

Women Empowerment In The Writings of Amish Tripathi

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Abstract

Women empowerment has been a very powerful and strong concept since ancient times in India. Women are the backbone of every civilization's arch. Women empowerment is the most important point to be noted for the overall development of a country. At present women empowerment has become a considerable topic of discussion in the development and economics. Amish Tripathi (1974) gave a new birth to women empowerment through his writings. His female characters are from ancient times. He represents his women characters through myth. Most of his female characters are taken from the Puranas and the Ramayana. All of his female characters are well educated, expert in war and dance. These characters are also adept in administration and medicine. All of them are very strong and self dependent. Amish Tripathi attempts to give the inherent, dependent and stereotypical women, their voices in the hope of improvement in the entire social mindsets. Amish Tripathi, wrote Shiva Trilogy including, '*The Immortals of Meluha*', (2010) '*The Secret of the Nagas*' (2011) and '*The Oath of the Vayuputras*'. (2013) His Ram Chandra Series, retelling of the myths from the Ramayana has notable novels including, '*Scion of Ikshvaku*', (2015) '*Sita : Warrior of Mithila*' (2017) and '*Raavan : The Enemy of Aryavart*' (2019). This paper analyzes the shades of women empowerment through '*The Immortals of Meluha*', '*The Secret of the Nagas*', '*Oath of the Vayuputras*' and '*Scion of Ikshvaku*'.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Myth, Feminism, Education Freedom, Equality, Vedic age.

Introduction

"I make my women characters very strong" - Amish

At present, when women have acquired equal rights in all spheres of life, the subject of women empowerment appears by default in literature. In this behalf, Amish Tripathi's fiction presents certain delightful aspects. His Shiva Trilogy is a mythic fiction based on mythology related to Lord Shiva. His Ram Chandra Series is also a mythic fiction based on mythology related to Lord Ram. The setting of *Shiva Trilogy* is 1900 BC, the period when the projected Saraswati Civilization, generally referred to as Indus Valley civilization, collapsed. This series presents the status of women in the distant past, intuited by today's ideals of feminism.

Now a days, there is a group of creative writers which revisit reinterpreting old mythological text in a new light. There are many contemporary authors like Kavita Kane, (1966) Ashok k. Banker, (1964) Dedutt pattanaik, (1970) Anand Neelkantan, (1973) Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1956) and Amish Tripathi (1974) have represented voices from ancient texts in order to distort mythical stereotyped images of women as well as created new amplitudes in the texts. They employed many strategies that include deconstructing the role of a woman in patriarchal male dominated society by placing them in the centre of text, decentralizing the male superiority in the myths, portraying the simple glory of free willed ancient woman, distorting the power structure that provides the space for them to showcase their unique talents.

Literature is generally used as an authentic source when one has to pass judgement on women. So in this context, famous feminist critic Simon De Beauvoir 1908-1986 quotes, "This has always been a man's world, and none of the reason have offered in explanation have seemed adequate".

So, the representation of women's status in literature overtly a male oriented touchstone. In this regard, Amish must be allotted credit for not only creating

Keshav Kumar
Research scholar
Dept. of English
DAV P.G. College,
Bulandshahr, U.P.,
India

Sanjeev Kumar
Assistant Professor
Dept. of English
DAV P.G. College,
Bulandshahr, U.P.,
India

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a women friendly society in his fictional world by casting equal right and power in the hands of women characters but also for redefining the social norms responsible for degraded conditions of women. He has described a seminal narrative of contradictory cultural beliefs gender bias promoter's vis a vis the promoters of gender equality.

In the series of Shiva Trilogy, there are several female characters like Sati, Kali, Veerini, Ayurvati, Anandmayi, Kritika, Tara, Khankhala, Dhruvini, Kanini, Anandmayi, Uma, Maya and Suparna. All of these are independent, well educated, perfect in performing their duties, professional and powerful. In Shiva Trilogy, such status of women is iconoclastic against the traditionally defined role of the women in the society where women were referred to as men's subordinate and not an autonomous being. In India, Manu writes about the role of women,

When the readers begin to read the first novel of Shiva Trilogy, 'The Immortals of Meluha', they see one of the major female characters, Ayurvati, the head state doctor. She is adept in her profession and highly respected by all meluhans. She and her devoted team of competent nurses are capable of the suitable treatment. One of them is Dhruvini, assistant doctor of Ayurvati. The set up is in genuine contrast to the frequently parochial and conservative attitude exhibited in the contemporary Indian society which frowns upon independent working women. So Ayurvati's presentation is also non-conventional so far as the aesthetic standards of the average Indian woman is concerned who is devoted towards her profession.

Defining similar quality and aesthetic standards to both men and women is itself very important for gender equality in the society. The courteous qualities like; compassion, politeness, modesty, nurturance, softness, generosity are given to women and is attached with the ideal of "femininity" while dominant qualities like; offensive, adventure, boldness, brave, courageous, leadership are given to men and is attached with "masculinity". So the completion of this gender equality will collapse the long drawn

hierarchical line between male and female. It has been practically presented through the women of the Meluhan Society in the *Shiva Trilogy*.

Another notable female character, the prime minister of Meluha, is an experienced lady named Kankhala. She is adept in administration and well educated. She always accounted with truth. When she knew about the conspiracy of king Daksha and Vidyunmali against Shiva, she resigned from her post and committed suicide.

Sati is considered as an epitome of women empowerment in Shiva Trilogy. She is the major character and the heroine of this series. From the beginning to the end she focuses on values, customs, education, principles, etc. Like other male characters she is adept in dance as well as sword. She is a fierce warrior with unmatched martial skills, courage and compassion. She is a widow and gave birth to stillborn child as her father told her. So she is called the same day on which she gave birth to still born child. Due to this incident, she is called Vikarma, an untouchable. Her husband Chandandhwaj died the same day on which she gave birth to still born child. Due to this incident, she is called Vikarma. Amish's concept of untouchability is not connected to birth. In the series if a lady gives birth to a deformed or still born child, and if there is a persons born with deformities her or she is declared an outcaste and untouchable with the belief that the sins of their past birth are responsible for this state. Whoever touched the Vikarma people had to go through the process of purification. But Shiva breaks the social rule and marries Sati. During his visit in the temple of Lord Brahma, Shiva met Sati for the first time. Suddenly a hooded man attacked them. The hooded man wanted to kidnap Sati but she kept fighting without fear. She supported Shiva in the fight. "Shiva and Sati stood back to back in a standard defensive. partner position, covering all the directions of any possible attack."

Through his Shiva Trilogy, Amish wanted to represent gender equality. He says that women are equal to men in every field. They can not only dance but also fight. If they can nurture the children, they can also do administrative

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work. In his trilogy, 'Agnipariksha' is a duel unto death within the ring of fire, to challenge injustice. In the chapter 'Trial by fire' of *The Immortals of Meluha*, Tarak insults Sati for her being a Vikarma (untouchable). He said that princess Sati defiled the yagna with her presence. So Sati challenges him to Agnipariksha (Trial by fire). Tarak was a brave warrior but Sati defeated him. So the gender equality presented in this series, corresponds to the role of the women in Vedic culture. In his book *"Social, Cultural and Economic History of India"*, Roy Choudhri writes that the women of Vedic period enjoyed a better position than the consequential periods. He writes, "These women not only composed hymns but were also well-versed in sacred texts. Women also learnt music and dancing".

Sati crossed the river at night to know the secret of Eastern palace in kashi. It was a secret place where nobody was allowed to go. So Sati decided to know the secret of Eastern palace. It was her bravery that she took courage to go there. When she entered the palace she saw a naga who was talking to king Athithigva. Sati interferes between them. Then Athithigva replied that she is his sister and he was only getting a rakhi tied by his sister. Then Sati said that the nages are not allowed to stay in our country. She should be in Naga territory. So Athithigra replied, "Lord Rudra said judge a person by his karma, not his appearance". (*The Secret of the Nagas, 181.*)

Amish has presented another strong female character who is against the orthodox ways of society. She is a Naga and her name is maya. She says,

"And who is more misunderstood today than a person with a deformity? Call us Naga. Call us a monster. Throw us to the South of the Narmada, where our presence will not trouble your lily white lives". (*The Secret of the Nagas, 182.*)

She is against the abnormal way of the society that treats the Nagas as if they are victims. Here Amish represents Nagas with the current scenario. Nagas are similar to handicapped people. The Naga women of Amish are very brave and strong. Kali is one of them. She is proficient in brave warfare and also adept in administrative work. She is the queen of the Nagas in Panchavati. She fights several wars. She is against her father. It is she who saves the life of Sati in Ichhavar from the attack of a herd of lions with Ganesh. She was Sati's twin sister. Suparna is also a brave woman character who is a Naga. She is skilled in administrative work. She was elected the queen of the Nagas in Panchavati when Kali left from there with Shiva and Sati to fight a war against Daksha.

Some other notable female characters who also play an important role in the society and they are expert in their fields. Krittika is one of them. She is close friend of Sati and she lives with her. She is not a warrior nor holds any administrative post but she is a simple and kind hearted lady. She faces every situation and never leaves Sati alone in any situation. She is believed to be the best friend of Sati. When Sati went to Ichhavar to save the lives of the villagers from the attack of lions. In that situation, she takes care of her child kartik.

Next, important female character is Veerini. She is the mother of Sati and Kali and wife of Daksha. She is the best example of motherhood in the Shiva Trilogy. She is sincere to her husband. She accompanies her husband in every situation. Before Devagiri was attacked by Shiva, she was asked to leave Devagiri but she denied and replied that she can not leave her husband in this situation. She can die but she will never leave her husband alone. She is a very strong character who bravely faces every situation.

Anandmayi, daughter of king Dilipa and princes of Ayodhya is the symbol of beauty and charm. She lives her life like a royal princess. She is an expert in dance and later she learns to sword so that she can save her life from any unexpected attack. She always tries to convince Parvateshwar for marriage and finally they get married. At last when Shiva decides to attack Devagiri, the Capital of Meluha, Parvateshwar choses to fight on behalf of Devagiri. In the beginning, Bhagirath and Anandmayi try to stop Parvateshwar to fight against Shiva but when he does not agree, then Anandmayi also takes her

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husband's side. She says that she will live with her husband and she will die with her husband. So here Amish presents the determination of women characters who like to die but they do not leave their husbands in any situation. There are two other women characters who play an important role for the welfare of society. These two characters are Tara and Uma. Tara, beloved of Brahaspati, lives in Pariha, disguising herself by another name so that she can hide her identity. The other female character is Uma, majoring in Branga. She Serves in the army of Branga.

'*Scion of Ikshvaku*' Amish has deconstructed the socio-economic image of the traditional powerful man with the new wonder woman who contributes to the society through her implicit leadership traits. In this novel, the women characters are Sati, Kaikeyi, Roshni, Manthara, Radhika, Nilanjana, Samichi, Urmila, Sumitra, Kaushalya who portrayed not as weak women, but as the embodiment of power and gallantry. All these women characters are presented as experienced, adept, independent and powerful in their professions.

Amish portrays a different, down to earth Sita in his '*Ram Chandra Series*'. She is not just a princess who dresses up and down, behaves in a conventional manner or desires for jewels or fineries and a good place to live in. She is a very brave and well educated woman character. She has the knowledge of Vedas and Puranas. She is the prime minister of Mithila. She is a chivalric warrior, a qualified soldier in the battlefield.

The novels of Amish Tripathi irrespective of his gender has been able to bring about a mighty transformation in the social position of women. In this regard, myth serves as a powerful weapon for the feminist writers as they can rethink and revise the image of silent, passive, courteous all accepting women of the past and envision them from a different perspective. So in his '*Scion of Ikshvaku*', Amish took his characters from the epic Ramayana and some of them are created by his imagination. He characterised these characters according to his imagination. Roshni and Radhika are the best examples of it. In this novel Roshni is a doctor and daughter of Manthra. She is devoted to her profession. She is very kind hearted. She is rakhi sister of Ram, Lakshman, Bharat and Shatrughan. She is well educated and sincere. In the novel, she is raped and killed by Dhenuka, a monster. The Character of Roshni is affected by Nirbhaya rape case in Delhi, where the victims committed a heinous crime. The same condition is in this novel. She is raped and killed mercilessly. According to the law of Ayodhya the main victim escaped from punishment of hanging till death because he was minor. But Bharat kidnapped him from the prison and killed him. He treated Dhenuka the same way as he did to Roshni. He was killed ruthlessly. In *Scion of Ikshvaku*, Radhika is beloved of Bharat. She follows the principles of her tribe. She is the daughter of Chief Varun. She couldn't marry Bharat because the rule of her community were different than that of other communities. "Their girls, no doubt, were liberated, but they did not marry outside their community". (77)

There are some other female characters who have contributed significantly to society. These characters are well mannered, well educated and devoted to their professions. Kaikeyi is a brave warrior who saved her husband's life in the battle of Karachapa where Ravana defeated Dashrath. She saved her wounded husband from the attack of the enemy. Nilanjana is a good doctor who is attending to the members of the royal family of Ayodhya. Samichi is self dependent lady who is the police and protocol chief of Mithila. She follows law and order in Mithila. In this novel, Urmila is the younger sister of Sita and blood-daughter of king Janak. She is later married to Lakshman. She is kind hearted and sincere. She spends 14 years in bereavement of her husband.

Aim Of Study

The aim and objectives of the present paper is to highlight the status of women in the present time through this research paper .Amish Tripathi shows the strong side of women in every field through his novels.

Anthology : The Research**Conclusion**

Gender stereotyping is the oldest and most founded division between human beings popular in every society, categorical of its social, political and economic foundations. The capabilities of females could never be doubted, so undertaking masculine behaviour or substituting men in the war or any other place just to prove they could do it, is not required at all. In this respect, Amish's women have self confidence and they are independent. His 'Shiva Trilogy' and 'Ram Chandra Series' deal with the rich mythological heritage of ancient India. Most of his characters are taken from mythology. These characters are the best example of women empowerment. The major female characters are strong, dexterous, and self dependent. These characters are equal to men in every field. They can dance and fight. The Amish represents these characters to present social and community models for 21st century.

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