

## **Symbolic Archetypes found in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy**

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### **Abstract**

This Paper aims to analyse the dynamic schemas that accelerates Amish Tripathi's narrative technique in Shiva Trilogy. Shiva trilogy is the retelling of Shiva Purana. Trilogy is loaded with enough archetypes, symbols and schemas which are the attributes of myth narratives. Symbols such as river Saraswathi, blue throat, third eye are widely used by Tripathi in the narrative. This study will confine itself to analysing the schemas that are present in the story using the critical approach semiotic literary analysis. River Saraswathi stands as a symbol of knowledge and how it is pushed to the brink of extinction and somras which is the immortal drink turns detrimental to entire humanity, blue throat that indicates arrival of the saviour constitutes the crux of the narrative. Symbols and their semiotic indicators with reference to literature will be studied in myth theoretical perspective.

### **Key Words**

Myth; Symbols; Schemas; Archetypes; Blue throat.

### **Introduction**

Symbols are cultural ambassadors carrying the message from diachronically. They enrich the narratives with their encoded array of meanings which are culture specific. Amish Tripathi in his Shiva trilogy extensively uses various symbols and schemas to make the story line dynamic. This paper analyses the symbols that are used in the narrative. The symbols and schemas synthesis with the story rendering a newer perspective to an old story. Tripathi explicitly attributes contemporary meaning to the symbols so as to enable the reader to compare it with existing conditions. A sign or a symbol prompts different comprehension levels, making the individual to decipher it according to his cultural settings to which he or she is part of. To analyse these symbols a proper empirical method could

be semiotic literary criticism. Semiotics is the study of cultural signs and symbols. Semiotic analysis penetrates deep into the unconscious cultural patterns that shape the thematic content. It reveals the underlying meaning of the structures, it shall be verbal or visual. Semiotic literary analysis instead of focusing on the thematic meaning investigates the signs and symbols that lead to the coded meaning. The subsequent section will demonstrate the application of the semiotic theory extended to the analysis myth within the contemporary cultural representation of Amish Tripathi.

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines symbols as "something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance." Ross and Van Den Haag make this point in their book

*The Fabric of Society: An Introduction to the Social Sciences:*

The meaning of conventional signs or symbols, however, is fixed by use and agreement; they are arbitrarily chosen, in that they have no causal connection with what they represent. All words are symbols although not all symbols are words. And words have no direct efficacy to alter things; their power is indirect, through their effect on men." (868).

As Sander Peirce noted, every sign is determined by its objects, either first by partaking in the characters of the object (when he calls a sign an icon) and secondly, by being really and in its individual existence connected with the individual object (when he calls a sign an index). Thirdly, by more or less approximate certainty that it is interpreted as denoting the object, in consequence of a habit (the term used as including a natural disposition, and when Sanders uses it to mean the sign as a symbol).

Carl G. Jung discusses other aspects of symbols in his book *Man and His Symbols*,

...a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider "unconscious" aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. As the mind explores the symbol, it is led to ideas that lie beyond the grasp of reason... Because there are innumerable things beyond the range of human understanding, we constantly use symbolic terms to represent concepts that we cannot define or fully comprehend. This is one reason why all religions employ symbolic language or images. (4)

According to Gilbert Durant "By myth we understand a dynamic system of symbols, archetypes and schemas. Dynamic system that tends, when prompted by a schema, to take the form of a story." (62) Initially analysing the symbols and their meaning were peripheral analysis, confining it to understanding what the symbols communicate. But by including the cultural context to it, removes it from the margin and assigns it with an imperative central function. A symbolic archetype is an object, location, or image in a story that contains more than one functional meaning. It has both a physical meaning in the story world and a thematic meaning for the reader to interpret. In this study the symbols are studied from a three-dimensional level; formal, social and metaphorical levels.

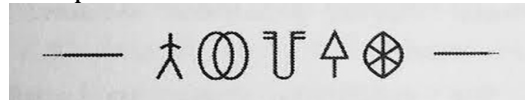


Fig.1. The symbolic archetypes adopted by Tripathi

According to Tripathi, the first from the left means the symbol of a single man, it is Shiva who emerges out as a hero, who intends to bring together humanity and save it and the second symbol denotes that he is the uniter of nations. In the trilogy he unites all warring factions into a singular entity and strengthens the notion of brotherhood. The third symbol refers to "Man of Knowledge." Though he emerges as a novice tribe his quick-witted nature makes him understand the intricacies of the world around him. This knowledge further enables him to understand the real evil and its dimensions. The fourth symbol indicates the warrior in him. His warrior abilities are proven recurrently in the Trilogy. The fifth symbol indicates the third eye. The mid-point between the eyebrows, Shiva always has the throbbing and burning sensation whenever he is exposed to challenges. The throbbing and burning vanishes when he terminates the

evil from the face of earth. These symbols were used by Tripathi to symbolize the attributes of the puranic hero.



Fig.2. The seal excavated from the Site of Harappa Civilization

This symbol is adopted by Tripathi to indicate the puranic stature of the archetypal hero Shiva. This indicates a man with the crown of bull horns surrounded by grazing cattle and weapons of various dimensions and intensities.



Fig.3 Symbol of OM

The symbol Om represents unity among diversity. It represents the Suryavanshi way of life and the Chandravanshi way of life, they are marked with different colours where as a unifying factor colour orange is used, along with symbols of moon and sun.

Well, King Bharat came up with this symbol of unity between the Suryavanshis and the Chandravanshis. The top half in white represents the Chandravanshis. The bottom half in red represents the Suryavanshis. The part in orange coming out of the meeting of these two parts represented the common path. The crescent moon to the right of the symbol was the existing Chandravanshi symbol. (Tripathi 43).

The colour orange in the above symbol refers to the sun which is bright,

valiant and orderly. White colour refers to the moon which is cool, careworn waning and waxing. Both indicate Suryavanshi and Chandravanshi way of life. The symbol Om also refers to the inclusive way of life.



Fig.4 bagavatgitausa (Shiva's fury, Daksha)

This Goat amulet is worn by Daksha. Goat as a symbol is not a well received or augmented animal symbol. Emperor Brahamanayaka, father of Daksha, assigns him the goat insignia. Since he had not seen Daksha who never owned the attributes required to be a king. This symbol foreshadows Daksha's character, thus enabling a strong narrative towards the antagonist. A symbol in a way reflects the attribute of a character; it is not only left to the perception of the reader but also the real qualities. The deeds of the cowardly emperor pushes his entire civilization to extinction.

Shiva smiled cautiously. Something about the conversation niggled at him. He took one more glance at the amulet on Daksha's arm. It represented a humble goat, one of the lowest chosen tribes amongst the Kshatriyas. In fact, some people considered the goat chosen-tribe to be so low that its wearer could not even be called a full Kshatriya. (Tripathi 162)

The metaphorical symbols such as blue throat, Somras, Saraswathi river and deformity of nagas, goat insignia of Daksha prompts the dynamic system of story. The legend of Neelkanth is an indicator that the saviour has emerged.

After reaching Meluha from Tibet Shiva is given a concoction which changes its colour into blue. It is symbolic in the sense that Shiva will eventually quaff the sufferings of humanity. Blue colour indicates poison, in the narrative it symbolises the human inflicted woes on entire humanity. Arrival of the saviour is celebrated and well received by all the people in and out of Meluha. Since all believe that he is the ultimate on whom they can bestow their trust on.

Somras the divine potion is the symbol of human greed. Those who drink it are benefited with long life and they are in a sort becomes immortals. In the desire to possess it in excess, Daksha depletes the natural resources such as river Saraswathi and contaminates Brahma Putra with its effluences. Greed for Somras leads to various conflicts in the story such as the feud between Daksha and Shiva, Naga's connections with Brahaspathy, Sage Brigu plotting to alien with malicious forces to have control over humanity etc. This remains as a predominant symbol which distinctly decides the story line. This symbol enables the hero's journey and his pursuit of evil gets intensified, finally reaching the pinnacle point, where Somras is looming as a giant against humanity. Neelkanth and Somras as symbols contribute to each other. Somras is a cause for Shiva's blue throat and Shiva the Neelkanth is responsible for its extinction. Two paradoxical symbols put together makes the story line stronger enough.

Somras is a metaphor for human desire to be immortal, to wield one's supremacy over the others. Possessing it in excess or the greed to possess it in excess leads to human down fall. Metaphors of similar dimensions are common to all myth narratives. It could either be a magic wand or a magic ring. In the trilogy it is Somras that leads to inexplicable pains inflicted by a vicious on

the virtues, thus prompting the same archetypal clash between good and evil.

Social Symbols refers to Nagas and their challenges remains as a consequence of the stigma or judgemental views of mankind, for someone's fault the stigmatized pay the cost in the name of karma. Rather an imposed karma. The outcasting of the Nagas is also a sort of defence mechanism, the greed to be immortal causes this heavy damage to a set of people. Portrayal of Nagas, a prominent thread in the story by itself is a strong symbolic representation of human greed and folly. The deformities in Nagas are the deformities the society has on its body and face. A few causes this perpetual mark on the society thus pushing it to the state of out casting. A symbol need not always be an object or an animal. It can, even be an issue. In Siva trilogy Nagas and their woes is the symbolic representation of entire humanity, victimising a set of people for the benefit of a particular individual or a group.

The three platforms on which the Meluhan capital is situated is also a symbolic mention of how human consciousness works, though the platforms were built to protect the city and its citizens from danger of flood and enemies, the significance it carries is how the mind has to protect itself from outside potential dangers.

Like all Meluhan cities, Devagiri too was built on giant platforms, an effective protection against floods and a sturdy defence against enemies. However, where Devagiri was different from other Meluhan cities was in its sheer size. The city sprawled over three giant platforms, each of them spreading over three hundred and fifty hectares, significantly larger than other cities. The platforms were nearly eight metres high and were bastioned with giant blocks of cut stone interspaced with baked

bricks. Two of the platforms, named Tamra and Rajat, literally, bronze and silver, were for the common man, whereas the platform named Svarna or gold was the royal citadel. The platforms were connected to each other by tall bridges, made of stones and baked bricks, which rose above the flood plains below. (Tripathi 45)

The symbolic representation of the platforms has a philosophical underpinning to it. A man starting from mere mundane existence to become a master of his needs. Bronze and silver change and react to the external affectations but Gold remains as it is, it never alters its colour so also human conscious, evidently, it is rather a slow and systematic process and also it symbolizes individuation of the self.

A symbol can also be the proper nouns, names of characters. In Shiva trilogy Ganesh is fondly called as "Lord of the people" the Sanskrit name Ganesh

when translated means lover of gunas the tribe of Shiva. Karthik the younger son of Shiva and Sati gets his name from his mother's friend Kartika whom she loves and appreciates more. The name Nandi refers to devotion and love, the character Nandi in the Trilogy reflects the attributes of the name.

### Conclusion

Symbols and schemas provide a larger scope for the development of the story. A metaphor or metonymy makes the narrative grandeur. In Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy the symbols and motifs dominate the narrative leaving enough scope for reader perception. Through these symbols the author's intended message about the social, cultural and personal milieu is well defined and leads to the proper understanding of a particular puranic narrative in a much contemporary colouring. Thus, in addition to diction the symbols and motifs also contributes to a larger extent in the development of a narrative.

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