



Twenty-first Century Imagination in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

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Abstract:

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is a popular mythological fiction in India. The trilogy is a euhemeristic treatment of the myths of God Shiva in the form of fiction. The paper argues that Tripathi's treatment of mythology is more a frame of reference to contemporary issues of the Twenty-first century than a historical retelling. The trilogy is set in the ancient Indus Valley Civilization at the intersection of Iranian plateau and the South Asian peninsula around 1900 B.C and the plot revolves on 'Somras', a posthuman project of the Meluhan society, that leads to depletion of Saraswati river, seasonal plague in Branga region and physical deformation of Naga community. The politics over the usage of Somras results in terrorism, counter-terrorism, war and atomic bombing. To situate the text between the fictional retelling of Hindu mythology and Twenty-first century discourses of ethno-nationalism, counter-terrorism, ecocide, and posthumanism, the study follows the method of textual analysis from the perspective of New Historicism. The paper concludes that forming the mythical tales in the Trilogy after the major Twenty-first century events in India and South Asia in particular and around the World in general, Tripathi has turned Hindu Mythology into a pertinent scripture of the Twenty-first century.

Keywords: Ethno-nationalism, counter-terrorism, ecocide, South Asia, myth

Introduction

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is an "epic fantasy" that treats life of God Shiva from "a humanist point of view" in an "odd blend of fantasy, reality, and speculative history" (Chatterjee, *Humanizing Theography* 75). Tripathi conceives Shiva as "a person in flesh and blood" whose actions were solely responsible for his fame of mythic height (Preface to *Shiva Trilogy*, *Immortals* xv). But he enshrines the humanist portrayal of Shiva in a doubt at the



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popular belief among the foreigners that Shiva “could [n]ever have existed in reality” (*Immortals* xv). The doubt in fact demonstrates his resistance to the Western tradition of considering myth as fantasy and challenges the foreigners’ belief. To substantiate his conviction that Shiva was “a man who...[became] god-like as a result of his karma” he “interprets the rich mythological heritage of ancient India, blending fiction with historical fact” (xv).

Although Tripathi’s historicist model of interpretation offers a “surrogate experience” in the mythological life of Lord Shiva, the paper argues that a New Historicist reading can unveil how *Shiva Trilogy* embodies a social critique of the events and discourses of the Twenty-first century India and South Asia in particular and the world in general. Following the fundamental prescription of New Historicism that texts are the products of historically specific social, cultural, and political conditions, the study interrogates Tripathi’s preoccupation with literature as “a medium for the expression of historical knowledge” in his “attempts to interpret ... heritage of ancient India” (Brannigan 3; *Immortals* xv). Geographically ancient India encompasses the region of South Asia. The New Historicist model of reading finds “surprising correspondences [and] startling resemblances” between the mythological history in *Shiva Trilogy* and “the [contemporary] South Asian security complex” in *South Asian Security: 21st century Discourses* (Brannigan 137; Dutt and Bansal, Introduction 1). The social, cultural, and political motives in *Shiva Trilogy* are argued to be symbolic representation of the Twenty-first century discourses namely ethno-nationalism, counter-terrorism, climate change, and nuclearization (Dutt and Bansal, 1-10). The study re-reads the trilogy as a story of power struggle for divinity between the immortal citizens of Meluha and Lord Shiva. The divinity of the Meluhans is endowed by the immortal properties of Somras, a medicinal drink. Somras also generates malevolent side-effects of intoxication and water depletion. The political struggles in the trilogy centre on Somras for these ambivalent consequences. The primary concern of the power struggles is found to be the concern of security in Meluha and its neighbouring state Swadweep. The security is compromised in both of the states for numerous political motives: terrorism in Meluha is on



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the one hand an ecological resistance to the ecocidal and genicidal impacts of Somras while on the other hand counter-terrorism, nuclear threat, and the political intervention of Meluha in Swadweep are the political forms of resistance to the forces against Somras. The rise of ethnonationalism in Meluha is a cultural and social impact of Somras. Shiva's struggle against Somras is, therefore, multidimensional as it involves opposition to the social, cultural, and political forces generated by Somras. In this re-reading, Shiva's life is tied to Somras because in destroying the institution of Somras Shiva achieves divinity in the form of memorability in popular imagination for his humongous struggle for the humanitarian cause.

II

The tales of Shiva is available in both Shiva Purana and the popular mind. Myth or Purana used to be an integral component of the history in India until Nineteenth century (Guha 3). Mrityunjay Vidyalankar's *Rājābali* (1808), an example of the Puranic history that existed as a precolonial form of historiography, accounted for stories in public circulation from unverified sources and didn't distinguish "myth, history, and the contemporary" considering the course of history as determined by "the grace of the divine power" on the parameters of righteousness or "dharma" (Chatterjee, *History and the Nationalization* 113-122). The modern Indian historiography that emerged in the late Nineteenth century "through the processes of archivization" promoted "disciplinary protocols such as the sifting of facts, the positing of historical truth, and the production of 'sources' as well as through ... the separation of mythic and magical elements from historical facts" (Mantena 9-12). The modern historiography dismissed myth because in the Western philosophy myth has been a problematic concept in its "relation of rational, philosophical truth to traditional, religious belief" (Bidney 379). Sophists, Neo-Platonist, and Stoic philosophers treated myths as allegories of natural, moral and philosophical truths while Epicureans and Euhemerus considered them "fabrication" that "conceal[ed] purely naturalistic and historical events" and Christians accorded value to "classic Greek and Roman myths provided they did not compete with the Christian religion" (379).



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On the contrary, “Ancient Hindu seers knew myth as *mithya*” that is, according to Devdutt Pattanaik, “a frame of reference” to “*Sat*” or truth (*Myth=Mithya* 1). In the brief genealogy of myth, Pattanaik shows how the idea of myth is derived from Greek concept of *mythos*, that is, “intuitive narration” and is different from the concept of *mithya* as formulated by Indian sages (1). He argues that *Sat* and *Mithya* resemble materially because both of them refer to reality, but differ in their interpretation because *mithya* is a contingent and limited set of references to reality; and Hindu seers considered it a delusion while *sat* is “boundless and perfect” and remains outside semiotics (1). Following the rationale of *mithya* as delusional, he contends that myth “is essentially a cultural construct” (1).

The idea of Shiva being “a person of flesh and blood” is an alternative interpretation (*Immortals* xv). In fact, *Shiva Trilogy* arguably offers another *mithya* of Shiva, an alternative history of ancient India; and the study intends to analyse this alternative history of Shiva and explore the New Historicist aspect of it. Pattanaik’s formulation of *mithya* as a contingent ‘frame of reference’ is close to the New Historicist reading of the text that “investigates a series of issues that...represent a society’s behaviour patterns and perpetuate, shape, or alter that culture’s dominant codes” (Cadzow 535). Furthermore, the delusional aspect of *mithya* also conforms to the key assumption of New Historicism which postulates “that no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to neither unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature” (Veaser, Introduction xi).

The *mithya* of Shiva as “a person of flesh-and-blood” is based on myths of naturalistic truth and historical events (*Immortals* xv). Tripathi’s historical analysis of myth refers to the hermeneutical practice of ‘Euhemerism’ that considered “so-called gods as... mortal men who had, through the respect of their descendants, become falsely worshipped as gods” (Bidney 379; Cooke 397). At the end of *Trilogy* in *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, Tripathi formulates such euhemeristic reason for the loss of heritage and knowledge of the mythical past:



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These descendants beheld gods in what were great men of the past, for they believed that such great men couldn't possibly have existed in reality...divined myths in what was really history, for true memories were forgotten in chaos as vast arrays of daivi astras used in the Great War ravaged the land (564-565).

Tripathi's 'surrogate' history springs from a doubt in Indian historiography that emerged in the colonial period under British rule because during that period "history had taken over from Purana as the dominant mode of reckoning the past....as ethnology's surrogate" (Guha 3-11). The sceptic view of history being a critical tool of hermeneutical tradition of historicism espouses the idea that "the past could always have been different" (Hamilton 60). Kali, the Queen of Naga Community in *Shiva Trilogy*, expresses such doubt "for history is written by victors. They can write it however they want. The losers are always remembered the way the victors portray them" (*Oath* 205). The doubt of Indian historiography encourages Tripathi to turn to history based on myths or Puranic history. But his return to Puranas or Hindu mythology that takes place "after spending many years in the wilderness of atheism" reflects the religious turn of humanities enacting "a post-secular project of resacralization" at the turn of the Twenty-first century (*Immortals* xv; McClure 144). By the terms of a post-secular project secular theorists address the spiritual concerns in the postmodern texts of Don DeLillo, Thomas Pynchon, Ishmael Reed, Leslie Silko, Tony Kushner, and Quentin Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction* in a sort of "religious revival: a resurgence...of spiritual energies, discourses, and commitments" (141-144). *Shiva Trilogy* responds to such religious revival in the "hope [that] you find your God...it doesn't matter in what form we find Him...whether...as Shiva or Vishnu...or Allah or Jesus...or any other of His myriad forms" (*Immortals* xv).

The treatment of myth with history and science is indicative of Tripathi's awareness of the educated, empirically sound, and scientifically informed readership in the Twenty-first century. The reader in the Twenty-first century is a Post-modern humanity living in the world after the "death of God" (Pearson and Large xxv). To attend such readership, he presents a



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Puranic history of Shiva's life based on historical fact and scientific truth. In doing so and to re-tell the pre-historic events he recasts the contemporary predicaments of life such as terrorism, ecocide, war on terror and the posthuman stride of humanity (Adiseshiah and Hildyard 1-13). The Twenty-first century is the post 9/11 world of dystopian living at the edge of nuclear threat and environmental crisis. Therefore, it is no surprise that Tripathi writing in the present century wouldn't escape the turn-of-the-century issues.

III

Tripathi weaves the entire narrative of the trilogy on the rise of God Shiva at the decline of 'Somras'. 'Somras' is a "posthuman" project of Meluhan society (Bostrom 5) because the medicinal property of Somras works by purging poisonous oxidants out of body and at the cellular level it keeps the cells dividing even in the old age leading to eternal youth, health and disease-free life (*Immortals* 81). But the immortality of Meluhans is set at the cost of environmental hazard and eventual crises. The manufacture of Somras requires "massive amounts of Saraswati waters...during processing" and its mass producing induces river depletion in the Western Sea and desertification of the land in the South of Rajasthan (*Oath* 17). For "the horrifying scope and cumulative effects of the human-induced crisis of mass extinction and habitat" the manufacture of Somras becomes an ecocidal practice (Broszimmer 2-3). The ecocidal practice of Somras is further linked with genocide of the Branga and Naga people. The continued use of Somras triggers "deformities" in "a few babies...in the womb....[who] are born Naga" (*Oath* 14). The manufacture also generates large amounts of toxic waste which is the principal cause of Branga plague during every summer (19-21). Holding Somras for the plight of Branga and Naga people, Tripathi has "contextualised" the "ecological destruction" of Saraswati river "as a method of group destruction, drawing a link between ecocide and genocide" (Lindgren 2).

In fact, Tripathi associates the genocidal consequences of Somras with the idea of 'Evil': "Shiva nodded. He could see the terrible side-effects and the ecological destruction caused by the Somras. But he still couldn't see it as Evil" (*Oath* 18). Here, Tripathi



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articulates the vital concerns of the environmentalists of the Twenty-first century such as Polly Higgins who has campaigned for the ecocidal law in order to criminalize the practices of ecocide (<https://ecocidelaw.com/ecocide-law-2/>). In the elaborate polemic discourse on the idea of evil, Tripathi urges the contemporary reader along with Shiva for open confrontation: “Evil should never be fought with subterfuge...it must be attacked openly” (22).

Besides, the rise of God Shiva is dovetailed with the destruction of ‘Somras’. Shiva’s destiny of divinity is set against the immortal property of a medicine whose extinction makes him God, a figure larger than common humanity. Here in the rise of a new God, Shiva, Tripathi locates the institution of God. In the Twenty-first century the institution of God is still a crucial debate after the Darwin’s evolution theory and Nietzsche’s announcement of death of God. In *The Oath of the Vayuputras* Tripathi dedicates a whole chapter, “Who is Shiva?”, on how an Institution run by Vayuputras, a tribe left by previous Mahadev, Lord Rudra, determines and administers next incarnation of Neelkanth, a person with blue mark on the throat of the sign of divinity in the legends popular in Meluhan society, through an institutionalised training. In spite of veiled secularization of the Institution of God, Tripathi leaves some space for the readers to follow and choose their respective modes of faith. As the story unfurls it is revealed that Shiva is no ordinary youth. His uncle, Lord Manobhu, a former Vayuputra member, trained him for the “purported task” (113). But he didn’t arrange any predetermined series of events that would establish Shiva as God. Although Shiva considers his establishment as a matter of “Just luck”, Gopal, the chief of Vasudevs, argues that “all that he has because the Parmatma willed it” (113). The space for conflicting views of the secular and theological in the trilogy indicates the “ubiquitous trend towards heterogeneity in the ethnic and religious ... [and] pluralism in modes of life, ethical orientations and world views” of the globalized world order of the present century (Habermas 4).

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Somras has contributed stability, continuity, and solidarity for “one thousand two hundred years” (*Immortals* 68) to the national and cultural life of Meluhans because it is “administered to the entire populace, resulting in huge progress in society as a whole” (*Oath* 12). Meluha is “the richest and most powerful empire in India” and it offers not only free entry and means of livelihood to the immigrants but also a lifestyle (*Immortals* 14). The lifestyle of Meluha has allowed the citizens pursue an ideal life a perfect society (68). The system of Meluhan society is based upon the principles of honesty, equality, hygiene, lawfulness, order and discipline. The concern of hygiene is the response to the use of Somras in daily life: “All Meluhans are taught about two things from a young age — water and hygiene. Water is the cleanest absorber of the effluents that the Somras generates and excretes as toxins” (135). The near-perfect Meluhan society achieves equality by three social systems: one, the caste system based on the individual abilities and action (63); two, the Maika system which allows the empire adopt the child right after the child birth at the expense of lineage (97); three, Gurukul system that offers equal opportunity and benefit of education funded entirely by the empire (97). Honesty, lawfulness, order and discipline are the consequent principles nurtured in equal upbringing of the children by the nation. The adoption of the child after birth helps the state of Meluha cut the child from the ethnic and familial ties and educate an “emotional attachment” to the nation that is confused “between ethnic [national] consciousness/loyalty and civic [state] consciousness/loyalty” (*Conversi* 3). In the chapter “Trial by Fire” of *The Immortals of Meluha*, Tripathi shows how nationalism takes the form of ethnicity and the perceived myth of commonality [among Meluhan citizens] gives rise to ethnonationalism (2). Shiva decrees that Sati, his wife, can participate in the ritual of offering by fire or yagna despite of belonging to the community of vikarma, who are socially branded as sinners in the previous life, and faces objection from Tarak, “an immigrant from the ultra-conservative northwest regions of the empire” (*Immortals* 223). Tarak objects to the proceeding organised by the royal family: “the law says no vikarma should be allowed on the yagna platform...(and) Princess Sati defiles the yagna with her presence” (224). His conviction is informed by the fact that “I am a Meluhan” (226). His



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obstinacy “to challenge anyone breaking the law” showcases the ethnonationalist sentiment of the citizens like Tarak. In the process of ‘self-fashioning’ after ethnonationalism Tarak constitutes his subjectivity, that is citizenship, “within a heightened awareness of the position of [him] self within structures of power” (Brannigan 59). For Tarak the citizenship overshadows the ancestry, class, and ethnicity. The ethnonationalist sentiment of an immigrant like Tarak is the effect of Meluhan lifestyle and a reflection of the political goal of the state.

In the war against Swadweepans emperor Daksha calls to “destroy the Chandravanshi ideology” by offering “the benefits of our [Meluhan] lifestyle to the people of Swadweep” (*Immortals* 151). In this diplomatic policy Daksha ensures the political scheme of expanding the empire. For Daksha, ethnonationalism is an ideological tool to rule the subject with their voluntary consent.

In *The Oath of the Vayuputras* Shiva has not only to destroy the emperor but also to resist the ethnonationalist sentiment of the citizens which constitutes the ideological motif behind the Meluhans’ loyalty to the state. Shiva’s struggle is doubly complicated by the fact that the citizens support the emperor who tries to ensure the immortality of the subject. At every fight with the Meluhan army in different cities of the empire, Shiva considers the fact that “we haven’t conquered the city. We’ve only defeated their army. We need to get the citizens [of Mrityikavati] on our side” (152).

V

The trilogy is driven by the central concern of security: Shiva comes to the mainland of Meluha to secure his tribe from the belligerent tribe of Pakratris (*Immortals* 16); and King Daksha accepts Shiva as Neelkanth because he thinks Shiva is a “saviour” and “with his leadership, we can end the Chandravanshi crisis once and for all ... from the terrorist attacks to the shortage of Somras to the killing of the Saraswati” (50). Here, Daksha uses the institution of Neelkanth in the mode of “improvisation” as he “capitalize[s] the unforeseen



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[potential of the Meluhan empire] and...transform[s] the given materials [in the legends of Neelkanth] into his own scenario” (Greenblatt 227). Like the Spanish colonizers in the Lucayas, Daksha improvises the legend to follow his twin personal goals of expanding the empire and becoming an emperor of the expanded territory by justifying his rule and political schemes: “The Neelkanth has chosen my reign to appear. He will transform all of India to the ideals of Meluha” (*Immortals* 50).

The concerns of security link the Trilogy with other political and social concerns that Daksha relates to Shiva because “security is not an objective condition...[but] a process of securitization takes place as a result of political and social discourse” (Dutt and Bansal, Introduction 3). The security concerns of Daksha situate the trilogy in the Twenty-first century security complex in South-Asia for three reasons: firstly, the trilogy is geographically set on the Indian sub-continent that constitute South-Asian region; two, the nature of security threats in Meluha and Swadweep is identical with that of the contemporary South-Asia: terrorism, international relation, climate change, and nuclear energy; and three, the dimension of the security concerns is national.

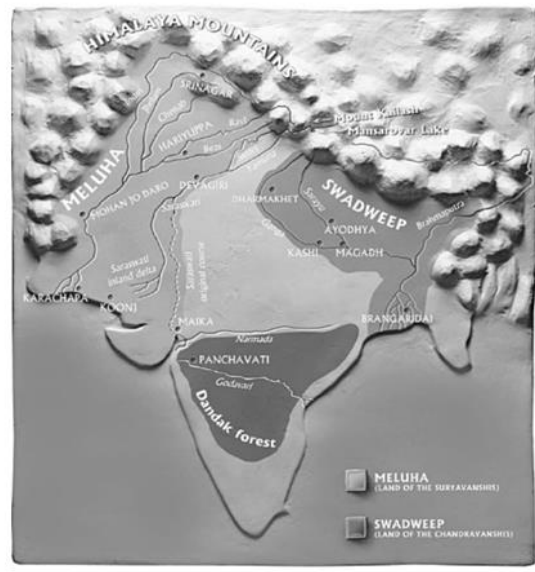
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Figure 1 (Dutt and Bansal xvi)



Figure 2 (*Shiva Trilogy* Back-cover)



Politically, Tripathi has organised the first segment, *The Immortals of Meluha*, on the international relations between Meluha and Swadweep. In it, Shiva and his tribesmen are offered immigration to Meluha on the unacknowledged search for Neelkanth whose arrival is prophesised in legends. The search for Neelkanth is owing to “destroy the evil Chandravanshis” (115). Chandravanshis are the line of kings of Swadweep who have joined an evil force of Nagas to execute the acts of terrorism out of hatred (59) and over a number of years Chandravanshis are using Nagas in the terrorist attacks in Meluha (111). In the chapter 20, one of the terrorist attacks takes place at Mount Mandar (293-303), a secret manufacturing unit of somras (107), and results in the controversial death of Brahaspati, the chief Meluhan scientist (305). Shiva, Sati, the Pandit and other associates witness three instances of explosion in three sonic reverberation of “BOOM” (298). Shiva’s aural witness of the terrorist attack on Mandar reminds the reader of the identical witness-accounts of 9/11 terrorist attack on world trade centre in 2001. At the ruin of Mount Mandar, Shiva discovers



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the clue of the perpetrators, i.e. “a bracelet of leather....with an embroidered design....[of] the Aum symbol” which belongs to Nagas and “vow(s)” for a vengeance with “war” (*Immortals* 308-9). In the aftermath of the terrorist attack on Mount Mandar Shiva’s retaliation takes “in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001” after “US invasion of Afghanistan and the toppling of the Taliban regime as part of the pursuit of Al- Qaeda” (Bali, Afghanistan and the war on terror 29). But at the end of Dharmayudh, the Holy War, Shiva is surprised with “a stunning revelation” that Nagas aren’t in league with Chandravanshis (*Immortals* 353). The absence of Nagas leads Shiva into questioning the righteousness of his actions: “what he had done was wrong. He had committed a terrible mistake. These people were not evil”(387). The first instalment ends in an unfinished combat of Shiva with a Naga (397) and leads to following segment *The Secret of the Nagas*.

Events in *The Secret of the Nagas* enact the strategic measures of counter-terrorism. Chapter 1 opens in the middle of Shiva’s combat with the Naga and whets reader’s interest in Nagas “What kind of a demon is he? He steals the horse and then leaves enough gold to buy five more! (17). Shiva discovers a gold coin of Branga (19). The Branga coin motivates Shiva into the pursuit of Nagas in their hinterland of the “Dandak forest” (97). But the pursuit takes numerous twists and turns at different moments of the novel. At first, Shiva aims for Kashi because “it is the only kingdom in Swadweep that the Brangas deign to trade with. Furthermore, there are many refugees from Branga settled in Kashi” (19). On the waterway to Kashi, Shiva halts at Magadh where river Sarayu meets river Ganga (25). There, Shiva receives news on another instance of terrorist attack and the eventual death of Prince Ugrasen of Magadh, and the evidence for Naga’s involvement is the same Branga gold coin (35). In Kashi, General Parvateshwar of Meluha gets heavily injured during his efforts to save Brangas in a riot (49-50). But a mysterious medicine from Divodas, the chief of Brangas, heals the wound (52-53) that is made with “the crushed wood of another specific tree... only grows south of the Narmada river...in Naga territory” (54). During interrogation, Divodas reveals to Shiva that Nagas supply the medicine to King Chandraketu in exchange for gold coins for the seasonal plague in the region of Branga (55-56). To “free ... [the] King and the



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land of Branga from the clutches of the Nagas”, Shiva leaves for Branga (56). Upon reaching Branga, King Chandraketu informs that he can’t reveal the location of Panchavati, the Naga Capital, until Shiva arranges another source of the medicine for plague (98). Divodas suggests that the alternative source of medicine can be obtained from Parshuram, “a bandit in the forests beyond the Madhumati river” (99-100). To nab Parshuram, Shiva undertakes a military strike with a disciplined force of a hundred soldiers on the bank of Madhumati and with an equal match of martial prowess “Bhagirath, with the help of Divodas and two Suryavanshi soldiers, wrestle[d] Parshuram to the ground” (114). But Parshuram gives in for the fact that Shiva is Neelkanth and helps him with element for Naga medicine and direction of the “way through the Dandak forests... [to] the Naga city” (125). In the meantime, Shiva’s wife, Sati, discovers her kinship with Naga community: the Naga Queen, Kali, is her twin sister and Lord of the People, Ganesh, is her son with ex-husband (120). This kinship undermines all the incidental developments and revamps all the critical assumptions of the mainstream events: firstly, Nagas are not exclusively evil creatures; and secondly, the Naga’s involvement with terrorism deserves favourable re-consideration. After a violent encounter with the Naga step-son, Ganesh, and sister-in-law, Kali, Shiva plans to visit Panchavati but faces a disguised militant attack with daivi-astras or divine-weapons (178-181). At the end of the novel, Shiva’s pursuit of Nagas gets stunted by the surprising revelation that his friend, the Meluhan scientist, Brihaspati is alive.

The third instalment, *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, concentrates on the deterrence and usage policy of daivi-astra, that is, a mythical version of nuclear weapon. The central event that leads the entire narrative of the novel is the use of Pashupatiastra, “a pure nuclear fusion weapon” and its annihilating consequences (541). The momentum of the story gains critical attention when an investigation is carried on “the wreckage” of the attack occurred in the previous segment of the trilogy (6). Meluhan General Parvateshwar confirms that the ambush was organised by Emperor Daksha (7). Since the nature of the attack is nuclear as daivi-astras were used, the story begins to thematize the deterrence policy of the Vayuputra council as it’s expressly stated in a letter to the mastermind of the attack, Lord Bhriugu:



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It has been brought to our attention that daivi astras were loaded onto a fleet of ships in Karachapa. Investigations have led to the regrettable conclusion that you manufactured them, using materials that were given to you strictly for research. While we understand that you would never misuse the weapons expressly banned by our God, Lord Rudra, we cannot allow the unauthorised transport of these weapons to go unpunished. You are therefore prohibited from ever entering Pariha or interacting with a Vayuputra again. We do hope you will honour the greater promise that every friend of a Vayuputra makes to Lord Rudra: that of never using the daivi astras. It is the expectation of the council that you will surrender the weapons at once to Vayuputra Security (68-69).

The theme of nuclear deterrence policy as a strategic mode of international security manifests “South Asia’s recent history with nuclear weapons” (Blarel 47). Since 1940s nuclear weapon in South Asia plays a vital role in stabilizing regional conflicts and at the same time nuclearization of the region increases the risk of “breakdown of deterrence” on the occasion of “strong personalities, domestic politics, accidents, organizational compulsions and mistakes” (49). Such an instance of violation of the deterrence policy constitutes the ground for asking a nuclear weapon, Pashupatiastra, from Vayuputra council as part of “seek[ing] redress for a crime ... [of] the unauthorised use of daivi astra” (*Oath* 390). However, the nuclear weapon is intended to “help stabilize [regional] conflicts” (Blarel 49) between Shiva and Emperor Daksha: “we will not use the Pashupatiastra. We’ll only threaten to use it. But to make it a credible threat to the Meluhans, we will actually have to set up the weapon outside Devagiri” (*Oath* 405). But the war between Shiva and Daksha turns into a domestic tragedy where the hired assassins from Egypt kill Sati during her attempt to save Nandi (463-478). To avenge death of wife coupled with the mission to destroy the secret manufacture unit of Somras in Devagiri, Shiva decides to wipe out “all except those who have protected or made the Somras, and those directly responsible for Sati’s death....there will be no more Daksha... no more Somras... no more Evil...all ends now” (503).



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Conclusion

Shiva Trilogy offers a Twenty-first century *mithya* of Shiva. In blending historical facts with mythological tales, Tripathi offers a Puranic history of ancient India. But the role of divine intervention in historical events is secularized in order to emphasize “science of historical truth”, a prominent trend in “nationalist historiography ... in postindependence India” (Mantena 1). In the secular version of Puranic history Shiva lives up to the merit of God for the highly sophisticated training by a former Vayuputra member Lord Manobhu. The trilogy demonstrates that the merit of God doesn’t require immortality but the goodwill to serve common humanity. Shiva becomes God by destroying the ecocidal practice and genocidal consequence of Somras. The annihilation of the immortals of Devagiri gives rise to the divinity of common humanity whose actions, not posthuman abilities, contribute to the progress of human civilization. Since history is contingent and a product of existing political regime, Tripathi’s analytic design after Puranic history is justified for the lack of documented history of ancient India. Reflecting contemporary events in the narrative and adapting terrorism, nuclear threat, and ecological crisis to improvise the Puranic history of ancient India, Tripathi recovers “a lesson lost in the depths of time and ignorance” (*Immortals* xv). A lesson in Shiva’s extraordinary struggle against terrorism, nuclear threat, and ecological crisis can not only transform the mythological view of ancient India and Hindu Scriptures but also can inspire the contemporary readers for such reactionary efforts against such crises in South Asia and around the world.

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