity that it can be observed and studied from a great many sides. It faces us with the same problem that the world does: because a systematic study of the world is beyond our powers, we have to content ourselves with mere rules of thumb and with aspects that particularly interest us. Everyone makes for himself his own segment of world and constructs his own private system, often with air-tight compartments, so that after a time it seems to him that he has grasped the meaning and structure of the whole. But the finite will never be able to grasp the infinite. (Jung 23-24)

The infinite which Jung refers to in this quote, is the mysterious, holy, powerful entity which imparts allure to myths, tales and parables as it gives a final significance for the otherwise mundane and tiresome human existence.

American scholar Joseph Campbell says that mythology is the basal structure of every civilization, and forms the foundation of every individual's consciousness. His most significant work is *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, a milestone in comparative mythology. He introduces his idea of the 'monomyth' or the 'hero's journey' which refers to the similarities in constituents of a myth like theme, characters, purpose, and progression of narratives from different cultures, at varying times, across the world. With respect to comparative mythology, the 'hero's journey' / monomyth involves a series of stories featuring a hero who embarks on an adventure, battles a decisive crisis and emerges victorious, then returns home a transformed man.

Campbell asks in his work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, "what is the secret of the timeless vision? From what profundity of the mind does it derive? Why is mythology everywhere the same, beneath its varieties of costume? And what does it teach? (Campbell 4)

Colloquially, the term 'myth' refers to a collectively held belief about something that has no truth in it. Often used as a pejorative, this usage was initially restricted for calling certain religious myths and beliefs as fabricated or incorrect, but it has found traction as a term which covers non-religious beliefs as well. Some religious adherents truly believe that the stories featured in their respective traditions are historical without a qualm of doubt, and therefore protest the classification of these popular narratives under the 'myth' category. To avoid offending any particular faction, some scholars label all religious stories as myths, while some other scholars choose to avoid the term altogether to refrain from overshadowing sacred religious

narratives with what can be possibly interpreted as a pejorative title. Some scholars broadly use the term to refer to traditional narratives, popular misconceptions or imaginary entities.

The term mythology in turn is derived from the root *myth*, and under the ambit of mythology comes a wide variety of subvarieties like Greek mythology, Roman mythology, Indian mythology, Hittite mythology, Celtic mythology, etc. the compilation of myths is referred to as ‘mythography’. This term is also used to identify scholarly anthologies of myths. Mythopoeia is a method of consciously generating mythology, coined by the author of *the Lord of the Rings* franchise, J.R.R. Tolkien. Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg is said to have notoriously suggested the same method. The theory of euhemerism states that myths are in fact distorted accounts of historical events. This theory postulates that storytellers exaggerate upon historical narratives until the protagonists of these narratives gain a godly status. The myth of the wind god Aeolus (in Greek mythology) could have evolved from old historical accounts of a king who taught his subjects how to use their sails and interpret the direction of the winds. Greek historian Herodotus (c.484 – c.425 BC) and Greek philosopher Prodicus (c.465 BC – c.395 BC) made claims of this nature. It was ancient Greek mythologist Euhemerus (c.320 BCE), who suggested that Greek gods formed from legends about human beings. Thus this theory is named ‘euhemerism’ after him. Other theories exist which propose that myths originated as allegories denoting natural phenomena, Apollo represents the sun, Poseidon denotes water, etc. and another theory says that myths started off as allegories for philosophical and spiritual notions – Athena symbolizes wise judgment, Aphrodite speaks of romantic desire, so on and so forth. Friedrich Max Muller, the German philosopher and Orientalist favored the allegorical theory of myths. He stated that current myths originated as allegorical descriptions of nature and people started interpreting literally. For instance, a poetic description of the sea seen as “raging” in quality was

later on accepted literally and the sea was understood as a raging god. There are some thinkers who claimed that myths occurred through the personification of objects and forces of nature. As per this theory, ancient civilizations viewed things as gods instead of mere objects. Thus these natural phenomena took on the garb of personal gods, giving rise to myths. William Robertson Smith, the Scottish Orientalist and Old Testament scholar theorized that people start performing rituals for reasons which are unrelated to the concept of myths. They firstly, invent a myth and then claim that the ritual celebrates the events mentioned in the aforementioned myths. James George Frazer, who is the author of *The Golden Bough*, a book about the comparative study of mythology and religion postulated that human beings started out with a certain belief in magical rituals. Later, however, they began to lose this faith in magic and created myths about gods, thus reinterpreting their rituals as religious rituals to please and appease the gods.

Some important figures who did critical approaches towards mythology are Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico, German philosophers Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling and Friedrich von Schiller, Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung, Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud, French scholar Levy-Bruhl, French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, Canadian literary critic and literary theorist Herman Northrop Frye, the Soviet School as well as the Myth and Ritual School. The critical interpretation of myths is said to have started off with Pre-Socratic philosophy. Pre-Socratic philosophers were intrigued by cosmology, but their fields of study also included the functioning of the natural world and also human society, ethics as well as religion. Another important pre-modern mythologist is Euhemerus- he considered myths as actual accounts of authentic historical events which are distorted by several tongues and retellings. The eminent Roman official and Neoplatonist (Neoplatonism- a version of Platonic philosophy) divided myths into five

categories- theological, physical (concerning natural law), animistic (concerning soul), material and mixed (which shows an interaction between two or more of the abovementioned categories and are used in initiations). Incidentally, poetic myth was criticized by Plato on his discussion about education in his *Poetics*, because he feared that the uneducated might take the stories of gods and goddesses literally. However, he referred to myths constantly in his writings.

Mythological narratives were frequently employed by Homer, who started the trend of using mythology in literature. During the Renaissance, there was a revival in polytheistic mythology.

Theologia Mythologica (1532), a book by Georg Pictorius, was one of the earliest works in classical mythology, a treatise which appeared in the sixteenth century. The more modern,

Western scholarly myth-related theories first appeared during the latter half of the nineteenth

century. European languages began adopting the term ‘myth’ as a scholarly word. Nature mythology was one of the most seminal mythological theories of the second half of the

nineteenth century which declared that the “primitive man” was mainly concerned with the

natural world. Due to their inability to frame natural laws which were impersonal, early humans tried to explain the natural phenomena occurring around them by imagining souls for inanimate

objects, which gave rise to animism. Sigmund Freud, in the earlier 20th century, used classical myths to develop his concept of the Oedipus complex in his 1899 work of psychoanalysis, *The*

Interpretation of Dreams. His disciple Jung too tried to comprehend the underlying psychology

behind the popular myths of the world. Jung postulated that all human beings shared some innate unconscious psychological conditions, and he called these psychological forces archetypes.

According to him, the similarities among the myths of different cultures were a proof for the

existence of these archetypes. In the mid- 20th century, Claude Levi-Strauss introduced the

structuralist theory of mythology in which he claimed that “myth is a language, functioning on

an especially high level where meaning succeeds practically at ‘taking off’ from the linguistic ground on which it keeps rolling”. (Strauss 430-431) In his 1957 work *Mythologies*, the French philosopher Roland Barthes examined several modern myths and the process of their creations. In the late 20th century, researchers who were influenced by postmodernism argued that every version of a myth had its own significance with relation to the respective culture. Myths have found its’ place in the modern world discourses as well. With the advent of digital media, mythological content can reach much greater audiences than ever before in history. Mythical references and elements can also be seen in popular culture- namely, television, cinema, video games and so on. Initially myths were transmitted through oral tradition to small, localized groups but now the film industry has made it possible for filmmakers to transmit myths to large audiences through films. This is especially relevant to cultural studies as Carl Jung had earlier argued that a myth is an expression of a society or culture’s goals, ambitions, fears, hopes and dreams. The *Walt Disney Company* is well known for reinventing childhood myths like fairy tales. It can be said that the very foundation of modern visual storytelling has its roots in the mythological tradition. While not as obviously transparent as Disney movies, certain other films present archetypal myths like technology abuse, clashes among gods and origin stories under the guise of action films, cyberpunk, dramas, fantasies, etc. Certain contemporary movies like *Thor*, *Immortals* and *Clash of the Titans* frame traditional mythology to suit modern plotlines. Several authors have also employed myths in their books, a prominent example being Rick Riordan who is behind the *Percy Jackson* and the *Olympians* series. He portrays a world wherein Greek gods are manifested as people. Scholars specializing in the genre of fan studies have observed a link between myths and fan fictions. American media scholar Henry Jenkins observes in an interview with the New York Times, “fan fiction is a way of the culture repairing the damage done in a

system where contemporary myths are owned by corporations instead of owned by the folk.”

(Harmon 2)

Much like Rick Riordan, Amish Tripathi attempted to reimagine the Hindu god Shiva as a flesh-and-blood human being in his *Shiva Trilogy*. Both *Shivapurana* as well as Amish's *Shiva Trilogy* attempt to use myths as a pathway to seek and convey philosophical meanings as well as moral teachings. Both the texts feature mythical characters and legendary events as the base of their narratives. Both the texts provide an opportunity for readers to reconnect with their own culture and heritage by navigating the rich world of Hindu mythology to create an immersive universe filled with gods, demons, and fantastical battles. The fact that familiar figures appear as the protagonists, add to the appeal. As far as mythology is concerned, the *Shivapurana* offers the traditional narrative of Shiva, *The Shiva Trilogy* re-imagines the characters and the events, providing alternate explanations for them, in a creative fashion. By reimagining popular mythology, *The Shiva Trilogy* proves to be an exciting read. It encourages readers to dig deeper into mythology and unearth fresh perspectives. In both the texts, mythology is used as a vehicle for imparting moral and philosophical wisdom. Foundational concepts like *dharma* (righteous duty), *karma* (the cycle of actions and their consequences), and *moksha* (salvation of the soul) are keenly looked into and explained in these texts. The characters undergo ethical dilemmas, moral confusions and receive lessons through various events that transpire. This encourages the readers to do some self-reflection and identify their own values and evaluate themselves. Mythology, in general, is replete with allegories. In a similar fashion, both *The Shiva Trilogy* and the *Shivapurana* employ symbols and allegories to convey deeper truths. According to Hindu mythology, the snake coiled around the neck of Lord Shiva signifies his mastery over his senses. Amish further explores this symbol to depict the power of desires and emotions. The varying

socio-cultural values of the country in different ages can be seen in both the texts. The *Shivapurana* represents the beliefs, practices and social classes of a bygone era. Amish takes these elements and shapes them to suit the modern Indian society by addressing caste inequalities and patriarchy. The characters in *Shiva Trilogy* challenge, change and establish new rules along with the changing world. This inspires the readers to critically examine socio-cultural practices and change what needs to be changed.

Both *Shivapurana* and *Shiva Trilogy* use mythology, but in different ways. They perform the task that all myths perform, which is, providing moral, spiritual and philosophical insights through stories and superhuman characters. The difference is that while the *Shivapurana* is faithful to traditional Hindu mythology and celebrates asceticism, *The Shiva Trilogy* gives a reimagined version of the same stories and characters by attempting to inculcate modern sensibilities.

Chapter 3

Shiva as a philosophy in *Shivapurana*

The *Purana* is a genre of ancient literature which deals in detail about numerous subjects like philosophy, history, religion, sociology, politics- they are an encyclopaedia of various branches of knowledge and ancient wisdom compiled by the scholars and sages of the age. With respect to the *Puranas*, scholars believe that just as one needs to dive to the depths of the ocean to attain the purest of gems, the truth about the human condition lies hidden in an ancient language which was rendered obsolete by the passing of time. The Sanskrit term *Purana* literally means “ancient” or “old”. These texts feature stories laced with complex symbolism which are aimed to spark the thought process of the readers and express profound philosophical truths. The *Puranas* are a feature of both Hinduism as well as Jainism. While most of the *Puranas* or *Maha Puranas* in Hinduism are believed to be written by Krishna Dvaipayana or Veda Vyasa, the revered sage who wrote the Indian epic *Mahabharata*, some scholars believe that the *Puranas* were probably written by several different authors over the course of centuries. In contrast to this ambiguity in Hinduism, most *Puranas* in Jainism can be clearly dated and assigned to specific authors. In Hinduism, information regarding creation (*sarga*), recreation (*pratisarga*), cosmic cycles (the *manvantara* concept in Hindu cosmology, concerning the age of Manu, the progenitor of mankind), genealogy (*vamsa*) and the history of royal dynasties (*vamsanucarita*) are the five characteristics expected out of a *Purana*, though not all *Puranas* strictly follow this code. Amarasinha, the famous Sanskrit grammarian and poet, touted as one of the nine gems that adorned the court of Vikramaditya, in his lexicon *Amarakosha*, refers to *Puranas* containing these five elements as *Pancalaksana*, and by the fifth century A.D, the term acquired popularity. However, as time passed, Puranic redactors found the *Pancalaksana* title to be insufficient to

fully contain the essence of the texts and decided to go with the term *Dasalaksana*. But this attempt was not fruitful as there were certain aspects of the *Puranas* which could not be explained by the *Pancalaksana* (five characteristics) or *Dasalaksana* (ten characteristics) titles. Besides, certain elements usually expected out of the aforementioned principal classifications were also deemed to be missing from some *Puranas*. There is also a theory that the *Puranas* represent the various phases in the life of a man at diverse ages. The *Puranas* are highly inconsistent with respect to their contents. Even specific, individual *Puranas* are themselves lacking in consistency as there are multiple manuscripts for each text. Most *Puranas* were scribed in narrative couplets, similar in style as the two seminal epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. Some scholars also consider the possibility that the earlier texts were compiled by upper-caste Hindu authors by appropriating the ideas and belief systems of other caste communities. Evidences of native influences and the presence of certain local traditions were spotted in the later Puranic texts.

The *Puranas* are classified into two classes, namely the *Mahapuranas* and the *Upapuranas*. Both types have eighteen *Puranas* each making the sum total of *Puranas* to be thirtysix. The *Mahapuranas* are further classified into other categories like Vaishnava, Brahma, Shaiva etc., depending on their preferential treatment of Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma and other deities. As the name suggests, *Shivapurana* is a Shaiva Purana. The *Shivapurana* is a sacred treatise celebrating the glory and greatness of Shiva. The *Shivapurana* text is in itself considered to be a form of Shiva. This work consists of twenty-four thousand verses divided into seven compendiums or *samhitas* designated as *Vidyeshvara*, *Rudra*, *Shatarudra*, *Kotirudra*, *Uma*, *Kailasa* and *Vayaviya*. The second *Samhita* or *Rudrasamhita*, is divided into five sections. It is believed that the original *Shivapurana* had a hundred thousand slokas or verses which were

redacted, reconstructed and abridged to twentyfour thousand verses by Dvaipayana Vyasa himself. As mentioned earlier, there are supposed to be eighteen *Mahapuranas*. While Puranic agreement exists about the existence about seventeen of them, there is a difference of opinion with regard to the eighteenth. Most of the *Puranas* consider *Shivapurana* to be the eighteenth *Mahapurana* while some substitute Vayu for Shiva. The substitution of either two was mandatory as the traditional number of eighteen had to be maintained. Some scholars voted in favor of Shiva, while some deem Vayu to be more befitting. One theory suggests that since out of the seven *samhitas* in the *Shivapurana*, one is *Vayaviya*, and also since the *Shivapurana* itself testifies that the original *Shivapurana* was in fact abridged into twentyfour thousand verses from the initial one hundred thousand verses, there could be a proto-*Shivapurana* and a proto-*Vayaviya*. Thus it is not entirely impossible to speculate that there could be an affinity between the extant *Vayupurana* and proto-*Vyayaviya* and that the extant *Vayupurana* is a recension of proto-*Vyayaviya* and thus a part of *Shivapurana* itself. The most viable solution would lie in accepting the similarity between the two, and not in rejecting one in favor of the other text.

The *Shivapurana* has all the five characteristics of a *Mahapurana*. The origin of the universe or *sarga* is traced back to Lord Shiva, who is devoid of attributes, but still has an inherent energy which manifests itself in the form of – *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* personified by the *trimurtis* or holy triumvirate of Hinduism, the deities Vishnu, Brahma and Rudra. These three deities are also complemented by their respective energies called Lakshmi, Saraswati and Kali respectively, in collaboration with whom they create, maintain and dissolve the universe. As per this account, the task of creation is entrusted with Brahma, who creates the cosmic egg possessing twentyfour principles. The cosmic egg is insentient at first, but goes into activity on being pervaded by Vishnu. Then a variety of creations evolved out of it.

The *Shivapurana* also mentions fourteen Manus by name- Svayambhuva, Svarocisa, Uttama, Tamasa, Raivata, Caksusa, Vaivasvata, Savarni, Raucya, Brahma-Savarni, Dharma-Savarni, Rudra-Savarni, Deva-Savarni and Indra-Savarni. Each manvantara has forty three thousand two hundred human years or one by fourteenth day of Brahma. Thus the fourteen manvantaras make up one whole day of Brahma.

Unfortunately, the exact date and authorship of *Shivapurana* remains uncertain and unknown due to the lack of authentic data. Scholars like Klaus K. Klostermaier as well as Rajendra Chandra Hazra estimate that the oldest chapters in the manuscript can be estimated to be composed around the time span of tenth to eleventh century CE, some chapters are believed to be composed much later, presumably after the fourteenth century. Since the text has not been brought under the scan of carbon dating, there is no option other than to trust the text itself with respect to its composition. Rajendra Chandra Hazra believed that a Bombay manuscript which was published in the nineteenth century is much rarer and is thus assumed to be older than the alternate versions of the text which were primarily produced from eastern and southern parts of the Indian subcontinent. As was characteristic of other puranas in the Hindu literary corpus, the manuscript, which was published by the Vangavasi Press of Calcutta in 1896 includes six sections (*samhitas*), while the second recension of Shiva Purana published in the year 1906 and later reprinted in the year 1965 by a publishing company called Pandita Pustakalaya in Kashi consists of seven sections (*samhitas*). The oldest (surviving) chapters of Shivapurana are a blend of Advaita-Vedanta philosophy as well as theistic bhakti. The term *Advaita*, meaning nondualism, is a school of Hindu philosophy, derived from the Upanishads. According to this philosophy, *Brahman* alone is real and that the physical world around us is transient and merely an illusion *Brahman* (commonly called *maya*).

Shivapurana is the only purana which proclaims readiness to offer salvation to the reader. A person who reads the seven *samhitas* without any omissions is described as a *Jivanmukta* (a liberated soul who has surpassed the ocean of wordliness). *Skandapurana* and merely an illusory appearance (commonly called *maya*) named after Skanda, a son of Shiva and Parvati) has seven chapters titled *Shivapurana-Mahathmyam*, extolling the virtues of *Shivapurana*. The three forms of devotion, which are meditation, prayer recital and noble acts of worship and selfless service are explained in the *Shivapurana*. *Shivapurana* is described as the only text to describe the trio of *Bhakti* or piety, *Jnana* or wisdom and *Vairagya* or non-attachment and the object of Vedanta.

Most versions of *Shivapurana* begin by eulogizing the importance of the text by narrating the tale of a sinful Brahmin called Devaraja who committed several crimes like neglecting his duties as a Brahmin, showing an aversion to prayers, indulging in robbery by deceit or murder and thus amassing wealth, abandoning his first wife to pursue the prostitute Sobhavati, consuming alcohol and forbidden food, and finally murdering his own father, mother and wife who tried to counsel him. However, on reaching the city of Pratisthana, he fell ill. Before his death, he heard a discourse on Shiva from a Brahmin. Such was the power of *Shivapurana* that Shiva's attendants rescued him from the noose of Yama and took him to Kailasa. Thus, this introduction conveys the idea that even the greatest of sinners can attain salvation by a mere hearing of the holiest of holy texts, the *Shivapurana*. Another example of the youthful wife Cancula of a morally questionable man called Binduga is also discussed. When Binduga got enamored by a prostitute and neglected Cancula, she herself got a lover to fulfil her urges. On being caught by her husband, both of them got in a mutual agreement that she will extract money from her lovers and give it to him. When Binduga died, he endured torture in hell and later became a ghost or Pisaca in the Vindhya mountains. (The Vindhyas are a range of mountains

stretching across India, diving the madhyadesha from the south. As one of the seven Kulaparvatas, the Vindhyas are frequently personified in most puranas.) The wife Cancula, in her old age, went to Gokarna and happened to listen to the punishment meted out to sinful women by Yama's servants. Thus, she grew fearful and repented her sins. Seeing her agony, the Brahmin who was conducting the sermon advised her to listen to the story of Shiva, which will guarantee her salvation. She attained liberation by doing the same and also saved Binduga from his wretched condition. Both Binduga and Cancula were lovingly welcomed by Shiva and Parvati. While Binduga was made their attendant, Cancula became the goddess Parvati's chaperone. The text also prescribes several rules for listening to the *Shivapurana* and certain dos and don'ts.

The first *Samhita*, the *Vidyeshvara Samhita*, begins with a discussion by sages seeking a remedy to destroy the sins of people in the Kali age. Thus the *Suta* (*Sutas* are Brahmins and disciples of Vyasa who preserved the genealogies of Gods, sages and Kings) replies that the best way to attain salvation in this age is to recite or listen to *Shivapurana*, which contains the entire essence of Vedanta. Fruits of four forms, namely, *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha* are attained by studying the story of Shiva. He further says – “He who reads the Rudrasamhita portion of Shivapurana with pure and concentrated mind becomes a purified soul within three days even though he might have killed a Brahmin.” (Shastri 9) The first rite to observe is *Sravana* or listening, followed by *Kirtana* or glorification and *Manana* or deliberation. On the successful completion of the three rites, the result is *Shivayoga* or unification with Shiva through *Salokya*. Supreme bliss will be realized along with the nullification of all bodily ailments. The significance of the phallic image or *linga*, modes of worshipping the *linga*, descriptions of fire sacrifice and good conduct, modes of worship of clay idols, the greatness of the holy ashes and the *rudraksha* are also explained. The story of a battle between the gods Brahma and Vishnu is

narrated to show that Shiva is the supreme god. Shiva stops the duo from destroying the world in a war over superiority by manifesting as a terrifying column of fire in their midst. It is Shiva who disappointed on observing Brahma's dishonesty to win the war, punishes him by proclaiming that Brahma shall not have temples or festivals dedicated to worshipping him. However, on observing Brahma's repentance, Shiva grants him the boon that Brahma will remain the presiding deity in all domestic and public sacrifices. Lauding Vishnu's honorable conduct in the battle, Shiva grants him the boon that he will have equal footing as Shiva among the general public and will have separate temples, idols, festivals and modes of worship. Shiva teaches both Brahma and Vishnu their duties of creation and maintenance as well as the significance of the five-syllabled *Om* mantra. The *Shivapurana* explains- "The syllable 'A' came from the northern face; the syllable 'U' from the western; the syllable 'M' from the southern and the *Bindu* (dot) from the eastern face. The *Nada* (mystical sound) came from the middle face. Thus the complete set cropped up in five-fold form. Then all of them are united in the syllable 'Om'". (Shastri 65) The second *Samhita* is *Rudrasamhita* which is further divided into five subsections. The first subsection is titled 'Creation' and the second is *Satikhanda* or 'the narrative of Sati'. *Rudrasamhita* narrates a summary of Sati's life – the conditions leading to her avatar, her childhood sports, subsequent marriage to Shiva, estrangement between her father Daksha and husband Shiva which led to Daksha not inviting Shiva to his fire sacrifice, Sati's journey to the fire-sacrifice against the advice of Shiva, her anger at her father for the insult meted out to her husband and the subsequent casting off of her body using yogic prowess, Shiva's rage on hearing about the tragedy, the creation of the fearsome Virbhadrā to avenge Sati's death, the destruction of Daksha's fire sacrifice and his beheading by Virbhadrā, Shiva's arrival and forgiveness towards Daksha and all the other attendees of the sacrifice who opposed him. In section three of

Rudrasamhita, *Parvatikhanda* or the narrative of Parvati is described. Sati who forsook her body in Daksha's sacrifice is reborn as the daughter of Himavat and Mena under the name Parvati. Through severe penance, Parvati attains Shiva as her husband. The fourth section *Kumarakhanda* describes the birth of Shiva's sons Karthikeya and Ganesha, and Ganesha's marriage. In the final and fifth section titled *Yuddhakhanda* narrates how Shiva transforms from the role of the householder to that of the slayer of evil. After the death of the Asura Taraka at the hands of Karthikeya, his three sons Tarakaksha, Vidyumali and Kamalaksha perform extreme penance and attain boons from Brahma. They demand three cities, made of gold, silver, and copper respectively. Later, they defeated the devas and start destructive activities. Since the three powerful asuras cannot be killed by ordinary devas, they request Lord Shiva's assistance. In the ensuing battle, Shiva emerges victorious by annihilating evil.

The next Samhita called *Shatarudrasamhita* describes in detail the several incarnations of Shiva. *Kotirudrasamhita* eulogizes the glory of the *vyotirlingas*, the greatness of Nandikeshwara, Mahabala, Pashupatinatha, Trymbakeshwara, Gautama, Vaidyanatheshwara and sings the glory of Shivaratri. *Umasamhita* describes the different types of sins, descriptions of Yama, the god of death and hell, the pangs of hell, the importance of penance, the glory of the Puranas, the description of the sphere of earth as consisting of seven continents or *Dvipas* which are- Jambu, Plaksa, Salmali, Kusa, Kraunca, Saka and Puskara which are surrounded by seven different oceans. The seven oceans are called salt sea, sugarcane juice sea, wine sea, ghee sea, curd sea, milk sea and pure water sea. An island called *Jambu Dvipa* is situated in the middle of all. The golden mountain Meru exists in the middle of *Jambu Dvipa*. The *Samhita* then describes the nature of the birth and development of the human body, its impurity, stages beginning from infancy, ascertaining the time of death, escaping death and realization of Shiva and a description

of *Chayapurusha* or ‘shadow-man’, the race of Manu, ways to worship Vyasa, Manifestations of several forms of goddesses like Mahakalika, Mahalakshmi, Saraswati, Uma and Sataksi. The *Umasamhita* ends with a review of the holy rites. The next *Samhita* or *Kailasasamhita* describes the path to *Sannyasa* or asceticism, modes of worshipping Shiva, procedures of *sannyasa* and renunciation, the *Pranava*, the non-dualistic nature of Shiva, rites to be observed on the occasion of the death of an ascetic until the twelfth day. The final *Samhita* called *Vayaviyasamhita* is in turn, divided into two subsections. The first subsection traces the origin the principles of the Shaiva cult, the Naimisha episode, descriptions of creation and sustenance, the creation of the gods Brahma and Vishnu, the manifestation of Shakti, story of Upamanyu and his penance. The second subsection describes the principles of Shiva, the incarnations of Vyasa, rules of Shaivite initiation, *Nitya* and *Naimittika* rites, *Kamyas* rites, compulsory and optional rites, rites for prosperity and bliss, the goal of Yoga, obstacles in the path of Yoga, Shaivite Yoga, the journey of the Naimisha sages and the instruction of Vyasa. Veda Vyasa is the sage to whom most of the *puranas* are attributed to. He is also called Krishna Dvaipayana, with the word Krishna referring to his skin complexion and Dvaipayana denoting his place of birth. Vyasa is known as the writer of the Vedas, the compiler of the Mahabharata, the founding father of Vedanta philosophy as well as the arranger of the Puranas. It is believed that Vyasa also taught the puranas to his five disciples-Romaharshana, Paila, Vaisampayana, Jaimini and Sumantu.

The Shivapurana imparts the readers a thorough, all-inclusive understanding of Lord Shiva’s mythology, teachings as well rituals. The Shivapurana portrays Lord Shiva as the ultimate deity of Hindu pantheon. The Shivapurana also delves into the various forms of Lord Shiva, like the destruction of Rudra and the harmony of Nataraja. The text also explores the divine attributes of Shiva, including the concepts of his omniscience, yogic prowess, wisdom and

power over all the other deities. Using hundreds of stories as well as legends pertaining to various episodes in Shiva's life, the lives of his devotees and the other deities, the *Shivapurana* serves not only entertainment but moral along with spiritual instruction to its' readers. The complexity of Shiva, the nature of his interactions with other *devas* (gods), *asuras* (demons) and *martyas* (human beings), the significance of inculcating qualities like devotion, humility, righteousness, honesty and the justice of *karma*, are other aspects highlighted in these stories. Through the mode of rich visual imagery, ornate language and the appealing mode of stories, the puranic text lucidly imparted teachings to the listeners or readers without boring them. Along with popular mythology, the *Shivapurana* also explores deeper concepts which are philosophical and spiritual in nature, like that of righteousness or dharma, liberation or moksha, the actual nature of Brahman or reality. The text also denounces materialism and glorifies asceticism, devotion, meditation and the journey towards self-realization as the suggested methods to attain enlightenment and unification with Shiva.

The *Shivapurana* also explains in detail the rituals and ceremonies associated with the worshipping of Lord Shiva. Detailed and descriptive instructions are provided regarding ways of venerating the deity, offering sacred substances, *mantra* recitation as well as the construction of temples and their consecration. These rituals are intended for the devotees to maintain a harmonious relationship with the Supreme Being. They form as essential part of Hindu religious traditions.

The *Shivapurana* is both an ancient Hindu religious scripture as well as a cultural artifact. The text provides insight into the mythical, theoretical and formalistic aspects of worshipping Shiva. The text has also played an exceptional role in framing Hindu religious customs,

providing a deeper understanding of the concept of Shiva and functioning as a guide for spiritual seekers.

Chapter 4

Shiva in the *Shiva Trilogy* through the Lens of *Shivapurana*

Indian author Amish Tripathi's *Shiva trilogy*, which consists of the books *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, is a present-day adaptation of the myths and fables encompassing the Hindu god Shiva.

The Immortals of Meluha begins thus:

1900 BC, Mansarovar Lake (At the foot of Mount Kailash, Tibet).

Amish establishes a clear time frame for the story. He introduces the protagonist Shiva, a popular and powerful Hindu god, but interestingly, his description hits home- as Shiva here is not the almighty but a twenty-one year old boy who was gazing at and admiring the beauty of the sunset sky, a bright hue of orange. A sentiment most can relate to, as every human being must have, at some point of time, stood spellbound by the vivid sky before him/her at sunset. Amish describes Shiva as having a "lithe, muscular body" with "numerous battle-scars on his skin". Shiva then fondly remembers his carefree childhood days and takes pride in how he had perfected the art of throwing pebbles that bounced off the surface of the lake, his record of seventeen bounces being the highest count in his tribe. Shiva is the young leader of the Guna tribe of Tibet. He takes the chillum made of yak-bone to his lips and takes in a deep drag.

In the *Shivapurana*, Lord Shiva assumes the divine form of the three-eyed moon-crested God, white in complexion, clad in white cloth, with the body illuminated and embellished by all ornaments. Shiva is the lord of the *Atmans*, the five-faced (signifying the five elements) and the dispeller of the five powerful sins. He is *aguna*, one who is free from all attributes. His true

nature is difficult to fathom. In the *Shivapurana*, it is expounded that the three deities Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha are the three forms of Shiva. There occurs a slightly different variation in another Puranic text called *Kurma Purana*. In the *Kurma Purana*, *Agni (Tamas)*, *Brahma (Rajas)* and *Vishnu (Sattva)* are the three forms of Rudra while the other form, full and devoid of any attributes is Shiva himself. The *Kurma Purana* also belongs to the eighteen *Mahapuranas*. It is named after the second or tortoise avatar of Lord Vishnu. There is no reference to Shiva engaging in reveries about his childhood or using psychedelic substances. There is, in fact, no mention of Shiva's childhood or lineage.

Thus, through mythological refashioning, the Shiva trilogy adopts a fictional and modernized approach to the legend and persona of Shiva. The idea of Shiva as a young, adventurous, attractive, muscular, carefree tribal chieftain, smoking marijuana while admiring the sunset, is clearly meant to resonate with the young readers who find such qualities appealing, 'cool' or relatable. While Amish attempts to humanize Shiva at every step, the *Shivapurana* does the exact opposite- it leaves no stone unturned to remind the readers/listeners that Shiva is not an individual, but *Brahman* itself. Shiva's representation as a heretic who lives amongst ghosts and goblins, wearing tiger-skin and having an ash-covered body has symbolic meanings like the impermanence of the physical world. Those who get caught up in such superfluous illusory outwardly appearances or, like Prajapati Daksha, are said to be deceived by Shiva's *Maya* and corrected and shown Shiva's true reality.

In the beginning of *The Immortals of Meluha*, Shiva is considering an invitation from a foreign envoy, inviting him and his tribe to a life of peace and prosperity in a land which the foreigner describes as heaven – Meluha. Shiva accepts the invitation of the Meluhan general

Nandi as his tribe, the Gunas are constantly being terrorized by an enemy clan, the *Pakratis* and their war monger chief, Yakhya. Meluha is a near perfect empire, created by Lord Ram, again described as a human being, a monarch, who was elevated in status owing to his *karma*. Meluha is ruled over by the Suryavanshi dynasty under King Daksha. The Suryavanshis are descendants of the sun and they follow the solar calendar. The once powerful and proud Suryavanshi empire is under threat. They are constantly being attacked by Chandravanshi terrorists. The Chandravanshis are another dynasty, in fact the birth dynasty of Lord Ram, but they are constantly at war with the Suryavanshis. Chandravanshis are descendants of moon and in turn, follow the lunar calendar. Suryavanshis consider them to be crooked, dishonorable and lazy. To make matters worse for the Suryavanshis, their primary lifeline, the river Saraswati is slowly dying. They attribute this catastrophe too as the evildoings of the Chandravanshis. Chandravanshis are also shown to be teaming up with a sinister and deadly group of deformed ostracized people called the Nagas. They are believed to be born with such deformities due to the sins committed by them in previous births.

Amish ponders over the philosophy of evil, as to what actually constitutes evil. Initially the Chandravanshis and the Nagas are termed as evil by Meluhans, and hence by Shiva too, as he sees events from only the Meluhan viewpoint. But as the novel proceeds, Amish challenges the readers to look beyond the obvious and the external, and he carefully propounds an alternative philosophy of evil as something the universe requires. The Meluhans believe in the prophesy of their fabled savior Neelkanth (the one with the blue throat), and that he will “save” them from the “evil” Chandravanshis. Shiva’s tribe is administered the Somras, the miracle elixir responsible for the long lives and radiant health of the “immortal” Meluhans. While it causes fever and sweating to break out among the unsuspecting Gunas, it also turns Shiva’s throat cold

and blue. Overnight, he gets catapulted from the garb of a local tribal leader to the savior of an entire generation, the divine incarnation of Lord Rudra himself. Being new to this newfound fandom, the formerly ‘uncouth barbarian’ (in the words of the Meluhans themselves) has no idea how to provide succor to this country of sophisticated, alien residents. He also meets the love of his life, the princess Sati, daughter of King Daksha. He later finds out that Sati is a Vikarma, one who has to atone for their past life sins and thus cannot get married as she should be kept at a distance from the mainstream society. Shiva fights and abolishes the unjust Vikarma system and marries Sati. He is convinced that his role is to fight evil. Since evil equals the arch rival Chandravanshi clan in the eyes of the Suryavanshis, Shiva wages a war against them and defeats the Chandravanshi emperor Dilipa. But this is where the readers get the next surprise as Shiva realizes to his horror that the Chandravanshis also regard him as their God and feel betrayed because he was supposed to be on their side. He discovers that the Chandravanshis are not evil, but merely different. This causes him much mental anguish as to what his real purpose is and what in fact constitutes evil, if not the Chandravanshis.

The second edition of The Shiva Trilogy, *The Secret of the Nagas* begins with the quotation:

Satyam Shivam Sundaram

Shiva is truth. Shiva is beauty

Shiva is the masculine. Shiva is the feminine

Shiva is a Suryavanshi. Shiva is a Chandravanshi. (Amish 1)

While the *Asuras* and the *Suryavanshis* portray a primarily masculine energy by their strict adherence to truth and strength, the *Devas* and the *Chandravanshis* signify the more feminine qualities of beauty and passion. Both are necessary forces which maintain the universe. This is a reference to the ambiguous nature of Shiva and his *Ardhanareeshwara* form. Amish tries to question the ‘black and white’ prejudice which considers one as entirely good and it’s opposite as the epitome of evil. Rather, he promotes thinking in ‘greys’, that everything and everyone has both good and evil within them, and even a life-saving elixir can transform into evil if used recklessly. The same philosophy is seen in the popular Malayalam adage, “*Amithamayal Amruthum Visham*’.

In the second book *The Secret of the Nagas*, Shiva believes that true evil are not the *Chandravanshis*, but the *Nagas*. However, the *Nagas* are revealed to be the victims of an unjust social hierarchical structure wherein they are considered to be demonic owing to their physical attributes, as the *Nagas* are essentially children born with deformities who are later abandoned as they are considered to be vile and a danger to the society in general. These unfortunate babies are then adopted by other *Nagas* and raised in a land south of the *Narmada* called *Panchavati*. Sati discovers that her son *Ganesh* and twin sister *Kali* were cruelly abandoned by her doting father *Daksha*, who also killed her first husband *Chandandhwaj* because he begat Sati a *Naga* offspring. She cuts off all ties to her father in fury, which makes the shortsighted *Daksha* to believe that *Shiva* choreographed this fracture between the loving relationship between him and Sati.

The Oath of the Vayuputras is the final edition in the series, where *Shiva* finds out that the original evil is the *Somras*. The *Somras* is responsible for the deformities in the *Nagas*, as the *Nagas* are basically born with the side effects that happen to the *Meluhans* who consume the *Somras* indiscriminately. The pollution from the *Somras* factories also causes the intermittent

plagues affecting the kingdom of Branga. The Puranic sage Maharishi Bhrigu appears as the savior of the Somras, as he believes that the Somras is essentially good and that Shiva is a fraud Neelkanth. The Emperor of Ayodhya, Dilipa, who is the Chandravanshi king, also supports Bhrigu since Bhrigu provides him life-saving medicines which help his otherwise fast deteriorating health. Blinded by personal animus, emperor Daksha aligns himself with Maharishi Bhrigu with the sole aim of assassinating Shiva and gaining his daughter back. This causes a great war to break out between the factions of Shiva and sage Bhrigu. Amish also paints his characters as morally grey, tilting to the good/ white, with a few exceptions. Even the apparent villain sage Bhrigu isn't essentially morally devious. His actions are a result of his strong belief in what is right and wrong. War happens as a result of the varying notions of what constitutes good and evil among individuals. Despite being the god himself, Shiva too makes countless errors by killing thousands of innocents solely because he was swayed by the narrow-minded prejudices of his immediate allies. He is constantly haunted by guilt as a ran away from a site of crime in his childhood, without saving a lady, while she was crying out to him for help. She was being raped by a monster. This post-traumatic stress causes Shiva more anxious to do the right thing, later in his life. Even the practices of a near perfect society like Meluha is filled with unjust practices like the ostracization of the Vikarmas and the Nagas as well as addiction to an elixir, even at the cost of harming innocents. The philosophical meaning here is that even godly figures and noble citizens are susceptible to making grievous errors, whether intentionally or unintentionally, and that one's true duty is to learn from one's mistakes and exercise what one believes is the right course of action. As shown by Shiva's recurring nightmares, shirking one's duties creates much psychological distress, even though it might appear to be the easier choice at the moment.

Amish opines that his books can be read purely as adventure-thrillers, as many of his readers already do. But he insists on the philosophical core which forms the foundation of each of his series. The Shiva Trilogy had at the base the philosophical query “What is Evil?” Similarly, the philosophical question which forms the core of Amish’s *Ram Chandra* series is : “What is an ideal society?.”

Amish also includes female characters as fierce warriors and active members of the society. His way of portraying the goddess Sati is quite interesting and refreshing. Amish’s Sati appears as the princess of Meluha, the favourite and only accepted child of her father, emperor Daksha. Amish’s Sati is not a woman who needs Shiva’s protection. Rather , she is indignant whenever Shiva tries to ‘protect’ her. In her introduction scene, she foils a Naga kidnapping attempt against her by fighting alongside Shiva. When Shiva tried to protectively pull her behind him, she deftly side-stepped and produced her own sword, hidden beneath her angavastram. thus, from the very beginning, their relationship is one of equal partnership and not one where the man has to defend the woman. Sati is proud, regal and self-sufficient. Princess Sati is not a demure damsel in distress. In another episode, Sati fights and defeats Tarak, when he objects to her presence in the yagna at Karachapa city claiming that she was polluting the rites by her status of being a vikarma. The vikarma question can be an allegory of the caste system which was entrenched in the Indian society, according to which certain members of the society were deemed ‘untouchable’ owing to their birth in a particular caste. Taraka is an asura who appears in the Shivapurana as well, and he is annihilated by Karthikeya. Amish reimagines the asura as an immigrant from the ultra-conservative northwest regions of the empire. in an *Agnipariksha*, Sati defeats and yet magnanimously spares Taraka. The *Agnipariksha* was portrayed in Ramayana as the test of fire which proves a woman’s purity. Amish’s version of the

Agnipariksha is a duel-to-death combat in which both the combatants engage in a fierce fight in the midst of a ring of fire, and the winner marks his victory by killing the loser. Sati is portrayed as the only woman to call for an *Agnipariksha*, thus portraying women as independent and strong. Sati is not afraid to stand up to her father, the mighty emperor, when she realizes that her sister Kali, and son Ganesh were unjustly treated by her father. In the *Shivapurana*, there is an interesting legend behind the birth of Sati. Brahma, the grandfather of all the worlds, got enamored by his own daughter Sandhya, in the presence of his mentally created sons like Angiras, Bhrigu, Narada, Marici, Daksha etc. This feeling in his heart led to the birth of a beautiful being called Kama, the Indian equivalent of cupid. Brahma, blessed him that Kama will do the task of captivating men and women with his flower-arrows, thus continuing the process of creation. He also said that not even himself, Brahma, Vishnu or Shiva, will be exempt from Manmatha's powers. In order to test his boon, Kama fired his arrows, causing Brahma and his sons to feel lustful emotions towards Sandhya, seated before them. Seeing this, Dharmā, another of Brahma's sons, prayed to Shiva to put a stop to this. Shiva appeared and admonished Brahma and his sons for their sinful behaviour. Livid with the insult, Brahma cursed Kama that he will try his tricks in front of Shiva, which will cause his getting burned by Shiva's third eye. However, on seeing Kama's distress, Brahma relents that when Shiva gets married, he will happily grant Kama another suitable body. Brahma then consulted Vishnu to create a suitable divine consort for Shiva who can disrupt his yogic powers and control over his senses. Thus, they decide that goddess Shakti will take birth as the daughter of Daksha and his wife Asikni. Daksha performed severe penance for three thousand years to please the goddess. Delighted with his austerities, the goddess Shakti granted him the boon that she will be born as his daughter. But she also added that if ever she is disrespected by him, she will cast off her body and will take

birth as the daughter of someone else. She was named Sati. She attained Shiva as her husband through great penance. After marrying her, Shiva became a happy householder. Later, a great sacrifice was performed in Prayag. Since Daksha was the lord of the Prajapatis, he was honoured and lauded by the sages on his arrival. However, Shiva sat firmly and did not bow to him. This enraged him and he mocked Shiva's lifestyle, ghostly companions and lack of pedigree. This led to an array of curses hurled back and forth between Daksha and Shiva's favourite Gana, Nandikeshwara. Shiva mollified Nandi by reminding him that he was omniscient and unaffected by such malicious words. However, this estrangement between Daksha and Shiva due to Daksha's haughtiness resulted in Daksha not inviting Shiva to his fire sacrifice. Sati obtained the reluctant permission of Shiva to attend the event and was insulted on seeing that all the other deities were honored by Daksha and assigned shares but the supreme deity Shiva wasn't. Daksha further spoke harshly of Shiva and said that Shiva was of an ignoble lineage, was inauspicious and the king of goblins, ghosts and spirits. The infuriated Sati cast off her body in the fire. In Amish's third book, *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, Sati dies in an entirely different manner. The estrangement between Daksha and Shiva does occur, albeit, due to different reasons. Daksha's animosity towards Shiva starts when Sati cuts off all ties with her father owing to his cruelty towards Kali, Ganesh and first husband Chandandhwaj. This rivalry causes Daksha to assign three hundred cloaked assassins from Egypt to murder Shiva, in the pretext of a peace conference. However, on knowing that it is Nandi who is attending on behalf of Shiva, she escapes Daksha's palace and fights the assassins to save Nandi as well as her soldiers. She is fatally wounded in the vicious battle and succumbs to her injuries. Thus, Sati receives a heroic, warrior's death. Amish introduces the character of the Meluhan general Parvateshwar and says that Sati is also known by the name Parvati as she was his god-daughter. The name Parvateshwar, literally means

‘the lord of the mountains’ and can stand for goddess Parvati’s father Himavat, the King of the Himalays. Parvateshwar signifies a thought process, the philosophy that one needs to follow one’s dharma even if the dharma is against the common good. When presented with the dilemma of following his faith or his loyalty, Parvateshwar chose his duty to the empire even though he believed that the empire was fighting for the wrong cause. But in another parallel plot, he breaks his celibacy vows to marry Princess Anandmayi, on the advice of Shiva. This gifts him happiness and companionship. Thus the inner meaning is that one should apply one’s reasoning and obey only those laws that guarantee a good outcome than rigidly adhering to such rules. Rules are essentially framed for the betterment of mankind, and Amish shows that it is that lofty goal which should be given importance at the end of the day. All the characters as well as events in *The Shiva Trilogy* are clearly allegorical, standing for a deeper, inner, philosophical meaning. The character of Virbhadra is Shiva’s childhood friend and husband of Sati’s best friend Krittika.

In the Shivapurana, Shiva created Virabhadra by plucking out a cluster of his matted hair and striking it on top of a mountain. The cluster split into two with a terrifying sound. From the first half arose the powerful Virabhadra, the leader of the Ganas and from the second half goddess Mahakali was created. Shiva ordered the complete annihilation of Daksha’s sacrifice and disgrace of all the attendees present there. Virabhadra wrested Daksha’s head with his bare hands and threw it into the fire-pit. Impressed with him, Shiva made him the head of the Ganas. Goddess Kali is represented as having dark skin, terrible countenance, adorned with snakes, skulls and human heads. Kali appears as Sati’s deformed twin sister who is rejected and abandoned by Daksha in Panchavati, and who later becomes the Naga queen of Panchavati and the aunt-caretaker of Ganesha. She is noble, mostly angry at the world for the injustice meted out to her and her people, loves Sati and Shiva dearly and never backs down from a challenge.

Another character who features both in the *Shivapurana* as well as Shiva trilogy is Nandi. Nandi, also known as Nandikeshwara /Nandideva, is the mount of Shiva and the gate-keeper of Kailasa. He has the form of a bull. Most temples dedicated to Shiva feature a stone statue of the seated Nandi facing the sanctum. The *Shivapurana* describes Nandi as the son of a sage called Shilada. In *the Shiva Trilogy*, Nandi is the Captain of the Meluhan army. He is noble, child-like, loyal and is a well-built man. There is no reference to his appearance as a bull. However, he does have a caste amulet with a bull image, which he explains as a Kshatriya lineage of a 'bull' status. He also possesses amulets proclaiming his Suryavanshi status. The clear caste demarcation again points to the stringent caste system which existed in pre-Independence India. The Meluhans follow an elaborate education system instituted by Lord Ram. Every child born in the city is mandatorily adopted by the kingdom. All pregnant women travel to a hospital city called Maika, situated to the north of the Narmada, for delivery. Not even husbands or parents of the women are allowed entry in Maika. After the birth of the child, the mother travels back alone and the child is raised by Meluha Gurukul. Thus, all the children receive the benefit of the same education system and resources given by the empire. On entering the age of adolescence, all the children consume the Somras and at the age of fifteen they take a comprehensive test which determines the cast which they will be assigned to- Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or Shudra. The children are then given an additional year's caste-specific coaching. There are separate color bands for each caste or varna – white denotes Brahmins, red denotes Kshatriyas, green denotes Vaishyas and black denotes Shudras. Since the classification is based on colored bands, the Meluhans refer to this as the *varna* system. However, in Hinduism, the actual *varna* system was harsher and definitely more unjust than Amish represents it to be. The varna system was a system of classification of people on the basis of the castes into which they were born. The

concept is said to have originated from the *Purusha Sukta* in Rig Veda. Texts like the *Manusmriti* especially prescribes the four ranks and their duties. The Brahmins or 'Dvijas' (meaning twice-born) were supposed to undertake the more intellectual or spiritual professions like that of scholars, educators or priests. The Kshatriya dharma included engaging in warfare, ruling and administrating. The Vaishyas were the ones who did farming, agriculture and trading. The unfortunate Shudras belonged to the bottom rung and were expected to be laborers, servants or craftsmen. Even worse off were groups like tribals, Dalits, etc. who did not fall into any of these four groups. They were referred to as *avarnas* while the above four classes were called *savarnas*. The Indian society has undergone revolutionary changes under the helm of Dalit leaders like B.R. Ambedkar, Swami Achootanand, Iyothee Thass etc. Caste consciousness and the narratives of Dalit community members has caused much anger against mainstream Hinduism and upper-caste sensibilities amongst the general public. Even though Amish's rich imagination and storytelling techniques are laudable, one cannot oversee his subtle attempts to glorify Brahmins as intellectually superior scholars and Kshatriyas as exceptionally skilled warriors in *The Shiva Trilogy*. By softening out years of injustice through an alternate utopian re-imagination, he can cause some amount of confusion in the minds of impressionable young readers. It is also important to note that of late, there has been an attempt by right-wing organizations to promote a certain style of militant Hinduism. By glorifying elite castes and advocating violence as the means to achieve one's objectives, by reimagining Hindu gods and goddesses as militant heroes who indulge in violence with ferocity, Amish also contributes to the militant Hindu movement.

While both the *Shivapurana* and *the Shiva trilogy* have Shiva as their focal point, they clearly have certain notable differences regarding their respective approaches, narrative techniques and perceptions regarding the character of Shiva.

Chapter 5

The Conclusion

Indian mythologist Devdutt Patnaik defines mythology as the “the subjective truth of people communicated through stories, symbols and rituals.” (Pattanaik 1)

"Facts are everybody's truth. Fiction is nobody's truth. Myths are somebody's truth."(Pattanaik 1)

No matter how rational man claims to be, myths continue to survive decade after decade, generation after generation. Keralites just finished celebrating the myth of the *asura* king Mahabali returning from the netherworld *paatal* to visit his beloved subjects. There is something about the super-human and the fantastical which continue to inspire adaptations and re-adaptations in art, books and films. We can attribute several reasons for this, including man's thirst for power, fascination with anything that is mysterious, aspiration to achieve perfection, and a desire to escape the frustrations of a chaotic world s/he has to face day in and day out.

Among the thousands of Hindu gods, Shiva is one deity who has a massive following of devotees and fans like none other. He is very much a part of the art, entertainment, religious and cultural institutions. Over the years, hundreds of books have been written about Shiva and several movies have also been made based on his legends. Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, a spiritual guru who has attained fame through social media, is a proponent of Yoga and has popularized Shiva as the *Adiyogi* (very first yogi). In comparison to other deities, Shiva enjoys a certain explosive youth fanfare. Westerners enchanted by Oriental mysticism are also seen eulogizing Shiva while wearing 'Nirvana' tee shirts and consuming drugs. This is a cause for much intrigue.

This project studies Shiva's ambiguity, the reasons behind socio-cultural acceptance and celebration of a particular deity more than the others, as well as the contemporary relevance of mythology in general using the texts *The Shiva Trilogy* and *Shivapurana*, bringing in new and old perspectives on the legend of Shiva to study the impact it had on the Indian society.

In order to conduct a comparative study on mythology, two texts- Amish's *Shiva Trilogy* and the *Shivapurana* were used. Compared to other puranic texts, the *Shivapurana* is relatively less known, even though it is considered by scholars to be one among the *Mahapuranas*. The *Shivapurana* proclaims Shiva as *Brahman*, the omniscient, the Supreme among all the deities.

The Shiva Trilogy, on the other hand, is nothing like the *Shivapurana*. While the *Shivapurana* resembles a calm river-stream on a sunny day, *The Shiva Trilogy* is an ocean during a cyclone.

There are several reasons for the success of *the Shiva Trilogy*. It is important to keep in mind that Amish's readers are primarily young adults. Amish was able to offer an opportunity for the young people to re-connect with their cultural past and heritage. It greatly fascinated the readers to see their familiar deities transformed as human beings. By providing believable, yet alternate explanations for past events, he made the story resonate with the young readers. The younger audience is not familiar with the traditional texts like the *puranas*. Hinduism is a religion shrouded in mystery. Compared to the Abrahamic religions, Hinduism has thousands of gods and goddesses, all mostly equal in powers and stature. A stand-up comedian once compared Hindu gods to Marvel's *Avengers*. There are hundreds and thousands of stories involving these powerful Hindu gods in the puranas. It is easy to see why these stories and their superhero-like protagonists continue to inspire books and movies, year after year. One point of view is that what

keeps the puranic tales alive is not mere faith towards religion, though it definitely is a part of it, but mainly man's desire to vicariously experience a sense of power by celebrating such legendary characters. It is what drives people to read superhero comics or wait for the next Spiderman movie. *The Shiva Trilogy* has successfully presented age-old puranic stories in a fresh, relatable avatar. For example, Amish introduces the character of the Meluhan military general Parvateshwar and comments that Sati is known by the name Parvati because she is the god-daughter of Parvateshwar. But according to traditional Hindu mythology and the *Shivapurana*, goddess Parvati is a separate re-incarnation of Sati. This is merely one amongst the many instances of Amish changing the old narratives to appeal to the new-age sentiments of his readers. God-parent is a Christian concept. Amish's Shiva uses American English to swear out his frustrations. Amish has thus, incorporated the neo-Western sensibilities of young millennials into his novels, which made them identify with the character more, contributing to the success of the novels. The sensation one feels while reading *the Shiva Trilogy* is equivalent to that experienced while reading *The Harry Potter* series and the *Narnia* series.

While both the *Shivapurana* and *The Shiva Trilogy* have Shiva as the protagonist, they have stark differences. The *Shivapurana* presents Shiva as the Supreme god, while *The Shiva Trilogy* treats him as a human being. While the *Shivapurana* focuses on the spiritual and philosophical lessons imparted by Shiva, *The Shiva Trilogy* follows the themes of the nature of good and evil, philosophy, leadership and the role of destiny. The *Shivapurana* extols the need for salvation, devotion, asceticism, and overcoming the all-pervasive illusion or maya in an episodic fashion. *The Shiva Trilogy* is fast-paced and full of action with generous sprinklings of adventure, politics and fantasy. Even though the story Amish presents is fictional, he dresses it up in facts, which makes it seem convincing to the readers. Secrets after secrets are released in

the pages one after the other making the books a compelling read. The *Shivapurana* is written in classical Sanskrit and requires study for comprehension while *The Shiva Trilogy* is written in easy-to-understand English, and that brings it closer to a global audience and young readers.

This project has thus reached the conclusion that mythology will exist as long as mankind will. Change is inevitable as time passes. As new sensibilities are formed, newer narratives of old mythemes will emerge. Familiar characters will be re-written. Gods will re-emerge and readers will cherish these new adaptations as they will provide us with new avenues to connect with a long-gone past and our ancestors. And yet, the older texts will harmoniously co-exist along with fresh, new stories as odes to a bygone age. Such is the beauty of mythology.

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