



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

MYTHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF UNVEILING THE CONCEPT OF NEELKANTH IN AMISH TRIPATHI'S *THE IMMORTALS OF MELUHA*

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Article Received:12/03/2021

Article Accepted: 11/04/2021

Published online:18/04/2021

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.9.2.8](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.9.2.8).

Abstract

Although Amish Tripathi amalgamates the times gone by with myth, he has modernized his mythical novels. 'The Immortals of Meluha' is the first book of Amish Tripathi, first book of Amishverse, and also the first book of Shiva Trilogy. In which, Nandi, an emissary brings Shiva, chief of the Guna tribe and his people to Kashmir. On their first night of stay the tribe wakes up with high fever and sweating thanks to some drink. The Meluhan doctors administer medicine. Ayurvati, the Chief of Medicine of the Meluhans, finds out that Shiva is the only one devoid of these symptoms and that his throat has turned blue. On seeing this, the Meluhans decide that Shiva is the Neelkanth, their fabled saviour who can defeat the Chandravanshis. The mythical hero, Shiva, the Neelkanth emerges here. The faith of the people plays a vital role and the story gets going and revolves around Shiva. A feature of a myth is that mythical heroes should come to grip with their gifts and their mortality, but that humanity is part of their appeal. This paper targets to bring out the mythical significance of unveiling the concept of Neelkanth in Amish's 'The Immortals of Meluha.

Key words: mortality, mythical, Neelkanth, revolve, significance, unveiling

Introduction

The kids of 80's may have the experience of bringing back the full moon (Pournami) by running along with it to their poor huts to feel and to grasp what, so their eyes tell it, is actually there, so down through the ages, men have stretched out their hands in eager endeavour to know their God. And because only through the human was the divine knowable, the old peoples of the earth made Gods of their heroes. As we read the myths of the East and the West we could find ever the similar story. Our ancestors might have given to their Gods of their best. All that was noblest in them, all that was the strongest and the most selfless, all the higher

instincts of their natures were their endowment. As time went by due to distraction of various factors, their worship, noble way of life lost their beauty, there yet remains for us the old tales of Gods. They are in different forms and have a rich tradition and core values to be followed. The Mythological stories were almost dormant and very difficult to understand by the common folk.

As any author will tell you, sometimes the artist chooses the subject of his work and there are times when the subject chooses him. One among the later ones is Amish Tripathi. The author himself has told very many times that,

I believe that Shiva Trilogy is a blessing to me from Lord Shiva. Humbled by this experience, I find myself a different man today, less cynical and more accepting of different world views. Hence, most importantly, I would like to bow to Lord Shiva, for blessing me so abundantly, far beyond what I deserve.

Faith according to Hinduism is the sum of our worldview, our values and convictions. It encompasses the whole spectrum of our thought since much of what we know is what we believe to be worth remembering and paying attention to. From faith evolves trust, devotion, loyalty, commitment, dedication and assurance. Faith may arise from simple observation, facts, inference, intuition, assurance, experience, commonsense or a simple belief. Faith is difficult to sustain because the world is an appearance, and we are subject to delusion and ignorance. Without a second thought and not much logic in it the people of Meluha, the Suryavanshis too have a strong faith that the Neelkanth is their savior which is the base of a myth. This paper aims to bring out the mythical importance of revealing the belief of NEELKANTH (blue throat).

The Puranic Neelkanth

Once, the Devas and the Ashuras had a plan to get the Amirtha, the elixir of eternal life. There is, however, a slight hitch. It is at the bottom of the ocean. They would churn the milk with a mountain called Mandar. The python Vasuki offered to be the rope. And so began the Samudra Manthan, the great churning. Soon there was a perfect rhythm to the swaying. And then slowly one by one the ocean began to throw up its fourteen Ratnas. At last along with the amirtha, the ocean of milk had thrown up Halahal, the deadliest poison known either to men or Gods. It flew up and fanned out, the livid yellow-green globules, and the rays of the sun got trapped in them and there they stood poised above the pot of amirtha.

The elixir of life was finally within the reach of the Gods and the demons and it was about to turn to poison. They all had faith in none but Lord Shiva. That is when Shiva steps forward and without a word swallowed the poison. We will never know what

unbearable agonies Shiva suffered because he won't talk. What we know for certain is that the poison burnt his throat till it turned blue. The fire in his throat will never die. Lord Shiva, the destroyer of evil, has paid a terrible price to save the millions.

The blue colour of the Puranic Neelkanth symbolizes sin or negative thoughts. Shiva as Neelkanth (blue neck) teaches us that the negative emotions should never be expressed nor suppressed; instead they should be altered or modified. Therefore, the process of silently passing on love to any individual can take away the angry thoughts from the mind.

Amish's Neelkanth

In spite of having nothing to do with that of the Puranic Neelkanth, Amish Tripathi's Neelkanth has the core intention of unearthing the evil and destroying it for allotting the space for the new creation. Amish has delineated Lord Shiva as a person of flesh and blood like us. A man rose to become Godlike because of his karma. He is just a mere chief of a Guna tribe. Shiva's character and heading the Gunas to their greatest military victories through his genius and sheer personal bravery brought him great respect. Yet he hated fighting pointless battles with the Pakratris tribe with no end in sight. He, with his tribe, left for Meluha along with Nandi. He reflected his uncle's words:

"Do I really have the destiny my uncle spoke of?"

Your destiny is much larger than these massive mountains. But to make it come true, you will have to cross these very same mountains." (IOM 4)

As a typical mythical hero, Shiva too goes to the pure land Meluha, not knowing the fate awaiting him. On their first night of stay the tribe wakes up with high fever and sweating due to some drink. While giving the treatment, Ayurvati, the Chief of Medicine of the Meluhans, discovers that Shiva is the only one devoid of these symptoms and that his throat has turned blue.

Ayurvati just pointed at Shiva's neck. Nandi looked up. The neck shone an eerie

iridescent blue. With a cry that sounded like that of a long caged animal just released from captivity, Nandi collapsed on his knees. "My Lord! You have come! The Neelkanth has come." (IOM 24)

In moments of crisis, faith is our support. When we have faith, we persevere and continue with our effort, even if the circumstances are against us. The Meluhans are waiting for their redeemer for centuries. It speaks a lot about them, their personality, thinking and attitude. As part of their belief system, it shapes and helps them overcome their fears and transcend their limitations.

As a usual mythical hero, Shiva doesn't know his potential in the initial stage.

"To me it appears that Meluha is ranged against formidable and ruthless enemies. The solution cannot lie in reposing faith in an individual. Your people need to adapt to the changing times. Perhaps your innocent ways will find you helpless in the face of such a cold blooded enemy. A new system is needed. I am hardly a God to perform miracles," said Shiva dismissively.

"You are right my Lord," said Nandi, "a new system is required, and I obviously don't know what this new system should be. But I do understand one thing. More than a thousand years back, we faced a similar situation and Lord Ram came and taught us a better way. I am sure that, similarly, you will lead us to a superior path." (IOM 179)

The Bhagavad Gita affirms that those who worship God with faith, who contemplate upon Him and establish their minds in Him are dearer to Him, and they will be speedily rescued from the cycle of births and deaths. People who have faith in God and believe in his greatness are not deluded by his forms or appearances. They readily recognize Him even when He manifests in mortal form, but the ignorant ones who lack faith cannot perceive Him. They mistake Him for an ordinary being and ignore his teachings. It is faith which sustains our devotion, and by devotion only we achieve union or oneness with God.

Mythical Significance

Elizabeth Drew finds the perspective in using myth in modern literature as a symbol equating and expressing the human experience: The mythical method is the representation of experience in symbolic form, the earliest and still the most direct and immediate form of human experience. Myth builds the treasure house of the experience of mankind which comes from the past, which is used to interpret and to contextualize something in the present with the fresh images or concepts to the society.

David Adams Leeming in his book 'Mythology – The voyage of the Hero' has given the structure of a myth which includes eight step formulations. One among the characteristics of a myth is that ascension, apotheosis and atonement. By unveiling the concept of Neelkanth, the author Amish has perfectly swum in the stream of a mythical novel. He has made the hero to ascend a more powerful position, from a tribal chief to the crazy label of destroyer of evil.

"But what is it about the blue throat that makes them believe you can save them?" asked Bhadra.

"Damned if I know! They are much more advanced than us. And yet they worship me like I am some God. Just because of this blessed BLUE THROAT," replied Shiva. (IOM 28)

The Meluhans have a strong faith in Neelkanth which is illogical or irrational because they cannot substantiate their beliefs with either proof or logic. Some aspects of faith can never be proved right or wrong, but some can be established with the help of reason or fact. This facet of myth enables the writer Amish to precede the story revolving around Shiva, the Neelkanth.

Conclusion

Myth is a traditional story which embodies a belief regarding some fact or phenomenon of some experience, and in which often the forces of nature and of the soul are personified; a sacred narrative regarding a God, a hero, the origin of the world or of

people etc. In any myth, after the initial situation is depicted, the tale takes the following sequence:

- Somehow a hero is chosen or accidentally enters into the scene.
- An assignment or interdiction is addressed to the hero.
- Hero may be reluctant or unwitting.

Correspondingly, the Neelkanth in Amish Tripathi's 'The Immortals of Meluha', too has been chosen as a messiah by just having the blue throat and military skills. The future hero first refuses to heed it. This may be from a sense of duty or obligation, fear, insecurity, a sense of inadequacy, or any of a range of reasons that work to hold the person in his current circumstances. Then, being aware of his role and duty, he carries on well. The concept of Neelkanth enlightens us that there exists a potential God in every single human being. All we have to do is listen to ourselves. Unveiling the idea of Neelkanth in a flawless mythical way, Amish Tripathi could write a modern epic, Shiva Trilogy, in a perfect style.

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