



# Myth And Modernity: Reimagining Shiva In Contemporary Narrative

Aviral Singh suryavanshi

Student

Amity University Noida

## Abstract

Mythology has never been a fixed legacy. It continues to exist because it adapts to the societies that maintain it. In recent years, modern Indian fiction has started to look at mythological figures again, but this time not just to tell sacred stories again, but to give them new meanings based on modern moral and social issues. One of the most obvious signs of this change is in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy, where Lord Shiva is not seen as an eternal and distant cosmic deity, but as a mortal who becomes divine through experience, choice, and responsibility. This paper looks at how this new way of thinking changes the meaning and purpose of myth. The discussion examines the evolution of concepts related to leadership, justice, gender balance, and moral duty by juxtaposing Tripathi's narrative with classical representations in the Śiva Purāṇa. The paper contends that modern reinterpretations do not diminish mythology; instead, they facilitate its continued relevance in an evolving cultural landscape. This comparison reveals myth not as a vestige of belief but as a dynamic framework through which societies persist in negotiating identity, power, and ethical responsibility.

## Introduction

For a long time, mythology has influenced cultural memory and moral imagination. In India, figures like Shiva exist in a space that is both philosophical, spiritual, and symbolic at the same time. Traditional representations, particularly in texts such as the Śiva Purana, portray Shiva as a cosmic entity transcending human vulnerability, embodying destruction as an essential precursor to regeneration (Śiva Purana 1.3). In these depictions, divinity is immutable and absolute. But in today's world, people often question authority instead of accepting it, and moral certainty is replaced by ethical negotiation. So, it's not surprising that modern literature has started to look at mythological figures in ways that are more relevant to real life. Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy is part of this movement because it shows a version of Shiva who is not born divine but becomes so through lived experience and hard choices (Tripathi, *The Immortals of Meluha* 52). This change in the story shows a larger cultural trend to look for meaning in growth instead of perfection. This paper examines the adaptability of myth through a comparison of classical mythological representations and contemporary narrative reinterpretations, while preserving its symbolic profundity. The conversation goes beyond just comparing things to look at how myth works as a changing cultural language that can talk about both spiritual ideas and real-life situations. From Cosmic God to Ethical Leader: Myth in Transition

### **From Cosmic God to Ethical Leader: Myth in Transition**

In classical mythology, Shiva's identity is inextricably linked to symbolism. His blue throat stands for sacrifice, which is a reference to the story of how he drank poison to save the universe. His third eye represents knowledge that goes beyond the physical world, and his stillness as an ascetic shows that he is free from illusion (Kramrisch 102). These characteristics do not signify phases of personal growth; instead, they convey eternal truths regarding cosmic equilibrium. These kinds of pictures don't leave much room for moral or emotional doubt. Shiva does not fight; he just does what is right according to the universal order (Śiva Purāṇa 2.3). In this regard, classical mythology positions him beyond human experience. Tripathi's depiction starts from a very different point of view. Tripathi introduces his Shiva as a tribal leader who is dealing with new territory, political tension, and moral ambiguity (Tripathi, *The Immortals of Meluha* 12). The main guy in the story does not have to be perfect. He has to deal with his limitations. In this story being divine is not something you are born with it is something that happens over time. This is similar to what Joseph Campbell said about the hero's journey, where people change and grow when they go through times and think about what they did. The story says over and over that you do not become a leader just because you are meant to you become a leader by doing things. The way things are seen in the story is also different. Tripathi explains things that people usually think are magical. For example Shiva's blue throat is not because of some kind of poison. It is because of the effects of Somras as we see in *The Immortals of Meluha*. Such reinterpretations allow myth to coexist with a worldview shaped by reasoning.

As Northrop Frye suggests, myths endure because they can be retold in forms that resonate with intellectual climates. Importantly this rational framing does not eliminate depth. The blue throat continues to signify sacrifice. In this way myth operates simultaneously on narrative levels. The trilogy also reimagines dharma. Classical mythology often presents it as an divinely sanctioned order. Tripathi however portrays dharma as something that must be examined in context. Shiva's willingness to question practices such as the Vikarma system suggests that moral responsibility may require reform than obedience. This emphasis on inquiry aligns with contemporary expectations of leadership grounded in accountability rather than authority. The fictional society of Meluha with its structures and inherited stigma echoes broader discussions about systemic injustice. Shiva's struggle becomes less about defeating forces and more about dismantling flawed institutions. The narrative also engages with the philosophical principle of balance embodied in Ardhanārīśvara. The union of masculine and feminine energies.

In thought this form symbolizes the interdependence of Shiva and Shakti. Tripathi translates this idea into relationships by portraying female characters such as Sati and Kali as active participants in shaping moral and political outcomes. Their presence challenges the assumption that mythology's inherently patriarchal. Instead it suggests that balance has always been central to its core. The popularity of reinterpretations may also be understood in light of postcolonial cultural dynamics. Contemporary Indian writers often return to myths not merely as heritage but as resources for storytelling that can speak both locally and globally. By doing they create narratives that invite reflection on authority, justice and identity without abandoning tradition altogether. Moreover, Tripathi's Shiva exhibits vulnerability grief, doubt, anger and compassion. These traits humanize him without diminishing his significance. Of existing beyond morality he becomes deeply engaged with it. This shift reflects a cultural movement toward leadership models that prioritize empathy and responsibility. In this framework divinity is not equated with perfection. With the capacity for ethical action. Seen together these developments point to mythology's adaptability. Classical texts preserve abstraction while modern retellings foreground ethical and emotional complexity. The two approaches coexist, offering yet complementary ways of engaging with the same enduring figure, Shiva. The reinterpretation of Shiva in fiction demonstrates that mythology continues to evolve alongside cultural expectations. Traditional depictions in the Śiva Purāṇa emphasize transcendence and cosmic order.

While Tripathi's narrative foregrounds struggle and social responsibility. Than replacing one another these perspectives coexist, offering different but complementary insights into leadership and balance. By presenting Shiva as a figure who grows into divinity modern storytelling brings myth closer, to lived experience. In doing it ensures that mythology remains not only remembered but actively engaged with in contemporary life. Myth does not fade with time—it transforms, carrying forward its power while adapting to new ethical and cultural realities. The stories that Amish Tripathi tells are a take on old myths. He puts these myths into genres like fantasy and thriller that people can easily get into. This way younger people

can get into these stories without feeling like they are reading something that's really old and not relevant to them. By making these stories exciting and easy to follow Amish Tripathi is making it possible for people to talk about ideas like ethics in schools, book clubs and online.

The old stories about Shiva say that he is the reality and that he has many different forms like Bhairava or Nataraja. Each of these forms does something in the world. The Śīva Purāṇa says that these forms are not different stages of Shivas life but are actually eternal symbols that help us understand the world. Amish Tripathi does things a bit differently. He tells the story of Shiva in three parts: as an outsider then as a leader and finally as a destroyer. This story is similar to the stories, but it is also unique. One thing that is different about Amish Tripathis stories is that they talk about the environment. In the stories this is not something that is usually discussed. In Amish Tripathis stories there is a plant called Somras that can purify people's karma but it also hurts the earth. This is like what's happening in the real world, where people are hurting the earth and causing problems. Shivas friendship with the Nagas, who are hurt by the Somras shows that we need to think about how our actions affect the world. In the stories Shiva is often shown as a powerful god who is in charge of everything. Amish Tripathis version of Shiva is different. He earns his power by making choices and standing up for what is right. When things go wrong Shiva does not just sit back. Let them happen. Instead he tries to make things better. He is not a distant god but a person who is involved in the world.

The women in Amish Tripathis stories are also really important. They are not background characters but are instead strong and independent. Sati, Kali and Anandmayi are all examples of this. They are not just love interests or sidekicks. Are instead full people with their own thoughts and feelings. This is really different from the stories, where women are often shown as being secondary to men. Some people do not like the way that Amish Tripathi tells these stories. They think that he is changing the myths much and that he is not being true to the original stories. However others think that this is a thing. They say that Amish Tripathi is making the myths fresh and exciting again and that he is helping people to think about ideas in new ways. Amish Tripathis stories are not just for people who like myths and legends. They are also for people who like adventure stories and fantasy. They are like popular stories, such as the ones by Neil Gaiman or Rick Riordan. However they are also unique because they are based on myths and legends.

The fact that many people are reading Amish Tripathis stories shows that myths are still important today. They help us to think about ideas and to understand the world in new ways. They are not old stories but are instead living and breathing things that can help us to navigate the world. For people who are studying English literature Amish Tripathis stories are really useful. They can help us to understand how myths and legends can be retold in exciting ways. They can also help us to think about ideas, such as identity and morality. By reading Amish Tripathis stories we can learn more about the world and about ourselves. In

the end Amish Tripathi stories show us that myths are not old stories but are instead living and breathing things that can help us to understand the world. They are not, for entertainment but are instead a way of thinking about big ideas and exploring the human condition. Shiva is not a god but is instead a symbol of the human spirit. He is a reminder that we all have the power to make choices and to shape the world around us.

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