ANALYZING AMISH TRIPATHI'S 'SHIVA TRILOGY' FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CAMPBELL'S 'MONOMYTH' THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The present study seeks to analyze Amish Tripathi's 'Shiva Trilogy' from Joseph Campbell's theory of Monomyth or more precisely The Heroes' Journey in seventeen stages as described in Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949). The study aims to show how the main framework of Campbell's theory on Hero's Journey can be applied with some subtle modifications even to the analysis of modern and contemporary works like this. The traditional ideas associated with an ideal hero's journey through terrible ordeals, dangerous adventures and final ascension to mythical or god like status all can be interpreted in terms of both symbolic / psychological as well as purely physical manner. In fact, the study attempts to show that a work may not always follow in a systematic and meticulous manner to all the stages and substages that a theoretician has laid down as an expression and articulation of his vision regarding the predominant construct that any particular cultural activity might embrace to build its thematic treatment upon. An individual genius, like an author can always choose to introduce his own element of novelty into the fictive narratives or legendary myths which has been handed down by his culture to him, but when one's culture and religion are flexible enough and open, staying true to one's roots can give him more than enough space and desired freedom for exercising his creative power quite fruitfully. Several theories exist even beside that of Campbell's own exposition and though they differ from each other in their way of articulating the specific substages of each and every main stage, but in their essential appeal and final treatment they all seem to point towards some basic and universal idea of a hero's journey.

KEYWORDS: *Monomyth, Myth, Campbell, Hero Motif, Amish Tripathi, Religion, Fiction*

INTRODUCTION

Shiva in traditional Hindu mythology, especially Shaivism tradition is considered to be the Lord of the Lords, the creator, protector and transformer of the Universe (Sharma, 65; Issitt & Main, 147, 168; Flood 1996, 151). Shiva is one of the Trimurti where Brahma is the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the quintessential destroyer (Matchett, "The Purāṇas", 139). He is there to destroy all worlds and dissolve them into nothingness at the end of time (Zimmer, 124). In the introductory part of the first book of the trilogy titled *Immortals of Meluha* (2012) we see how Lord Shiva's essential Godlike nature is described in vivid and powerful words: "Shiva! The Mahadev. The God of Gods. Destroyer of Evil. Passionate lover. Fierce warrior. Consummate dancer. Charismatic leader. All-powerful, yet incorruptible". (Tripahi, Immortals of Meluha, 132-133). However, Tripathi's portrayal of Lord Shiva in these novels is much different from that of a supremely powerful Lord; rather he here attempts to portray the human-like aspect of Shiva before the apotheosis is

complete. According to his tetrapartite division of Gods, Tripathi mentions that there are essentially three types of Gods – one of them is the Nirguna/Nirakaar God who is forever the formless, shapeless, genderless and eternal one and this is what Paramatma or Brahmana according to Upanishadic thought represents; next is the aakar Gods who have forms like Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu; the third type is that of the Avatar Gods in which Supreme Lords often come down to Earth in human form and partakes in the cycle of brith, karma, death and possible rebirth and the fourth and final type is when a mortal being becomes God by discovering the God in him (Tripathi, Amish. Interview by Anupama Krishnakumar). It is based on this fourth aspect of God that the Shiva trilogy is narrated and we find here throughout the trilogy how myths have been reconstructed to give shape to a new pattern of narrative. Tripathi believes that "Myths are nothing but jumbled memories of a true past. A 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 has been blended with history in a harmonious whole: "A man who rose to become godlike because of his karma. That is the premise of the Shiva Trilogy, which interprets the rich mythological heritage of ancient India, blending fiction with historical fact" (Tripathi, "Immortals of Meluha" 138-139). So, before proceeding to analyze the work from Campbell's theory of a Hero's Journey, we should first take a look at the nature and function of myths as has been expressed in this work. In fact, Campbell's theory is largely based on the idea and influence of myths on the construction of narratives throughout the ages and he emphasizes repeatedly how the same, archetypal mythical pattern emerges in different forms across different narratives. Campbell writes, "Myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energy of the cosmos pour through into human cultural manifestation" (Campbell, 3).

Tripathy's handling of myths as "jumbled memories of true past" harks back to Jung's monumental idea of "collective unconscious" or a racial memory comprising of "primordial images" and archetypes. But it is by following Ernst Cassirer's definition of myth as expressed in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Second volume (1925) that we can best interpret the nature and scope of the myths as has been employed in Shiva trilogy. According to Cassirer, myth is "a form of thought", a "symbolic form" obviously, which instead of trying to represent a thing itself acts as a thing and obliterates all reflective distinction between the real and the ideal. So myths can be reconstructed and reinterpreted as long as it does not fail to capture and express the essential "dynamic of the life feeling" (2:38). Myths like the language here assume the role of creator, definer and re-interpreter of our world. So this definition of myth actually also separates myths from all kinds of historicity and any relation to our mundane, material and objective plane of reality; rather myths are endowed with the ability to create, define, transform and mould the pattern of reality in any way it wants to. This is what Tripathy attempts to accomplish in his trilogy here and the core "dynamic of life feeling" that the novels belonging to his Shiva trilogy, try to teach mankind is that we humans are all potential gods and it is through our karma and self-realization that we can again hope to rise to the level of the god/s. In the introductory part of his Trilogy Tripathi brilliantly sums up his vision and philosophy regarding the nature and origin of God/s, meaning and scope of mythological narratives and its relation with religion etc. that will later guide him all throughout the work.

Now, before embarking on a thorough analysis of Shiva's journey to Godhood we should first sum the blueprint of the discussion. The main theoretical framework which will be used here however is not based on any theoretical idea about myths, narratives or archetypes, but on Campbell's theory of the mythological Journey of the Hero according to which from abroad perspective the Hero's journey can be divided into three parts, namely, "Departure", "Initiation" and

"Return" and these three broad parts will then be subdivided into seventeen separate stages. The first stage of "Departure" will consist of five acts which are as follows: 1. The Call to Adventure, 2. Refusal of the call, 3. Supernatural aid, 4. Crossing the Threshold and 5.Belly of the whale. In the first book of the trilogy *The Immortals of Meluha*, we find that his action starts when Shiva arrived in the land of the Meluhans to help them fight against the Chandravanshis who had formed alliance with the cursed race of Nagas. So the first stage "Call to Adventure" occurs when Meluhan king Daksha sends emissaries to Tibet to invite Shiva, the head of the tribe guns and he responds to the call by accepting the proposal and moves to Meluha. According to Campbell "...(the call of adventure is to) a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or profound dream state; but it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, super human deeds, and impossible delight" (Campbell, 48). The second stage Refusal of the Call does not happen here as we find Shiva never refuses to heed it and this si important in keeping with the fact that Shiva will actually rise to the type of who will never turn anyone's earnest request down. So subtle differences like these are what that will in the long run differentiate an ordinary, mortal Hero from an Immortal One. Now coming to our discussion of Campbell's division, we find the third stage is 'Supernatural Aid' and here fantasy and supernatural forces will start playing their roles thus setting the course of the action rolling: "The fantasy is a reassurance— promise that the peace of Paradise, which was known first within the mother womb, is not to be lost; that it supports the present and stands in the future as well as in the past (is omega as well as alpha); that though omnipotence may seem to be endangered by the threshold passages and life awakenings, protective power is always and ever present within or just behind the unfamiliar features of the world" (Campbell, 59). In *Immortals of Meluha*, the supernatural aid will appear at first in the form of the Somras, the drink of the gods: "Taking the Somras at defined times not only postpones our death considerably, but it also allows us to live our entire lives as if we are in the prime of our youth — mentally and physically" (Tripathi, Immortals of Meluha 1428-1430). But as we come to see that this Supernatural Aid will occur again at a later period of the story when Mithra will convince Vayuputhra to grant Shiva the Pashupathiastra which can annihilate any specific target one aims at. However the first such isnatce of granting of Supoernatural Aid was in the form of Somras which turned Shiva's throat blue and was thus a clear indication that he was indeed the prophesied redeemer Neelkanth: "The legend says that the Neelkanth will be a foreigner. He cannot be from the Sapt-Sindhu. And that his throat will turn blue when he drinks the Somras" (Tripathi, Immortals of Meluha 1965-1966). Shiva's wooing of and finally winning the hands of enchanting, mysterious suite is also an instance of deriving supernatural aid whose real significance will be discovered towards the end of the novel. In the next stage/substage the hero will cross the threshold of his known world and finally venture into the strange, mysterious, unexplored and the unknown. Shiva's declaring war on the Chandravanshis and his marching towards the land of the Chandravanshis, Swadweep is the instance of "Crossing the First Threshhold" : "Beyond them is darkness, the unknown and danger; just as beyond the parental watch is a danger to the infant and beyond the protection of his society danger to the members of the tribe. The usual person is more than content, he is even proud, to remain within the indicated bounds, and popular belief gives him every reason to fear so much as the first step into the unexplored. The adventure is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown; the powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage the danger fades" (Campbell, 64). The next image is that of the "Belly of the Whale" which symbolizes both the process of magical rebirth and the hero's final merging with the world of the unknown and the mysterious. Here the hero successfully severs all his connections with all that is known and of his own accord passes the threshold of the known and visible world to undergo a form of metamorphosis. In *Immortals of Meluha*, Shiva undergoes

his transformation when he arrives at the Ram Temple at Ayodhya, the capital of Swadeep and an old priest informs him of his choices, karma and fate in life which will guide him in the future. There Shiva ventured into the world of the Nagas when he charged towards a Naga who was standing beside Sati. So this is how the first book of the series ends.

Next we shall see how in the second book of the trilogy *The Secret of the Nagas,* the stage 2 or the Initiation phase in Campbell's theory of an ideal Mythological Hero's Journey gets realized. Here the first sub-stage is the Road of Trials which consists of a series of trials to test the hero's strength of character and stamina. In this book Shiva's journey to the capital of Nagas, Panchavati is fraught with numerous, unforeseen dangers and thus qualifies as the Road of Trials phase. Now the second sub-stage is the Meeting with the Goddess and this is a tricky part as we know that the heroes and heroines in the novel themselves are to become Gods/Goddesses themselves and as such it is impossible to actually come face-to-face with a true God. Characters of Kali, Ganesh, Kartik and Sati are all future gods and goddesses. However Shiva's meeting with Kali serves the function of meeting with the Goddess, but the hero does not win the love of the Goddess here; he has already passed the stage when in the first book he won the hands of Sati who herself is destined to become the goddess in the end. But meeting with Kali, the great and formidable Naga queen definitely lives up to the expectations. This meeting also serves another role which is the third substage in Campbell's classification and it is dubbed as 'Woman as Temptress' and in this stage we find that Kali lures Shiva into a completely different territory where the latter is to undergo a series of adventures. So like different Hindu Goddesses Kali here serves the dual role of a caring and protective figure to Shiva and also that of a temptress. The duality is really intriguing and puzzling. Goddesses in Hindu traditions are often presented as idealistic figures who combine together the glorious qualities of head and heart and are expected to be models for all women to aspire to. The next sub-stage 'Atonement with the Father' materializes when Shiva came across Parashuram, a Vasudeva and who had enormous knowledge about medicines. The end substage Apotheosis is not to be taken in its literal meaning, but this actually refers to a point when realization about something greater or more universal occurs within the hero. Shiva's shattering of illusion after his acquisition of true knowledge about Kali and Daksha's true relation with Kali resulted in his Apotheosis. The final sabotage of this second phase of initiation is dubbed as 'The Ultimate Boon' and this occurs when Kali took Shiva to a school at Naga capital, where the greatest Naga secret lied and the novel ends with Shiva meeting meets Brahaspati, the guru teaching in a class.

The final stage is 'Return' and it starts with the substage of Refusal of the Return in which the hero often chooses not to return among his fellow men and this is what happens in the third book *The Oath of the Vayuputras* where Shiva after learning its secrets decided not to return to Meluha and even declared war on the Kingdom. In fact the true Refusal of the Return happens at the end of the novel when Shiva decided to retire to Mount Kailasha to spend the rest of days peacefully and in seclusion. The next phase the Magical Flight occurs in the novel when Shiva got hold of the deadly Pashupthastra. The next stage called Rescue from Without occurs when the hero gets assistance from foreign powers and is often protected and here we find Branga, Vaishali and Kashi - all serve this function of rescuing Shiva from Without and the most remarkable example is the sacrifice of Sati herself who laid down her life in defense of Shiva while fighting Egyptian assassins. The Crossing of the Return Threshold happens when Shiva after destroying the town of Devagiri and its Somras manufacturing units hidden underground returned with all the knowledge about life and death. The final stage is dubbed as The Master of the Two Worlds in through which the hero emerges as a transcendental figure and this is exactly what happens at the end when Shiva ended his adventures and gained command over both the worlds: "Freedom to pass back and forth across the world division, from the perspective of the apparitions of time to that of the causal deep and

back—not contaminating the principles of the one with those of the other, yet permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other—is the talent of the master. The Cosmic Dancer, declares Nietzsche, does not rest heavily in a single spot, but gaily, lightly, turns and leaps from one position to another" (Campbell, 196). In fact Lord Shiva himself according to the traditional Hindu mythologies is the Cosmic Dancer who engages in Tandavam or Nadanta dance (Verma, *Performance and Culture: Narrative, Image and Enactment in India* 19-26).

So as we cans see that the trilogy actually follows the basic framework as laid down by Campbell in his 1949 work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and the main discussion will take a deeper look at the pattern of unfolding of the events according to Campbell's theory of seven stages of a hero's journey.

Departure

We should start the discussion by pointing out a very powerful quote by Campbell: "Briefly formulated, the universal doctrine teaches that all the visible structures in the world – all things and beings - are the effects of a ubiquitous power out of which they rise, which supports and fills them during the period of their manifestation, and back into which they must ultimately dissolve" (Campbell, 257-258). The trilogy by Tripathy also follows the same formula of paying tribute to the one supreme reservoir of infinite and universal energy who is none other than Lord Shiva himself. His dance with the damru symbolizes the eternal process of evolution, dissolution and annihilation. In fact, Shiva is often equated with the truth and also the beauty in. So presenting the Lord's journey in human avatar is definitely not a negation of the Godly glory of the Lord; rather it is an affirmation and a reinterpretation of the glory from a unique fictional perspective which is both derived from as well as highly indebted to the Monomyth of an ideal Hero's journey through trials and tribulations and his final emergence as a legend. In *Secret of the Nagas* Tripathy writes beautifully, "There is a lovely Sanskrit line in the Rig Veda which captures the essence of my belief. *Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti*. Truth is one, though the sages know it as many. God is one, though different religions approach Him differently. Call Him Shiva, Vishnu, Allah, Jesus or any other form of God that you believe in. Our paths may be different" (Tripathi, Secret of the Nagas 168-173). So now we should analyze the first chapter under the light of Campbell's first main stage in "the hero's journey" called the 'Separation'.

In the first stage the main theme to be illustrated is that of a hero's desertion of his earthly or normal life and his embarking on a quest to uncover some deep and powerful secrets. Shiva did that and after accepting the invitation from Daksha left Tibet with his tribe to arrive at Meluha. Shiva, like the traditional hero of the folk tales and folklores was destined to be the Savior of the people and he was only unconscious fulfilling the prophecy according to which he would indeed be the fabled savior with a blue throat or the Neelkantha. Daksha realized that and sought the help of Shiva to destroy the Chandravanshis: "…what the legends also tell us is that when the problems become insurmountable for ordinary men, the Neelkanth will appear. And that he will destroy the evil Chandravanshis and restore the forces of good. My Lord, you are the Neelkanth. You can save us. You can complete the unfinished task of Lord Ram" (Tripathi, Immortals of Meluha 1944-1946). The hero also shows the capability to rise above ordinary levels and to break obsolete laws or traditional customs, especially those which he would deem to be inhuman or unjust and this is what Shiva did when he sought to win the heart of Princess Sati, the daughter of King Daksha and while doing that dissolved the Vikarma law which could state one untouchable by virtue of some deeds done in one's previous birth. In fact, as we come to know Sati is in fact Parvati, the goddaughter of the chief of Meluhan army Parvateshawar. Now, Vikaram law was one of the most

sacred laws in the land of the Meluhans and as such nothing or nobody ever tried to break it and here Shiva came in its true glory when he first decided to break the law in order to marry Sati/Parvati. When Nandi said to Shiva that Vikarma "are people who have been punished in this birth for the sins of their previous birth. Hence, they have to live this life out with dignity and tolerate their present sufferings with grace. This is the only way they can wipe their karma clean of the sins of their previous births. Vikarma men have their own order of penance and women have a different order" (Tripathi, Immortals of Meluha 1590). Now Shiva protested strongly against the law which, according to him was based on some "some very confusing and abstruse philosophies" and could not find any satisfactory answer to his question "How can anyone say that she is being punished for the sins of her previous birth?" (Tripathi, Immortals of Meluha 1602). The role of a guide and magical helper for Shiva throughout the novel was served by Ayurvati, the lady doctor and it was she who first realized the essential heroic nature of Shiva upon looking at his neck: "'Ayurvati just pointed at Shiva's neck. Nandi looked up. The neck shone an eerie iridescent blue. With a cry that sounded like that of a long caged animal just released from captivity, Nandi collapsed on his knees. 'My Lord! You have come! The Neelkanth has come!'" (Tripathi, Immortals of Meluha 551-553). Here the power of Monomyth to alter, transmute and finally build upon the original source a new paradigm or an alternative perspective is exemplified. We all know that according to the most trusted of our sources e.g., Bhagavata Purana and Vishnu Purana Shiva actually drank the lethal poison called *Halahala* emanating from the The Samudra Manthana process, but his consort Parvati grbbed Shiva's neck to stop the poison from spreading into other corners of the universes residing within Shiva's own body and so Shiva's thorat turned blue and hence the name *Neelkantha* (the blue-throated one; "neel" = "blue", "kantha" = "throat" in Sanskrit) came to be associated with Shiva (Mallory, J. P.; Adams, Douglas Q. *Encyclopedia of Indo-European Culture* 538). But as we know here Tripathi is not dealing with the true Godlike form of Lord Shiva; rather he is transmuting the mythical paradigms o create a fictional universe of his own in which the Avatar-like attribute of the gods in which they are not born as but become god/s is emphasized. Now coming back to our main discussion Shiva like a true warrior initially refused to believe that he was indeed the true Neelkantha and here we find that Campbell's second substage called 'Refusal of the Call' gets realized in an implicit manner. Shiva did not like being revered as a god or savior: "'What the hell are you doing, Ayurvati?' asked a horrified Shiva. You are a doctor, a giver of life. Don't embarrass me by touching my feet.'" (Tripathi, Immortals of Meluha 683). So Shiva's reluctance in accepting the role of the warrior-cum-protector was very much in keeping with the tradition of Campbell's ideal mythical superhero. Now, as Shiva's adventures proceed, we find him entering into the "zone of magnified power" when he has to leave the comforts of his known world for good. In the novel the power of karma or one's own deeds is repeatedly emphasized and various incidents attempt to illustrate this concept of karma. This is an important thing to observe because the basic pattern of Campbell's theory of a hero's ideal journey is itself based on the idea of karma itself. When in an episode Ananmayi and Parvateshwar engaged in an altercation regarding the nature of Lord Ram, and each tried to portray Ram as a hero belonging to his/her own dynasty, the power of karma is stressed. Anandmayi said about Lord Ram that "His name meant "the face of the moon". He was more Chandravanshi than you know" and in response to that Parvateshwar replied that Lord Ram said that only a person's karma determines his identity. The fact that his name had the word moon in it means nothing. His deeds were worthy of the sun. He was a Suryavanshi to the core" (Tripathi, Immortals of Meluha 683). Then we are presented with the problem of the interplay of binary dualities as is evident when Anandmayi asked Parvateshwar the reason why could not a legendary figure like Lord Ram could not be a "Suryavanshi and Chandravanshi" at the same time, Parvateshwar simply dismissed the idea as nonsensical and highly improbable. This is again a subtle reference to Lord Shiva's unique ability to hold the most contradictory ideas of nature in

a most harmonious equilibrium in his Ardhanarishvara form. The form represents the existence and inseparability of apparently contradictory ideas in a harmonious whole. Through the imagery of Ardhanarishvara the unity of opposites (coniunctio oppositorum) is emphasized as the form can sustain the male and female principles through its fusion of masculine Purusha (Shiva) and feminine Prakriti (his energy, Shakti) (Daniélou, T*he Myths and Gods of India: the Classic Work on Hindu Polytheism* 63-67). However, Shiva in the novel only listended to their interaction without engaging actively in any debate. Now, Shiva crossed the First Threshold to enter into the realms of the unknown by entering Swadweep, the land of the Chandravanshis and he did that after the attack on Moutn Mandar by the Chandravanshis in which lots of innocent people were killed. The faith in Shiva's heroism and his ability to wipe out all evils is nowhere depicted in a more touching manner than through the character if Daksh. Daksha believed that Shiva was the true Neelkantha and he would bring the nectar of immortality or somras to the meluhans and thus would transform the land of Meluha once and forever: "I believe in the legend. My people believe in the legend. The Neelkanth has chosen my reign to make his appearance. He will transform all of India in line with the ideals of Meluha — a land of truth, duty and honor. His leadership can help us end the Chandravanshi crisis once and for all. All the agonies they now inflict upon us will be over — from the terrorist attacks to the shortage of Somras to the killing of the Saraswati.'" (Tripathi, Immortals of Meluha Kindle Locations 1257-1260). So Shiva would cross the First Threshold to secure Somaras and destroy Chandravanshis. This was the task he was supposed to undertake and with the advent of the next stage, which Campbell metaphorically termed as the Belly of the Whale Shiva's separation with the known and familiar would be complete. Shiva, like a true hero ventured into the unknown, but not without the help of some supernatural or semi-divine powers. His journey into the land of the fierce Nagas was destined to be fraught with innumerable challenges and adversities. He faced them all and got ready to confront even deadlier challenges. There was one such instance where we find Shiva engaging in his full might against one of the Naga chieftains. The description of the ferocity and power of Shiva's charge is expressed in the following words: "The destroyer of evil roared in fury. He charged at the Naga like a wild elephant on the brink of insanity, his sword raised…With a fierce yell, Shiva leapt high as he neared the Naga. He swung his sword viciously, decapitating the Naga with one swing of his sword. The Naga's lifeless body fell in a heap as his severed head flew with the mighty blow, while his still pumping heart spewed blood through the gaping neck" (Tripathi, Immortals of Meluha 3993-3999). In fact, it was Sati, who obstructed the course of the venomous arrow Agnibaan and saved Shiva from getting stuck. However Sati was no ordinary mortal and even the lethal poison of Agnibaan could not kill her and she came back from the clutches of death. Shiva was overwhelmed with the grief of loss when Sati was burning with fever from the poison of the Agnibaana and everyone thought that she would die: "Death is the ultimate destroyer of a soul's aspirations. Ironically, it is usually the approach of this very destruction which gives a soul the courage to challenge every constraint and express itself and express even a long-denied dream" (Tripathi, Immortals of Meluha 4096).

The first novel of the trilogy ends with Shiva journeying along with Sati to the Ram Temple of Ayodhya and thus we find Campbell's last substage of the first phase also end with it: "Allegorically, then, the passage into a temple and the hero-dive through the jaws of the whale are identical adventures, both denoting in picture language, the life-centering, life-renewing act" (Campbell, 77).

Initiation

This stage of the hero's journey consists primarily of all the main adventures and it is only after the completion of these challenges, tasks or adventures that he can hope to become a legend. Here we also find that the battle to e fought in

this part of the book would not merely be confined to physical planes but would symbolically signify a struggle within one's self as well: "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" (Tripathi, Secret of the Nagas 1827-1828). The novel starts with a series of losses and battle scars as we see how Shiva was determined to take revenge for the killing of his friend Brahaspatia and then Parvateshwar was also wounded and from Ayurvati Shiva came to know that the true medicine could be found only at the capital of the Nagas called Panchavati. Herw e also found how Shiva came to know about the true identity of the Naga queen Kali and Ganesha and Daksha's act of denouncing both kali and her son. Shiva here seen as hesitating with lots of questions in mind and the more novel progresses the more it becomes clear that here Shiva would have to overcome not only the evils on the physical plane but also on a psychological plane. The essence of karma and its impact on in determining the course of action and the life one chooses for himself is made clear, though the speeches of Shiva's uncle: "It is your karma to fight evil. It doesn't matter if the people that evil is being committed against don't fight back. It doesn't matter if the entire world chooses to look the other way. Always remember this. You don't live with the consequences of other people's karma. You live with the consequences of your own." (Tripathi, Secret of the Nagas 2296-2298). Thus, even gods and goddesses are shown as not above the influence of karma. Shiva was shown his destiny according to which he would become the savior of a race and mankind and even the Great Himalayas would fade in comparison to the greatness of future Shiva; but a true hero has to overcome even greater heights than that to which he forever aspires to rise: "'Pointing towards the gargantuan Himalayas extending beyond the Mansarovar, the uncle continued. 'My child, your destiny is much larger than these massive mountains. But in order to realize it, you will have to cross these very same massive mountains'" (Tripathi, Secret of the Nagas 2309-2311). Here Kali served both the role of a temptress and a goddess and her actions along with those of Sita constitute a thorough reversal of stereotypical gender roles which women were normally supposed to play. Sita fought bravely against the lions here and Kali also helped her sister to defeat those creatures. Both of them served very active roles in helping out their male counterparts and were quite successful. The quest for perfection is another kind of adventure that the hero has to undertake in more than one planes of reality and her too we find that Shiva went on in his quest to uncover not only the secrets of Nagas and somras but also the core or essence of one's own being. Here another twist to the myth of women acting as temptress is given through the character of Kali who herself feels tempted on seeing Shiva: "How different would my life have been if fate had blessed me with a man like Shiva. Maybe like didi, all the poison could have been sucked out of my life as well. Perhaps, even I would have found happiness and peace" (Tripathi, Secret of the Nagas Locations 5146-5148). So the would-be goddess herself feels tempted by the masculinity of Neelkantha or Shiva and she craved form Shiva to alleviate the pangs of grief in her own life. It is through desire that all beings come into being and go through the repetitive cycles of birth and death; so as long as the hero is not able to overcome his own desire for others he cannot be said to have successfully completed the stage of Initiation: "Desire is the root cause of all suffering, all destruction…because desire creates attachment. Attachment to this world. And, when you don't get what you want or get what you don't want, it leads to suffering. This leads to anger. And that to violence and wars. This finally results in destruction." (Tripathi, Secret of the Nagas 5918-5922). The nextsubsatge Atonement with the Father is realized when Shiva came face to face with Parashurama who as Shiva would come to know alter was a Vasudev himself, a group of scholars who had been guiding Shiva in his journeys all throughout the novel. Parashuram was not he biological father of Shiva but he served the role of a guiding, caring and protective father in the story and his meeting with Shiva opened the latter's eyes of wisdom to the truth which lay beyond the corrupting influences of half-truths and deceptive practices of mankind: "The problem of the hero going to meet the father is to open

his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its peculiar blind spot and for a moment rises to a glimpse of the source. He beholds the face of the father, understands—and the two are atoned" (Campbell, 125). A hero in order to assert his heroism has to take very hard decisions and often has to break laws like Shiva did by breaking the Vikarma tradition and in doing so he often courted dangers. The hero seeks to implement a new pattern, a truly lasting and humanistic pattern in which the noble ideals of universal brotherhood and equality of beings will be manifested and while trying to accomplish this noble aim the hero often dissolves and discards various obsolete and oppressive sets of laws and regulations: "…rules are not an end in itself. They are made to create a just and stable society. But what if the rules themselves cause injustice?... The vikarma law may have made sense a thousand years back. But in this day and age, it was unfair. It was just a tool to oppress people one doesn't understand." (Tripathi, Amish 2816-2817). So the apotheosis of the hero is achieved in the novel when Shiva came to know about the true pattern in which the events unfolded when he met Kali and her son Ganesh and Shiva then confronted Daksha and Parvati also realized that the truth about Kali and Ganesh. Now the final substage of this phase of Initiation happens when Shiva found Brahaspati, well and alive and it was from him that Shiva would come to know about the greatest of all Naga mysteries. Shiva comes to know about various aspects of the lives of people and about the nature of laws, karma and its impact on one's life, unity of Being etc., and he could very perfectly harmonize and integrate various contradictory realities. Now let us have a look at how the modified version of a Monomyth in fact paves the way for the consolidation of the universal and the absolute. Shiva in his true Godly form would himself become the Law and will integrate both masculine and feminine versions of the law; but here Shiva is no god, rather he is probably on his way to become one and he has to understand various subtleties luring in the laws and rules which govern human society. Here he was told by a Pandit about the essential nature of two types of laws – masculine and feminine: "The masculine way of life is "life by laws"… Laws are unchangeable and they must be followed rigidly. There is no room for ambiguity. Life is predictable because the populace will always do what has been ordained" (Tripathi, Secret of the Nagas, 870-871) and "The feminine way of life is "life by probabilities". There are no absolutes. No black or white. People don't act as per some preordained law, but based on probabilities of different outcomes perceived at that point of time" (Tripathi, Secret of the Nagas, 875). This is the type of union of the eternal opposites, the masculine and the feminine, which will define one of the most important attributes of Mahadeva in His Ardhanarishvara form (Rao, T.A. Gopinatha, *Elements of Hindu iconography*. 2: Part I, 322). As the action draws towards its end, we find Shiva attains his "Ultimate Boon" not in the form of some magical or supernatural prowess, but by achieving a profound philosophical insight into the complex dynamics of life. Thus he adopts a relativist outlook towards the nature of good and evil and says, "Remember nobody is good or bad. They are either strong or weak. Strong people stick to their morals, no matter what the trials and tribulations. Weak people, many a times, do not even realize how low they have sunk." (Tripathi, Secret of the Nagas, 4913-4914). Shiva's apotheosis is the central motif around which the action revolves here in this part of the book while his realization of the truth about Ganesh and Kali provide the much-needed impetus to guide the book towards its climactic end in Book 3. Shiva becomes Neelkanth of the Meluhan legend by drinking the Somras and thus assumes the role of the ultimate savior or destroyer of evils for the Meluhans.

Return

In the third and final book of the Shiva trilogy *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, we find that Shiva travels to the hidden city of Ujjain to meet the Vasudev Pandit Gopal and thus fulfills the first criteria of Campbell's Monomyth when he

refuses to return. Shiva comes to know about the ill effects of Somras and seeing Meluha itself as the centre of manufacturing of Somras potion he declares war on the city. Here conversation between Shiva and Vasudev pandit Gopal give unique insights into the cyclical nature of the hero-villain myth. Gopal believes that an ancient council of tribes called the Vayuputra Council trains a member of their tribe as a Neelkantha whenever evil rises and the very nature of evil and good become highly complex to define in plain terms. The dynamics between balance and imbalance is embedded in the working of the cosmos and universe's constant effort towards maintaining equilibrium is manifest in allowing evil to flourish along with good as evil can only be stopped if we desist ourselves from committing any good too: "Creation and destruction are the two ends of the same moment. And everything between creation and the next destruction is the journey of life. The universe's Dharma is to be created, live out its life till its inevitable destruction and then be created once again. We are a downscaled version of the universe" (Tripathi, The Oath of the Vayuputras, 62).

The 'Magic Flight' occurs when Shiva leaves for Pariha with Gopal after losing the battle of Meluha. Shiva is also rescued here 'From Without' after losing the Meluhan war against the armies led by Bhrigu and Parvateshwar. Shiva's final 'Crossing of the Return Threshold' occurs when Sati is killed. Shiva then unleashes the Pashupatiastra to annihilate Devgiri forever. Then he becomes the 'Master of the Two Worlds' and though he himself stays in the shadow for the rest of his life he helps others like Ganesh, Kali and Karthik to achieve Godliness. Sati, also is transformed to become the Goddess of Power or *Shakti*. Shiva achieves his 'freedom to Live' by retiring to Mount Kailasha. Shiva achieves his Godhood by saving India from the dangers of the Somras and becomes not just a God but the Great God or Mahadev. Mithra says to Shiva "We don't become gods because we think we are gods… 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 understand our role in this great world and when we strive to fulfill that role. There is nobody striving harder than you, Lord Neelkanth. That makes you a God" (Tripathi, The Oath of the Vayuputras, 227).

CONCLUSIONS

This study attempts to show that how in the present day, though the author may portray the actions and adventures of a well-known legend or hero from the myths, folklores or tradition, he is often guided by the ideological frameworks like Campbell's Monomyth and many other the traditional ideas associated with such legends. This motif may not always be apparent and may often be found to have been violated but on a close reading one can see how the present is shaped around and with the help of ideas, ideologies, visions and imageries of the past. The fact that myths no matter in which way one reconstruct and reinterpret them always exert a tremendous constructive force in the development of the narratological and mythographical culture of future generations.

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