

## **Nothing Is Permanently Good Or Bad: Relevance Of Philosophical Mythology In Amish's Trilogy**

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### **Abstract**

'Change is the law of Nature' we all know this proverb. While bringing the change in society, everybody wants the change for good. But what is 'good' and what is 'bad'. This question is too difficult to answer by anyone because truth varies from person to person. That which is good for one person may not be good for another person. So finding the ultimate truth or ultimate good is not an easy task. Moreover, Amish's philosophy in Shiva trilogy says that nothing is permanently good or bad. That which is good for present generation, if not controlled, will surely become evil one day, as it is said that excess of everything is bad. This philosophy can be seen again and again in literature especially in Indian mythologies. Amish explains this philosophy didactically in his trilogy. Through his mouthpiece, i.e. Shiva, he very brilliantly discloses the Indian philosophical mythology i.e. nothing is permanently good or bad. This philosophy is still relevant in present Indian scenario. The paper aims to bring out the connection between this philosophy and present Indian civilization.

**Keywords:** Good and Evil, philosophical mythology, natural balance, vikarma system, saving legacy and Somras.

Amish Tripathy is a great storyteller whose style of writing strikes our mind as well as connects the souls of Indian readers. One cannot stay away from his works once started. They enrich our soul and mind with its powerful visual images of beautiful landscapes; appealing cultural heritage; and romantic jurnies of various characters. As Deepak Chopra said, "Amish's mythical imagination mines the past and taps into the possibilities of the future. His book series, archetypal and stirring, unfolds the deepest recesses of the soul as well as our collective consciousness."(Chopra)

Shiva trilogy constitutes of three books of Amish Tripathy namely, *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*. This trilogy has a continuous story of Shiva and Sati which starts with *Immortals of Meluha* and ends with *The Oath of the Vayuputras*. When one completes the first book, I promise one won't be able to refrain from picking the second one and so on. No doubt, the third book tends to loosen its grip in the middle but gets back its connection at the end. Amish is full of imagination and creativity in writing his trilogy. His writing style is so unique and appealing. Shashi Tharoor rightly said, about his narrative style, "Amish is a fresh new voice in Indian writing – steeped in myth and history, with a fine eye for detail and a compelling narrative style." Again as a renowned filmmaker, Karan Johar said, "I was blown away with the world of Meluha and riveted by Amish's creation of it." (Basu)

The trilogy is filled up to the brim or we can say its overflowing with so many themes. It seems the blue ocean of thoughts is in front of you and you are drinking slowly and slowly yet a large amount of enchanting thoughts are calling you. More you drink, more you thirsty. The telegraph says, "Amish's Shiva Trilogy has a refreshing storyline... The narration forces you to impatiently turn the page to know what secret is going to be revealed about the "Neelkanth" next." (Tripathi)

In the churning of the ocean of the trilogy we get themes like war of good and evil, war of emotions and ethics, nothing is permanently good or bad, reaching of self, justice verses society, patriarchal verses individuality, opposite attracts each other, larger good asks for sacrifice, etc.

Amish, in his Shiva Trilogy, set a tribal man, Shiva on a journey to find out and then destroy the evil from the society. In his pursuit Shiva, then become the Neelkanth by having a potion named Somras, fights with the Chandervanshis because Suryavanshis misguides him. Later when he got to know that Chandervanshis are not at wrong, they merely have a different way of living to that of Suryavnashis, he shifts towards the Nagas, whom he thoughts support evil. But in his journey he finds that its not Nagas, its Somras which is evil. Somras is the elixir to the Meluhans. It ensures long-life and sound health of people of Meluha, but on the other hand it is destroying the Saraswati river, making new born babies disfigured (Nagas) and is spreading a deadly disease (birth pangs) among Brangas. So, the side-effects of this wonderful potion make it the greatest evil of civilization. It means that which is good is itself contains evil or in other words good and evil are the two sides of same coin.

In *The Immortals of Meluha*, Shiva, the protagonist takes the responsibility of finding and then destroying the evil but at the end of the book, he was astonished to know that to which he and Meluhan army fought against is not evil. In *The Secret of the Nagas*, he initially thought that Nagas are evil, but at the end of the book, he came to know that they are not the evil, instead are the sufferers of the evil. It is then he came to know that the real evil is the greatest good of the people of Meluha i.e. Somras. In the third book i.e. *The Oath of Vayuputras*, Shiva tries to ban the use of Somras, but couldn't. Then he goes for the destruction of the evil, which now become poison as Shiva, in *The Oath of the Vayuputras* while addressing to the people of Mritikavati, says:

I come from a faraway land deep in the Himalayas. My life was changed by what I had believed was an elixir. But I was wrong. This mark I bear on my throat is not a blessing from the gods but a curse of Evil, a mark of poison. I carry this mark. But my fellow Meluhans, you bear this scourge as well! And you don't even know it. (291-92)

But Shiva and the Vayuputras think that the Somras is the greatest evil for the present generation but could be the greatest good again for the future generation. So they decide not to destroy the whole identity of the Somras and to protect the important scientists and manuscripts related with the manufacturing of the Somras. This desire is fulfilled by the son of Shiva, Lord Kartik; Prince of Chandravanshis, Bhagirath; Vasudev pandit, Gopal and chief of Suryavanshis' army, Parvateshvar

Somras was not only the potion for the Meluhans, but was their heritage and the accumulated knowledge as Veerini, the queen of Meluha in *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, says while offering thanks to Parvateshwar and Anandmayi for saving their Legacy:

Devagiri is not just a physical manifestation.... Devagiri exists in its knowledge, its philosophies and its ideologies. You have managed to keep that alive by saving our intellectuals.... The people you've saved are not merely the repositories of the knowledge of Somras, but also of the accumulated knowledge of our great land. They are the custodians of our philosophies of our ideologies. They will keep our legacy alive. (529)

It means what now seems evil or bad, may have some positive or productive elements in it which in future may provide some benefits to the mankind. So good and evil are the two sides of a same coin as Kashi pandit

in *The Secret of Nagas* says to Shiva, while guiding him to find out evil, “There is a god in every single one of us. And there is evil in every single one of us. The true battle between good and evil is fought within.” (107)

It means which is the greatest good will surely become the greatest evil. The excessive use of the greatest good makes it the greatest evil as Meluhan scientist, Brahaspati says (in *The Oath of the Vayuputras*), “That the Somras has been the greatest Good of our age is pretty obvious.... It has shaped our age. Hence, it is equally obvious that someday, it will become the greatest Evil.” (11)

The same thought has also been disclosed to the general people by the Neelkanth, in his proclamation, in *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, for banning the use of Somras:

I have travelled across our great land, through all the kingdoms we are divided into, met with all the tribes that populate our fair realm. I have done this in search of the ultimate Evil, for that is my task. Father Manu had told us Evil is not a distant demon. It works its destruction close to us, with us, within us. He was right. He told us Evil does not come from down below and devour us. Instead, we help Evil destroy our lives. He was right. He told us Good and Evil are two sides of the same coin. That one day, the greatest Good will transform into the greatest Evil. He was right. Our greed in extracting more and more from Good turns it into Evil. This is the universe’s way of restoring balance. It is the Parmatma’s way to control our excesses. (219)

Shiva is the mouthpiece of Amish’s philosophy that excess of everything is bad. Even the excessive use of the greatest good turns it into the greatest evil. Nature wants a balance in every sphere of life. An imbalance in natural activities will lead towards the destruction and chaos. Shiva, the Neelkanth, continues in his proclamation:

I have come to the conclusion that the Somras is now the greatest Evil of our age. All the Good that could be wrung out of the Somras has been wrung. It is time now to stop its use, before the power of its Evil destroys us all. It has already caused tremendous damage, from the killing of the Saraswati River to birth deformities to the diseases that plague some of our kingdoms. For the sake of our descendants, for the sake of our world, we cannot use the Somras anymore. (219)

This very philosophy of Amish is quite applicable and true in terms of modern civilization where we are using various things which were initially proved to be the great inventions for the people but their excessive use convert them into the great evil of civilization. For example, the use of motor vehicles, plastic bags, mobile phones, internet etc. Motor vehicles running on petrol or diesel have served and are serving the world very well. They have made distant places close to each other. Life has become very fast and feasible but now their demerits are overshadowing their merits. Air pollution which they cause creates some terrible effects on environment thereby spreading so many horrible diseases among flora and fauna. Not only this they are changing the climatic conditions causing global warming, greenhouse effect, ozone depletion, acid rain, melting of glaciers, rise of sea water level, etc. The greatest gift that science gave us turned into the greatest evil.

To save our future generation, we need to stop its usage or should shift towards some other alternative like electric vehicles. Same is the case with the exploitation of land resources and excessive use of plastics. Amish's philosophy is not just limited with myths or histories; it is applicable on present generation. His philosophy enriches both our mind and our soul.

It's very interesting that one can draw relevance of Amish's mythology in one's day to day life. Somras can also be compared with allopathic medicines, which ensure long life and sound health by curing diseases but these medicines also have some side-effects. While curing one part of the body, they inflict the other part. For example paracetamol tablet is used in fever to reduce body temperature, which is basically the symptom of some infection or some disease. So it is not curing the disease, it is curing the symptom. On the other hand it makes an ill impact on liver when used continuously. Besides this the expired medicines when dumped on the land or in the water bodies creates land, water and even air pollution, which then cause many dangerous diseases of flora and fauna on earth. Same is the case with Somras. While benefitting some people, it is inflicting so many other people of the country. It's quite pathetic that evil also resides with the greatest good.

Not only can this one can draw allusions of various great writers. For example in William Blake's "Tyger", the poet suggests that nature is having both good and evil in it. Good is represented by Lamb whereas bad is represented by Tiger. God, the creator of both, has both the qualities in Him.

Amish also believes in this philosophy as in *The Secret of the Nagas*, while discussing with Ganesh about Good and Evil, Shiva gets an idea for finding evil. He says, “Search for Good. And you shall find Evil as well. The greater the Good, the greater the Evil.” (325)

Vikrama philosophy, in *The Immortals of Meluha*, which was thought to be proposed by Lord Ram, holds that the people having any disability are the carriers of bad fate and they must be segregated from the main stream society. This theory is associated with the myth of queen, Kakai and her personal servant, Manthara. Manthara was hunched back and it was she who cajoled Kakai to demand her two wishes from the king. Ill conspired by Manthara, Kakai asks fourteen years of exile for Lord Ram and throne of Ayodhya for her son, Bharat. People, who believe in Lord Ram, start associating Manthara’s evil mind with her disfigure as in *The Immortals of Meluha*, pundit of Mohan Jo Daro, while talking to Shiva said,

... In Lord Ram’s time, a lady called Manthara triggered a series of events which led to the loss of millions of lives. She had suffered terribly due to her physical deformities. And then, fate put her in a position of influence over a powerful queen and thus over the entire kingdom. Therefore, the karma of one maladjusted victim of fate led to the mass destruction that followed... (212)

Due to the application of this rule in the society for a very long period of time, it starts suffocating people as an illogical superstitious belief. Instead of this, it is so imbibed in the personalities of Vikramas, that they start believing themselves as the carriers of bad fate. They don’t realize that this rule has now turned into an evil which need to be abolished which is then done by Shiva.

Here Amish points towards caste, race and color discrimination prevailing in Indian society. In India discrimination based on color, caste and creed was observed for a very long period of time on the basis of job division. The untouchables (lower caste people) like Vikarmas, started believing in their fate. Many social reformers and thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Joytirva Phulle, Sahu ji Maharaj, Ishwarchand Vidyasagar and many more, raised their voice against discrimination based on castism and all. This discrimination is now stopped legally but is not totally scrapped off from the minds of the people. Now and then we hear the news of case discrimination in Indian society. Amish, in *The Immortals of Meluha*, by scrapping Vikrama system from the hands of Lord Shiva, wants

to spread a message in Indian society that God himself wants to erase discrimination of any type from the society. He wants equality and amicability among people of different religion, caste, color and creed.

After abolishing Vikrama system, Amish turned towards another reform i.e. widow remarriage. Shiva, in *The Immortals of Meluha*, marries Sati, a widow and Vikarma, which spreads a message of widow remarriage among Meluhans which in turns bring reform in an evil practice, prevailed over a long period of time. This evil practice was initially believed to be good for humanity. It was believed to retain the moral and ethical values intact among the people. But with the passage of time this very practice become evil for the Meluhans as so many girls turn widow in a very young age and the rules of Meluha now become burden on them which they are carrying with them under compulsion and half heartedly.

There are so many practices in our society, which are initially believed to give positive and good results but with time the demerits of those practices come to the front and overshadow the previous so called merits. Eradicating evil, if become tough one needs to take harsh and cunning steps as laudable end justify some questionable means. Discussing over Parvateshwar's imprisonment (as Parvateshwar wants to join Meluha for war against God, Shiva) in *The Oath of Vayuputras*, Kartik explained Shiva,

I know that it is a difficult decision, Parvateshwarji has behaved with absolute honor. He was not privy to any of our strategy discussions. He could have escaped on multiple occasions, but did not. He waited till you returned so he could take your permission to leave. But you're the Neelkanth, baba. You have the responsibility for India on your shoulders. Sometimes, for the sake of the larger good, one has to do things that may not appear right at the time. Perhaps, a laudable end can justify some questionable means. 204.

But Shiva and Sati don't agree with this. It means nothing is permanently good or bad as in the case of Lord Shiva, who in *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, believes that scientists and important books related with the manufacturing of Somras (which has become evil) must be saved because it may become good again in future as nothing is permanently good or bad.

Again during his journey to destroy the evil (Somras), Shiva found that Asuras, who were believed to be against the workings of God and were essentially evil, are now become Vayuputras and are working

for the cause of good. This revelation is disclosed to Shiva in *The Oath of Vayuputras* by Gopal, the chief of Vasudevas. Gopal said,

Lord Rudra himself brought the few surviving Asura leaders to Pariha. Others, who were in hiding, were also led out of India by the Vayuputras. Some Asuras went farther west, even beyond Elam.... He found that a few of the Asuras were not detached enough to become members of the Vayuputra tribe. They were allowed to live in Pariha as refugees. But a vast majority of the remainder became Vayuputras.... Once they entered the Vayuputra brotherhood, they ceased to be Asuras. They gave up their old identities and embraced the primary task Lord Rudra had set for the Vayuputras: to protect the holy land of India from Evil. (371-372)

It means when something reaches its peak, whether good or evil, its turning point starts. In other words, evil will not remain evil forever and good will not remain good forever.

**Conclusion: -** Indian mythology takes redefinition and gets restructured in the hands of Amish. Present generation is moving away from their culture, heritage and religion. To get back those youngsters Amish digs the Hindu mythology and brings on the surface, the hidden mysteries and secrets of cultural heritage. Not only the readers, Amish inspired contemporary writers also as Amitabh Bachchan says, “I wish many more would be inspired by Amish Tripathi...” (Hidden) Shiva and Sati, in his trilogy, are presented here as real human beings and not God or Supernatural beings. Shiva, a tribal Tibetan immigrant is treated as “Neelkanth” by the people of Meluha, Chandravanshis, Nagas and even by the Vayuputras, still he feels himself an ordinary person. When people bow in front of him, to pay obeisance, he feels hesitant. He wants to be a friend rather than the God. By bringing the Hindu God to the position of a friend and by connecting the Indian mythology with the present Indian situations, Amish wants his readers to feel that God and God’s ways are real and accessible.

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