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REFLECTION OF VEDIC AGE IN WOMEN CHARACTER OF AMISH TRIPATHI'S
'THE IMMORTALS OF MELUHA'

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ABSTRACT

'The Immortals of Meluha' is Amish's first book in the series of Shiva Trilogy. Amish Tripathi, the banker who turned in to an author, is a recognized contemporary Indian fiction writer for his highly renowned Shiva Trilogy. Amish's Immortals of Meluha reflects the author's personal admiration for the Lord by the way he characterizes Shiva, the tribal warrior. The story entails how a human of flesh and blood becomes Godlike through his deeds. The Indian literary market is dominated today by novels dealing with the mythical past. The novel often reworks the Indian myths creatively to address contemporary concerns as well as eternal human issues. This reworking of mythological subject matter through new modes of expression has proved to be an effective strategy that connects one to the cultural past on the one hand and helps to assert the present cultural and socio-political identity on the other. Tripathi in his novels has also tried to amalgamate ancient Indian mythology with recent history and contemporary reality. The paper tries to read out The immortals of Meluha particularly on the ground of the status of women similar to the status in Vedic age. Any study of civilization is incomplete without study the status and position of women in it. Women constituted the keystone in the arch of Indian civilization. Indian civilization based on the spirit that women's cause is men; they rise or sink together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free. One of the best way to understand the spirit of civilization and to appreciate its excellences and to realize its limitations is to study the position and status of women in it.

Keywords: Contemporary Indian Fiction, Indian Mythology, Indian History, Socio-political identity, Vedic age, Indian Civilization

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INTRODUCTION

"I make my women characters very strong."-Amish Tripathi

Amish Tripathi, is a recognized contemporary Indian fiction writer for his highly renowned Shiva Trilogy. His Shiva Trilogy being rejected by 20 publishers became the fastest selling book series in the history of Indian publishing. Forbes India has ranked him among the top 100 celebrities in India four times in a row. In 2012,2013, 2014 and 2015. Amish Tripathi was born on October 18, 1974, in Mumbai. Tripathi grew up in a religious household. His Grandfather was a Pandit and a teacher at Banaras Hindu University. He belonged to a

middle-class family, who encouraged the religious and worldly learning. Since a very early age he was a voracious reader. One of his favorite subjects was history. Although he had a deep interest in history and greatly aspired to be a historian. He did not follow his dream. After his graduation from St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, in Science, Amish went on to study Business Administration. After completing his MBA from IIM, Calcutta, for fourteen years he worked in the field of finance as marketing and product manager at multiple firms, including Standard Chartered, DBS Bank and IDBI Federal Life Insurance. According to the author himself, he never intentionally aspired to pursue his career in writing. But as it is said that God has planned everything for us.

Amish has portrayed the status of female characters in his *Immortals of Meluha* which equivalently enjoyed by the women in vedic age. In today's scenario which is much more closer to the status of post-feminism. The status of women refers to her position in the network of social role structure, privileges, rights and duties. It refers to her rights and duties in family and social life. The status of a woman is generally measured in the comparative amount of prestige and respect accorded to her with that of man.

Though the status of Hindu women in India has been fluctuating. It has gone through several changes during various historical stages. Historically speaking, women in India have passed through two phases of their life – the period of subjugation and the period of liberation. At times she has been suppressed and oppressed and at times she is regarded as the deity of the home.

Amish has successfully portrayed the female character of his novel equivalent to the Rig-Vedic society which was a free society. Females were as free as their male counterparts. Education was equally open for both boys and girls. Girls studied the Veda and fine arts which is very true in case of Ayurmati who is Lady and an experienced professional doctor who is adept in the prescription of medicine as well as in the conduct of surgery. Nandi was genuinely startled at seeing her. With a reverential Namaste, he said, 'Lady Ayurmati! I didn't expect a doctor of your stature here.'

Ayurmati looked at Nandi with a smile and a polite Namaste.

She replied 'I strongly believe in the field-work experience programme, Captain. My team follows it strictly.'

'My name is captain Nandi, My lady.' Answered Nandi. 'We haven't met but who doesn't know you, the greatest doctor in the land?'

She replied visibly embarrassed 'Thank you, Captain Nandi, But I think you exaggerate. There are many superior to me.' (pg.15, Amish, *Immortals*)

This is how a highly educated well experienced and confident learned woman managed to reply politely and gracefully.

Women shared an equal standing with their men. There were women teachers, scholars, Brahmvadins and highly respected rishis. There were women warriors with bows and swords. Women even participated in battles along with their men folk. There is a mention of a certain warrior Queen Vishpla who lost her leg in battle and was fitted with a metallic prosthesis; she returned to battle and continued to fight. In '*The Immortals of Meluha*' Amish have very skillfully depicted Sati as the female fiercest warrior. When Shiva visited the temple and met Sati for the first time was suddenly attacked by the unknown enemy there Shiva considering Sati as female tried to protect her but he got surprised by looking at that Lady in the pose of trained warrior protecting herself as well as her attendant. On being attacked 'Shiva drew his sword and stretched out his left hand protectively, to pull the object of his fascination behind him. She however deftly side-stepped his protective hands, reached into the folds of her angvastram and drew out her own sword. Surprised, Shiva flashed her a quick, admiring smile.' (pg.51, Amish, *Immortals*)

Sati not only knows to defend herself but is a skilful warrior in Martial art and sword dueling, 'Shiva and the lady stood back to back in a standard defensive-partner position, covering all the directions of any possible attack.' And also the enemy, a gaint man cloaked in a black hooded, gets dread by the lady warrior- 'He was keeping just enough distance from Shiva and the lady to defend himself while at the same time keeping them engaged in combat.'

Sati was also efficient in dancing as the Vedic women mastered in several disciplines of fine arts that included vocal and instrumental music and dance.

Some words floated in from the group that was dancing. A voice of lady interjected, 'My lady, Guruji is right. You are dancing correctly, but not enjoying it.....'

Sati replied, 'Let me get the steps right. Then I can learn to enjoy them.'

This shows Sati mastered in fine arts like dancing too with the martial Arts.

Shiva when reached Devgiri met Emperor Daksh of Meluha. Emperor Daksh after introducing himself to Shiva introduced his important administrator asking Shiva, 'May I introduce my most important aides.'

Without waiting for an answer, he pointed to the women on his left, 'This is my prime minister, Kanakhala. She takes care of the administrative, revenue and protocol matters.' (pg.69, Amish, Immortals). In general women were not discriminated against merely on grounds of gender. They were given the equal rights of administration too.

CONCLUSION

Amish's 'The Immortals of Meluha' (Shiva Trilogy I) deals with the rich mythological heritage of ancient India. A chapter lost in the depths of time and ignorance by human beings. In Ancient India, many scriptures had written about the situation of the women, where she enjoyed equal status equivalent to that of men. Women were given equal opportunity not only in the sphere of education but also in the field of law or property, social or religious ceremony, political or administration. The role of women in orienting life and family were elucidated in Rig Vedic age which is very well depicted by Amish Tripathi in his 'The Immortals of Meluha'. The stature of Vedic women is reflected in the female characters of Amish's 'The Immortals of Meluha' where women enjoyed independence and self-reliance. Besides their domestic role, they had every access to education with tremendous potential to realize the highest truths. Many of them were seers who had an intellectual and spiritual depth. Women were also allowed to learn martial pursuits. Respect and value of the women in the Vedic society not merely as household mistress but also as individuals with great potential to contribute to human society were revealed. Amish Tripathi has attempted to give the women characters their due status.

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