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INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FELLOWS ASSOCIATION'S

# RESEARCH JOURNEY

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## Redefining Hindu Mythology in Contemporary Indian English Novels with Special Reference to Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy

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### **Myths and Mythology: An Introduction :**

A Myth is the collection of stories which tells about beliefs with cultural, traditional and historical facts. All countries, religions, tribes have their own myth. Myths are also the religious stories of the existence and deeds of supernatural beings like a god or goddess or a demon, messenger etc. Myths are the tales that have been passed on from one generation to another and they have become traditional. However, myths plays an important role as the foundation of societies and culture.

M.H. Abrams define myth as "...one story in mythology - system of hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group and which served to explain (in term of the intentions and actions of supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happened as they do, and to established the rationale for social customs and observances and the sanctions for the rules by which man conduct their lives." On the other hand, for Roland Barthes "Myths are nothing but this ceaseless, untiringly solicitation, this insidious and inflexible demand that all men recognize themselves in this image, eternal yet bearing a date, which was built of them one day as if for all time."

Levi-Strauss, while comparing myths with language, mentioned myth as a language and it is a part of human speech... it is both the same thing as language and also something different from it. On the other hand, Northrop Frey "myths, as compared with folktales, are usually in a special category of seriousness, they are believed to have 'really happened', or to have some exceptional significance in explaining certain features of life, such as rituals."

### **Myths in Indian English Literature :**

Mythology in Indian context has, so far been considered as an underlying system, which govern religious behaviour of its people. Mostly, the Gods, demons and Great heroes in these myths are embodiments of supernatural. In some situations, even real human beings are attributed with supernatural tracts. As a result, many of the Gods, and supernatural beings are still mysterious for us. We fail to understand deeds of the Gods, demons or great heroes. In the contemporary Indian English literature, mythology is become one of the main subject to write piece of work. These myths are heavily taken from the great stories from Indian History: The Ramayana and The Mahabharata.

In the Indian English literature, retelling of myth is become one of the themes that constantly get reflected in Indian English literary work. Many Indian writers used myth and history in their creative writing to bring out the cultural and historical significance of the incidents and actions of some mythical characters. The reality of literary works which lies within the

imagination of the reader must also have the scope of transcending its historical position. Therefore retelling of myth seems necessary.

One of the prominent writers of Indian English, Mahasweta Devi's short story 'Draupadi' revisits the past and recreates the character of the mythical Draupadi to formulate an account of a helpless women who must fend for herself unlike the mythical Draupadi who had Lord Krishna as her saviour. Both the characters, Mahasweta Devi's Dopdi and mythical Draupadi, symbolises exploitation at hands of their patriarchs. V.S. Khandekar, in his Sahitya Academy Award and Jnan Pith Award winner novel 'Yayati', narrates the internal conflict in the mind of Yayarti. Khandekar's 'Yayati' is not a pure myth only, but taking the subject matter of the myth, he has created a conflict of modern man in search of material pleasure. The concept of happiness for mythological Yayati in the Mahabharata is limited to his relationship and lust for women only, whereas the modern Yayati of Khandekar has so many factors which can arise his worldly passion and delude. Shashi Tharoor in his satirical novel; 'The

Great Indian Novel', interprets The Mahabharata as India's modern History. Figures from Indian history are transformed into characters from mythology, and the story is retold as a history of India

Shashi Deshpande has taken women characters from Mahabharata, as subjected to the contemporary period and reinterpret the role that a women play in her life in his 'The Stone Women', a collection of storis. Amitav Ghosh, in his 'The Circle of reason' retell the myth of Nachiketa. Nachiketa's persistent desire to learn the mysteries of death earns him true knowledge from Yama. A similar desire reverberates in Nachiketan Bose, a protagonist, who constantly quests for the reason behind the ills in the contemporary world. He considers wealth as evil and enemy of humanity.

#### **Amish Tripathi's use of Mythology in Scientific way in 'Shiva Trilogy':**

Amish Tripathi is one of the popular contemporary Indian English Fiction Writers, who is famous for his 'Shiva Trilogy' and 'Ramchandra Series'. He redefine Indian great myths by giving more logical, scientific touch to it. Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy focuses on the mythological hero Shiva. Tripathi portrayed Shiva not as a magical entity but as a man with blood and flesh, who has some limitations as well as Tripathi's characters never possess any magical powers like the Shiva possesses in the Hindu mythology. The original myth portrays Shiva as a God, a fierce warrior Rudra, Destroyer of evil. But Tripathi has recreated Shiva as a common man, a leader of tribal clan 'Gunas', destined to destroy evil. He has been portrayed with the limitations of any ordinary human being but rises to the level of God because of his deeds.

Original Indian mythology said that Lord Shiva has swallowed the poison, 'Halahal', to protect the whole universe, which emerges from the Samudra Manthan, that's why Shiva's throat turned blue and hence he is called Neelkanth. But Amish Tripathi recreated this myth with the help of medical science. Shiva and his tribe 'Gunas' have been given a medicinal drink in their lunch on Mount Kailash every day. When they visit Meluha first time, Shiva and his tribe was given a Somras, if they have any disease or illness. Due to the reaction between the medicinal drink and Somras Shiva's throat turned blue and he was called as Neelkanth.

One more famous myth in India is about Ganesh or Ganapati. Ganesh is the most worshiped God all over the India. He is known as Lord of ganas which is Shiva's tribal group. There are many different versions

about Ganesh's birth. But mostly it is believed that he was made with the dust of Parvati's skin. Tripathi has created own story. In 'Shiva Trilogy', Ganesh is elder son of Sati born through her first marriage and Shiva is not his father. He was born with physical disabilities because of the use of Somras and thus he lived with Naga tribe. His physical disability makes his head looks like the elephant head. But myth told us that Lord Ganesh did not permitted Shiva to meet Parvati and hence Shiva in anger cut his head and later when Parvati in mourned demands her son back then the head of elephant was pasted on Ganesh's Body.

Like Ganesh one more myth is recreated by Amish. Kali, in Hindu mythology, is portrayed as a blood consuming deity. Sati and ali are the incarnations of Parvati, so that they have many forms. She is Durga and Chandi. Amit Tripathi has depicted Kali not as the incarnations of Parvati but as a twin sister of Sati. It is Somras that has changed her colour and it is the only reason for the external outgrowth and physical deformities of Nagas. Tripathi has created Kali as a warrior and a Naga Queen.

Sati is portrayed as a devoted wife in Indian mythology. Tripathi created Sati not just as a devoted wife but also as a warrior. She is courageous enough to point out the mistakes of her husband and guide him too. Sati is also portray as a warrior who dies in a duel with Egyptian Assassin Swuth. On the other hand she is also portrayed as the victim of social injustice and superstitions. She is the Princes of Meluha, Daughter of King Daksha, but still she is consider as the 'untouchable' because she is called as 'Vikarma' (carrier of a bad fate).

#### **Conclusion :**

Myths in general were the stories, mostly transmitted orally. But in recent Indian English literature myths becomes one of the main theme of writing literary work. But writing mythical literature, writers either use myths as a fictional stories or they give political, social, economic, scientific, modern or cultural touch to them. Writers use Hindu gods and Goddesses as human being sometimes.

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