



The Archetypal Hero in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy: Exploring Good, Evil, and Greed through the Myth of Somras

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Abstract

This research paper offers a critical analysis of Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy, using the lens of archetypal literary criticism. The paper explores the idea of the archetypal hero through the character of Shiva, who is portrayed as a mythical counterpart of Lord Shiva. The protagonist's appeal to his clan to stop drinking the 'Somras' - water of eternity - appears ambiguous at first, but the narrative gradually resolves this ambiguity. The paper highlights the relevance of the Shiva Trilogy to contemporary issues surrounding the concepts of Good, Evil, and Greed. The author uses the myth of Somras to illustrate how excessive greed can lead to the birth of Evil, and the narrative serves as a warning about the potential consequences of an imbalance between Good and Evil.

Keywords: Amish Tripathi, Shiva Trilogy, archetypal literary criticism, myth, archetypal hero, Good, Evil, Greed, Somras.

Introduction

The portrayal of the protagonist in fantasy fiction has always been meticulous, primarily because fantasies are hero-centric narratives that inspire and motivate readers. Heroes embody universally admired qualities such as courage, wisdom, patriotism, kindness, and self-abnegation, epitomizing the ethos and culture of their nation. The concept of the hero evolved over time, from a male warrior or soldier like Achilles to a hero with spiritual qualities like those in Spencer's medieval romance, *The Faerie Queene*. The age of chivalry focused on protecting weaker sections of society, leading to the emergence of the common man as a hero in the twentieth century.

Mythical records in different cultures manifest the values, beliefs, and philosophies that fulfil the national interests of the people. The Bible embodies Christian values and philosophies, while the Puranas, Upanishads, The Mahabharata, and The Ramayana convey Hindu religious exhortations. Mythological characters represent the symbolic manifestation of these conventional values and are considered cultural beacons of any nation. Such characters reflect certain philosophical ideas, including the mysteries of birth, death, and destiny, and are known as archetypes.

According to M.H Abrams, "The term archetype refers to recurrent designs, patterns of action, character types, themes, and images identified in works of literature, myths, dreams, and social rituals." (12).

This paper critically analyzes the concept of archetypal hero through Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy, exploring common patterns of heroism in fantasy fiction. The hero is usually an orphan, and once destined for greatness, undergoes a difficult childhood during which their status as a hero is ignored,

unknown, or forgotten. Their typical mission is to save the world, or at least their own community, from the impact of evil embodied in a satanic villain. Shiva Trilogy presents several models of heroism, including Shiva, the great hero, Sati, the wise and brave warrior, and Parvateshwar, the traditional knightly quest hero.

Shiva's heroism is well depicted in W.H. Auden's essay, "the quest hero." He resembles the epic hero, a man of hidden powers, but also shares the second type of hero who owes his success to external forces rather than his powers. Shiva's endearingly human peculiarities make him a modern hero, with human attributes and related strengths and weaknesses. His conflict with Prakrits in saving his tribe, his conduct with his friends, and his less-than-perfect home life in the Himalayas all signify Shiva's modern heroism.

As Amish Tripathi writes in the Shiva Trilogy, "Shiva does not resemble the hero as a God-like form of a man. He has human attributes with related strengths and weaknesses, being drawn on the lines of Adam and Everyman.' Shiva is depicted as an archetypal 'innocent' who moves towards knowledge and transformation, as seen in his progression towards becoming a competent leader and future general who can challenge the villain and his cohorts. As Shiva himself says in *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, 'I need to know more. I have to know more.'"(52).

Shiva is introduced as the chosen one who is destined to bring an end to evil. In the words of Burrows et al., "The hero is often seen in savior terms as one who conquers evil and thus frees his people from destruction and death." (225)

As Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* writes, "Hero hood is predestined, rather than simply achieved" (35) and this is certainly true for Shiva. Despite his apparent ordinariness, Shiva was chosen for a great task and possesses hidden depths, such as his ability to foresee the future. He also fits into the knight archetype, as he is a voice for the voiceless and fights for the oppressed. Throughout his journey, Shiva is influenced by his uncle, Lord Manobhu, who taught him ethics, warfare, psychology, and arts. It is Lord Manobhu who trained Shiva for his journey against evil and even made the medicine responsible for the blue throat of Shiva. As Shiva acknowledges, "I was trained by him, no doubt. He taught me ethics, warfare, psychology, arts". (113).

The evil in the Shiva Trilogy is generated through the unequal and unchecked production of Somras, the drink of eternity. Somras can be seen as an archetype of the "magical elixir" or "fountain of youth" that appears in many mythological and literary traditions. This archetype is often associated with the quest for immortality and the desire for power and knowledge.

There are some interesting points of intersection between Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy and Northrop Frye's *The Anatomy of Criticism*. The concept of 'Somras' fits very well into Frye's archetypal framework. The characters in the Shiva Trilogy who seek to obtain or control Somras can be seen as embodying different archetypes that are explored in Frye's *The Anatomy of Criticism*. For example, the character of Shiva himself can be seen as an archetype of the "hero" who embarks on a quest to obtain the magical elixir and save the world. Other characters, such as the evil Nagas, can be seen as embodying the archetype of the "villain" who seeks to control the elixir for their own selfish purposes. Shiva doubts his ability to end this evil, saying, 'I'm not sure. I haven't made up my

mind as yet'(37). However, despite his doubts, he eventually fulfils his destiny and brings an end to the production of Somras.

Conclusion

As Amish Tripathi portrays in the Shiva Trilogy, Shiva is a hero drawn on the lines of Adam and Everyman, yet destined for greatness as the chosen one. He is a knight who fights for the oppressed and possesses hidden depths that he is not even aware of. His journey is shaped by the influence of his uncle, Lord Manobhu, and the evil he fights against is generated through the unchecked production of Somras.

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