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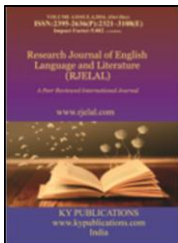
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THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF AMISH TRIPATHI'S 'THE IMMORTALS OF MELUHA'

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ABSTRACT

This paper intends to show that Amish Tripathi's debut novel *The Immortals of Meluha* (Shiva Trilogy I) can be interpreted from multiple theoretical perspectives. Amish Tripathi is a new Indian English writer who has displayed an unsurpassed brilliance in recreating Hindu mythology. His Shiva is a Tibetan immigrant who migrates to Meluha to lead the Suryavanshi vengeance and destroy evil. Shiva's clan constitutes a different thematic community. As a leader of the community Shiva cannot be defined from traditional thematic perspective. The conventional thematic consciousness of displacement, dislocation, alienation, nostalgia, desire for the Homeland and identity-crisis is not shared by Shiva's thematic community. Infact his tribe is satisfied with the Meluhan scheme of things; Meluhan magnificence has mesmerized their mind. Amish have humanized the legendary figures and mythological characters. His Sati is a Vikrama woman who is supposed to be the carrier of bad fate; inspite of being a subaltern she manifests rare skill of martial arts. The women in the fiction do not demand for political equality, economic rights and social identity; they are embodiments of excellence and perfection. Lady Ayurvati is an experienced, professional doctor who is adept in the prescription of medicine as well as in the conduct of surgery. Kanakhala is the prime minister of emperor Daksha; she looks after the administrative, revenue and protocol matters. The text can also be conceived in ecocritical perspective.

Keywords: Hinduism, Mythology, Subaltern, Post feminism, Diaspora, Ecocriticism,

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INTRODUCTION

The first novel introduced Shiva, as a simple tribal leader of the Gunas, who lived on the banks of Manasarovar Lake and Mt. Kailash in Tibet. Shiva was barely twenty-one years old but he was the leader of the tribes called the Gunas. In the beginning of the first novel, Shiva was shown in a worried and confused state of mind. The reason was that he wanted to protect his people, the Gunas, from the constant attacks of another tribe named the Pakratis at any cost. Pakratis were greedy, blood-thirsty and barbaric whose only aim was to

destroy every single man, woman and a child who belonged to the Gunas. Pakratis' main objective was to capture the lush, fertile lands of the Gunas that spread right next to the Manasarovar Lake which was also the prime land in all of Tibet. Hence, the Gunas and the Pakratis stand as arch enemies. However, the Gunas were led by a leader Shiva who was noble in heart; on the otherhand, Pakratis were led by Yakhya who was thoroughly evil in heart.

Shiva was given an offer by the neighbouring Emperor of Meluha, Daksha, to immigrate along with his entire clan to Meluha. The

Meluhan Captain Nandi came to Mount Kailash with a clear instruction from his emperor to persuade the immigrants to go with him to Meluha and never to reveal their true purpose or their secrets to Shiva or his fellow Gunas. As readers, we now observe how cultural crisis, dislocation, dispossession and displacement had occurred and how these combined forces had changed the course of Shiva's life. Thus an ordinary man's nobility finally leads him through his quest to his destiny.

Nandi says,

"Come to our land. It lies beyond the great mountains. Others call it Meluha. I call it Heaven. Our government has an offer for immigrants. You will be given fertile land and resources for farming. Today, your tribe, the Gunas, fight for survival in this rough, arid land. Meluha offers you a lifestyle beyond your wildest dreams. We ask for nothing in return. Just live in peace, pay your taxes and follow the laws of the land." (p.2)

The above were the words of Nandi who persuaded Shiva.

In reply,

Shiva mused that he would certainly not be a chief in this new land. *Would I really miss that so much?* His tribe would have to live by the laws of the foreigners. They would have to work every day for a living.

That is better than fighting everyday just to stay alive!(p.2)

Here, we are able to get a clear picture why in the first place someone would want to immigrate and the probable consequences of living in a foreign land, following the laws of that land. Also, it outweighs every other petty issue because the very survival of Gunas was at stake at that moment.

Shiva speaks to the Gunas. Powerful emotions coursed through every vein of Shiva and finally he revealed his mind to his people.

They kill woman and children when they can't beat us. A livid Shiva called the entire tribe to the centre of the village. His mind was made. This land is for barbarians! We have fought pointless battles with no end in sight. (pg.5)

He continues:

... I want to go with them to Meluha. But this cannot be my decision alone. (p.6)

Here we listen to the honest and sincere words of a people's man, and a true leader.

They spoke in one voice. 'Your decision is our decision'.(p.6)

This conversation won the attention and hearts of Nandi and the Meluhans. As readers, our response is the same, because the author is extra cautious to show Shiva first, as an uncivilized simple man; second, as a capable and worthy leader; finally, as a potential man who will eventually become a God and a Mahadev. Shiva believes in his Karma, his actions, and not merely in customary beliefs or legends, and thus the author succeeds in making the readers empathise with him.

Meluhans were in search of 'the Neelkanth' (God with a blue throat) for centuries. They believed in the legend that their saviour would emerge from a foreign land and destroy evil. This was the reason, captain Nandi was sent by the Emperor Daksha. Meluha was under threat by their enemy Chandravanshis who had changed the course of their sacred river Saraswathi. The Meluhans who were Suryavanshis possessed the knowledge of preparing 'Somras' the immortal drink, which when consumed at constant intervals bestowed a long, healthy and youthful life. Thus, Chandravanshis wanted to stop the production of 'Somras' which cannot be made without the waters of the revered river Saraswathi.

According to the legend, only, Neelkanth who was the reincarnation of Lord Rudra could destroy evil. That is why, Emperor Daksha had given clear instruction to the immigration officers at Meluha to administer "Somras" to all the foreign immigrants. As part of immigration procedure, Shiva and Gunas were quarantined and treated for any possible epidemics.

Shiva observed some changes in his body – his frost bitten toe, his knee and shoulder were healed once he had taken the Somras. Shiva also felt stronger but he was sweating profusely. His throat

felt unusually cold. Other Gunas were running a high fever.

Then, the most efficient Meluhan doctor Ayurvati made sure that all of them were treated. When, Ayurvati instructed Shiva to have bath, Shiva was stubborn that he would take care of his people first. Ayurvati was shocked and angry at this, as she could not digest the fact that Shiva, a simple man dared to disobey her words.

Shiva glared at Ayurvati as he made a heroic effort to rein in the curses that wanted to leap out of his mouth. (p.21)

Ayurvati too glared back at Shiva. She was used to being obeyed. She was a doctor,.. But in her long years of experience she had also seen a few patients like Shiva, especially from the nobility...such patients had to be reasoned with not instructed. Yet, this was a simple immigrant. Not some noblemen! (p.21)

The above scene from the novel depicts the ingrained attitude of the Meluhan doctor Ayurvati. She strongly felt that she was above Shiva, who was after all an ordinary immigrant from a foreign land, an uncivilized and an uncouth barbarian.

Here, we could visualize two contrasting characters, Shiva and Ayurvati. Shiva was born and raised in a village on the foot hills of Mt. Kailash. He led a simple rural life, innocent but very brave, spoke in a substandard language which was unacceptable by many elite and educated people like Ayurvati.

On the other hand, we see Ayurvati who belonged to the civilized, highly sophisticated society and accustomed to an urban life style. She was highly educated, talented, well-trained and a respected doctor in all of Meluha. It was natural for someone who possessed thorough knowledge of medicines and in particular 'Somras', to get infuriated at the defiant and crude behaviour of such an immigrant as Shiva. Yet, Ayurvati remained calm and composed.

Amish, the author is convincing in portraying how different cultures affect or influence people; what happens to people when they are displaced from one society to another, and also when and

how the unexpected hits the 'others' in a foreign land.

Later on, in the story it was revealed that Shiva was their Neelkanth, but Daksha had not been honest with him. During one of the meetings with Emperor Daksha, Shiva questioned him thus:

Do you agree that honesty is required to make any friendship work? Even if it means deeply offending your friend with the truth? (p.117)

Then Daksha replied to Shiva:

I am truly sorry my Lord, said Daksha. ...Somras has considerably positive effects on your body. (p.118)

But Shiva spoke firmly,

Do you know that my tribe was also probably given the Somras that night? And they fell seriously ill, perhaps because of the Somras?

... You should have told us the complete truth at Mt. Kailash. Then you should have let us make an informed choice rather than you making a choice for us. We probably would still have come to Meluha anyway but then it would have been our choice.

"Please forgive us the deception, my Lord." said Daksha, with guilty regret. (p.118)

Only now the readers understand clearly the hidden motive of Daksha. Also, through Shiva's words we realise his agony. The unabashed character of Daksha, his ulterior motive, the Meluhans' systematic search for Neelkanth together forms the crux of the story.

To conclude, when we first looked at displacement and dislocation in this novel, it appeared as a simple process where people moved from one place to the other. But later we understand that its complexity is multi-layered, and westumbleon the facts when we unravel each layer. These phenomena actually help in building many interesting twists in the story. The author has used them skilfully to captivate the readers. Today, Amish is one of the best-selling authors, whose debut novel is based on Hindu Mythology which is also a top

listed fiction and has sold millions of copies across the country.

CONCLUSION

I had hopes that this book would be a good read however the author did one better and made it a fun one. **Amish Tripathi** is a talented man and he proves himself to be an effective storyteller as well. This book is highly recommended for those wanting to read something different in the themes of epic fantasy. **Amish** joins the diverse epic fantasy wave spurred on by the likes of Saladin Ahmed, Martha Wells and few others, with his take of a fantasy tale with a terrific Indian mythological bent. Diaspora Literature involves an idea of a homeland, a place from where the displacement occurs and narratives of harsh journeys undertaken on account of economic or political compulsions. Basically Diaspora is a minority community living in exile. The very beginning of *The Immortals of Meluha* has thematic consciousness. Shiva is not a native of Meluha. He is the Tibetan immigrant, the leader of a tribe called the Gunas. Nandi, the Meluhan representative informs Shiva about the opportunities given to the immigrants by their government. Shiva is tempted to hear of safety, peace and prosperity which are like distant dreams for his clan. He decides to move to Meluha with his tribe:

This will change our lives completely. I believe the change will be for the better. Anything will be better than the pointlessness of the violence we face daily.

Though Nandi persuades and convinces Shiva to leave Tibet for better prospect, the migration of the Gunas is voluntary and not forced. However this thematic tribe has a different consciousness in comparison with the traditional thematic sensibilities. The honour and respect they have received make them forgetful of their native homeland. The ideas of displacement, dislocation, alienation, exile, nostalgia, rootlessness, desire for the homeland and identity-crisis are hardly associated with them. In fact the tribe is blessed with a comfortable life. Thematic writings resist cultural authoritarianism and challenges official truths. One of the most relevant aspects of thematic

writing is that it forces, interrogates and challenges the authoritative themes of timely and Historical.

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