

## SYMBOLISM IN AMISH TRIPATHI'S *SHIVA TRILOGY*: A STUDY

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### **Abstract:**

*This article analyses the use of Myths in Shiva Trilogy by Amish Tripathi with the objective of bringing out the symbols employed by the writer in the works and also the meanings they refer to. In general, writers use symbols to express their ideas and notions very effectively. Further, use of symbols will add colour, variety and ornamentation to the works. From society to society, symbols and the meanings they allude to are different. It is applicable to religions also. In a certain religion, certain symbols allude to certain things. But in other religions they are not used for the same purpose. Hinduism is one of the oldest religions of the world. Amish Tripathi bases his Shiva Trilogy on Lord Shiva, and in order to delineate His spiritual greatness, Amish has employed many a symbol associated with Lord Shiva.*

**Keywords:** *Myth, Shiva, Symbol, Religion, Spiritual, Trinity.*

Hinduism is based on Trinity Gods- Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Shiva. Lord Brahma is worshipped as the God of creation and Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva are revered as lord of protection and lord of destruction respectively. Vedas such as Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharvana and Upanishads form the central philosophy of Hinduism. Amish chooses to Portray the majesty of Lord Shiva who, in Amish' Perspective, might have been a human in the ancient past and who on account of his accomplishments and love of his tribes, might have been elevated into God. In Hinduism, every God is venerated in a certain idol image and in addition to that, there is a symbol as regards this. As far as, the Lord of destruction, i.e. Shiva is concerned, there are a number of symbols connected with him. Religious references from Hindu mythology abound in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*, of which the protagonist is Neelkanth who is none other than Lord Shiva. And, this paper attempts to depict the symbols which are connected with Lord Shiva.

This paper attempts to describe and illustrate the meaning behind every symbol of Lord Shiva. The convention of signifying God through symbols dates back to the Vedic age. Lord Shiva being one of the holiest forces in Hinduism is venerated by means of a number of symbols. When people get to see or hear about these symbols, they will connect them with Lord Shiva with so much of reverence and adoration. This research article takes up for analysis a few symbols that symbolize the Lord of destruction in Hindu mythology.

The first symbol discussed is 'Third Eye' which is known as 'Triyambaka' or 'Trinethra' and which is considered to be the search for true wisdom. Hinduism holds that the two external eyes are just sensory organs which help behold the external and outward world as it is. These sensory organs see only what is apparent or obvious without getting deep into the images seen. What our eyes see may not be true on many occasions. The appearance spotted by the external eyes may be deceptive. This is the reason why the world we live in is called 'Maya'.

In order to find out the truth, one needs to enhance one's perception which is possible through the enhancement of energy. What is in Shiva as his third eye can be found in human beings also but it is not so easy to realize it. In the logical perspective, the pineal gland or the third eye is the key that opens the metaphysical interpretations, which wisdom often stresses. As Amish says: "The universal truth does exist

though it has always been an enigma to human beings,'. 'And it will continue to remain an enigma for as long as we are bound to this mortal body.'"(196)

It can be attained through powerful yogic practices, one of the boons to humanity. It will assist us to get united with the ultimate source. By means of the awakening of the third eye, one can attain skills like telepathy and realize divine bliss. It is thought to be a venerated tool of mystics. Amish Tripathi in his *Shiva Trilogy* refers implicitly to the third eye of god and its importance. The author feels that the dormant third eye chakra leads to confusion, uncertainty, cynicism and pessimism which Shiva considers as evil forces that prevent us from taking a firm stand against injustice.

The author skillfully uses the mystic characters as an instrument to convey the spiritual significance of the third eye. The mirage of separation, love and ego dissolves when we learn to master the third eye chakra. There are certain doorways to get united with the eternal energy of divinity. After a deep analysis, the researcher has found the importance of balanced diet with fluoride, calcium and choice of food will also contribute a lot for a healthy pineal gland. Once we decalcify the pineal gland the activation of it is easily possible. To spend ten minutes a day consciously and activating our third eye through meditation, chanting mantras, prayers, dance or Yoga will enhance our third eye chakra through which we will receive guidance, messages and visions from super power. The writer has also mentioned the presence of third eye in humans with reference to his character Shiva as follows: "Yes, it does. But only amongst those who practice deades of yoga to train their third eye. Or it it active amongst those who are given medicines to stimulate it. What is unnatural about your case is that you were born with an active third eye. This is unheard of." (112)

Another symbol that is found in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is 'Snake' which in other religion like Christainity is called an evil force and in the form of which Satan is believed to have prisoned the minds of Adam and Eve. Nevertheless, in the Hindu mythology snake is deemed to be a symbol of holiness, as a mark of which women pour milk in its habitation. Amish Tripathi's fictional creation, Shiva portrays snake as a close associate of Neelkanth. In Hindu mythology snake ornaments the neck of Lord Shiva. Further, Kundalini power which can be raised in the human physique through the chakras is thought to have got the form of snake. Our body system has 114 chakras, but we are aware of only basic chakras of which the one called Vishudhi chakra is located in the pit of our throat. It is considered as a type of energy that decides our relationship with others. When our Kundalini is awakened, all our negative traits are shattered. We are made kind, compassionate and soft as well. Nourishment of Vishudhi chakra eliminates the feeling of dominating others or to feel dominated by others. Enhancement of this chakra filters everything from having an impact on us. It does not mean that we are away from this world leaving responsibilities but it means a sense of balance when we face overwhelming situations.

The protagonist of Amish Tripathi's novel is depicted as a tribal chief from Himalayan region around Manasarovar Lake. He is forced to leave his native Hamlet so as to shun violent conflicts with other tribal groups, which stake claim to use certain parts of Manasarovour bank. Shiva, inspite of willing to allow them to have their due, is considered as a rival and he is often dragged into armed conflict with them, which causes loss of lives and properties frequently. With a view to having permanent relief from these pointless clashes, he decides to go along with Nandi, who guarantees a far better and prosperous life for Shiva and his tribes in his land Meluha. Shiva arrives at the decision of leaving his native region not out of fear but of wish for peace.

Having arrived in Meluha, to his astonishment people and the emperor of Meluha, Daksha worship him as their savior and protector. He is appealed to provide protection for them against the attack of Chandravanshis. Shiva gets caught in an internal storm. He left his native region only to live in peace. But his country of new settlement expects him to shoulder and shield it from danger. While he finds himself in such a situation, Vasudevas appear before him and enlighten him. They make Shiva realize that it is his duty and foremost responsibility to eradicate evil and safeguard good. He has been destined to perform this task. The characters of Vasudevas are used to enlighten and embolden the protagonist Shiva. Vasudeva's

enlightenment to Shiva can be seen in the following part.

You will be remembered as the greatest man of our age; generations will look up to you as their God. How could I not want to meet you?' 'I am no god, Lord Mithra,' said an embarrassed Shiva. 'Wasn't you who had said "Har Har Mahadev"? That all of us are god?' Shiva laughed. 'You've got me there.' 'We don't become gods because we think we are gods,' said the Mithra. 'That is only a sign of ego. We become gods when we realize that a part of the universal divinity lives within us; when we strive to fulfil that role. There is nobody striving harder than you, Lord Neelkanth. That makes you god (402-403).

The next symbol that is focused on here is 'Trishul' or 'Trident' that Lord Shiva possesses in his hand. Today's scientists can be compared to ancient rishis and sages. The only differences between them is when the ancient hermits or sages made some innovation either in the field of health care or other domains like manufacturing of medicine for various sicknesses they sought to connect it with the divine force without revealing the scientific concept behind it. Shusruta was an ancient Indian physician known as the author of the treatise the compendium of Shusruta.

'Trident', which is a three pronged spear found in the hand of Lord Shiva is a symbol of destruction of evil and demonic forces. It is a main weapon of lord Shiva. Being looked at in a logical manner, it conveys some deeper meaning. This three pronged spear represents the three fundamental aspects of life- three energy channels known as Ida, Pingala and Sushumana. These are the basic nadis which represent the left, the right and the central parts of human physique. There are 72000 nadis in the energy body of the human system. Still the three energy channels mentioned above are considered to be very significant. Of the three, 'Ida' the left is described as feminine and related to the moon and it believed to have some connection with the river Ganga. The second one called 'Pingala' is the energy channel on the right side and it is described as red masculine. It represents the sun and has association with river Yamuna. The third energy channel called 'Sushumana' is the central channel which is linked to river Saraswathi. The 'Pingala' and 'Ida' represent the basic duality in the existence we call it feminine and masculine in terms of qualities in nature. When these energy channels are not balanced, people suffer depression and become emotionally weak. Further, it will result in the indigestion emergence of excessive physical and sexual energy and so on. Energy gets balanced in Ida and Pingala and it enters into Sushumana where one can attain a new state of balance. The disturbances in our external environment will not affect our internal equanimity. When energy is conditioned properly and proportionately at these three channels one can have sound health both physical and psychological. Shiva's 'trident' refers to Ida, Pingala and Sushumana energy channels. Shiva is masculine and feminine is also within him. He can be in the form of Arthanarishvara which is a combination of feminine and masculine.

After Trident, this article sheds light on 'Nandi' another symbol which is closely associated with Lord Shiva. It is in the form of a bull sitting in front of Shiva facing him. Many saints and sages including Sadhguru living Indian sage say that it refers to individual soul that is called 'Jeevatma' which has got to have its ultimate merge or union. For this to happen, the individual soul has got to go through a long process of self-purification. After the soul cleanses itself of the dirt and purifies itself of the filth like anger, lust, greed and so on, it is likely to merge with 'Paramatma' the soul has got to wait patiently and in penance so that there is a likelihood of communion with 'Jeevatma'. Nandi denotes the waiting of individuals. The purpose and goal of human birth is that it should ultimately have its shelter at lord's feet. Nandi refers to the efforts of individuals with the spiritual quest for joining together with Lord Shiva.

The next symbol analysed is 'Crescent Moon' found on Lord Shiva's forehead. It is believed to control the time of universe. Lord Shiva, who is portrayed in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy as Neelkanth with the responsibility of protecting both the Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis, is thought to have absolute control over time- including the past, the present and the future. Followers of Hinduism have strong belief in the idea that the time movement of this universe is governed by Lord Shiva as he governs

and controls each and every aspect of this world.

After that, next symbol 'Damaru' or the drum is analysed. It represents the cosmic sound 'OM' from which grammar and music came out. 'Damaru' has got deeper significance in Hinduism. According to ancient Indian Holy Scriptures, Panini, a Sanskrit scholar and grammarian composed sutras and created the basic rules of Sanskrit grammar after he saw Shiva dancing in front of him and he listened to the sounds he made with his Damaru. Shiva is considered to be the creator of all sounds, languages, music vibrations in this universe. The 'Damaru' with him signifies the musicality which is also a manifestation of divinity.

'Mount Kailash' is another symbol which has got close spiritual connection with Lord Shiva. It is believed to be the abode of God. that here, he bestows peace, health and prosperity on all is an unshakable faith and belief of people of India. This mountain is the center of the universe. Amish Tripathi's protagonist Neelkand is portrayed to have come from this region.

According to tetrapartite division of gods, Tripathi mentions that there are essentially three types of gods. One of them is the Nirguna or Nirakkar God who is forever the formless shapeless genderless and eternal one. This is what Paramatma or Brahmana. In accordance with Upanishad thought representation, the next is Aakar Gods in which supreme Lords often come down to earth in human form and partakes in the cycle of birth, Karma, death and possible rebirth and the other type is elevation of mortal beings into God by discovering the godliness in them. The author has expressed this view in his interview with Anupama Krishnakumar.

when a man or woman becomes a God or s/he discovers the God within him the concept that God exists within every single human being, in fact everything in the world. So for example, Gautam Buddha was clearly a historical man but if you ask all Buddhists or most Hindus, including me, we will say that Buddha is God. So, the concept of a man becoming a God is not unknown. It's been around for centuries and I am not doing anything new, frankly. (Tripathi)

On the basis of the fourth class, Amish Tripathi's Shiva trilogy has been constructed. Throughout the work, many myths like blue throat of Neelkandh, somras, analogues to elixir or amirtham have been reinterpreted to give shape to a new pattern of narrative. Tripathi holds that myths are nothing but jumbled memories of a true past. It is also defined as past buried under mounds of earth and ignorance. So, the unique angle from which Tripathi constructs his narrative and unfolds his grand design is based firmly on this conviction that a man can often rise to godlike stature by virtue of his karma and this is the most perfect way of interpreting India's rich mythological heritage where we find fiction is blended with history in a harmonious whole.

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