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P Lukeshwaran
Research Scholar, Department
of English, Maruthupandiyar
College Thanjavur,
Affiliated to Bharathidasan
University Tiruchirappalli,
Tamil Nadu, India

Dr. V Rajendran
Research Advisor, Assistant
Professor, Department of
English, Maruthupandiyar
College Thanjavur, Affiliated
to Bharathidasan University
Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu,
India

Corresponding Author:
P Lukeshwaran
Research Scholar, Department
of English, Maruthupandiyar
College Thanjavur, Affiliated
to Bharathidasan University
Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu,
India

Mythic Resonance and Archetypal Echoes in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

P Lukeshwaran and Dr. V Rajendran

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Abstract

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* presents an intricate interplay of mythology and archetypal patterns that echo deeply within the cultural and psychological frameworks of readers. This paper explores the mythic resonance and archetypal echoes in *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas*, and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, highlighting how Tripathi modernizes ancient myths while preserving their symbolic depth. Through an archetypal lens, this study examines the hero's journey, the presence of Jungian archetypes, and the reinterpretation of Hindu mythology in a contemporary context.

Keywords: Myth, Archetype, Hero's Journey, Amish Tripathi, Shiva Trilogy, Jungian Psychology

Introduction

Myths have long served as repositories of collective wisdom, shaping cultural consciousness across civilizations. Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* states, "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won" (Campbell, 1949, p. 23) ^[5]. Carl Jung's theory of archetypes provides valuable frameworks for analyzing mythic structures in literature, suggesting that "the collective unconscious contains the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution, born anew in the brain structure of every individual" (Jung, 1968, p. 43) ^[6]. Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* transforms the legend of Lord Shiva into a compelling human narrative, blending historical realism with fantastical elements. This study investigates how mythic structures and archetypal motifs operate within the trilogy to create a sense of timeless resonance.

Literature Review

Several studies have explored the significance of myth and archetypes in literature, offering insights into how ancient narratives continue to shape modern storytelling. Campbell's (1949) concept of the monomyth, or the hero's journey, is foundational in understanding Shiva's transformation in Tripathi's works. Jung's (1968) ^[6] theory of archetypes provides a psychological dimension to mythic structures, elucidating recurring motifs such as the hero, the mentor, and the shadow.

Scholars have examined the reinterpretation of Hindu mythology in contemporary fiction. Pattanaik (2013) ^[8] asserts, "Mythology is a map of the human mind. It is not a literal truth, but a metaphorical one" (p. 11). Similarly, Bhattacharjee (2017) ^[4] highlights the fusion of history and mythology in Indian literature, noting how authors like Tripathi reframe divine figures as relatable human protagonists.

Recent research on mythopoeic fiction suggests that retelling myths with contemporary sensibilities allows for a deeper cultural and philosophical engagement. Mukherjee (2020) ^[7] states, "Modern mythopoeic fiction does not merely adapt ancient tales but reinvents them to explore contemporary socio-political realities" (p. 87). This study builds upon these perspectives by analysing how *The Shiva Trilogy* employs mythic resonance and archetypal echoes to create an immersive and thought-provoking narrative.

Mythic Structures in the Shiva Trilogy

Tripathi reconstructs the myth of Shiva by placing him in a historically plausible setting, thereby allowing readers to engage with mythology as a living tradition. The narrative

follows the classical monomyth structure outlined by Campbell, which includes the call to adventure, supernatural aid, trials and tribulations, apotheosis, and the ultimate boon.

- **Call to Adventure:** Shiva, a Tibetan tribal leader, is invited to Meluha, setting him on a transformative journey. As Tripathi (2010) ^[9] writes, “A man becomes a Mahadev not because he desires power, but because he is willing to fight for dharma” (p. 45). This moment marks the beginning of his heroic journey, where an ordinary man is thrust into extraordinary circumstances, a theme prevalent in mythological narratives.
- **Supernatural Aid:** The Somras, a mystical elixir, grants Shiva an extraordinary destiny. “This potion, the Somras, is both a boon and a curse, for it bestows longevity but also sows the seeds of imbalance” (Tripathi, 2011, p. 102) ^[10]. This aligns with the mythic trope of divine intervention, where supernatural forces aid the hero but also bring unforeseen challenges.
- **The Abyss and Transformation:** The revelation of the Nagas and the nature of evil challenge Shiva’s moral and philosophical beliefs. “Evil is not the opposite of good; it is merely the other side of the same coin” (Tripathi, 2012, p. 321). Here, Tripathi challenges binary moral structures, emphasizing that good and evil are subjective, a departure from traditional mythological narratives.
- **The Return:** Shiva’s final battle against evil redefines righteousness and dharma for his people. “True leadership is about understanding the balance between creation and destruction” (Tripathi, 2013, p. 412) ^[11]. This stage reflects the hero’s return to his people with newfound wisdom, a recurring motif in mythic traditions.

Jungian Archetypes in the Trilogy

Jungian psychology identifies recurring archetypes that shape human narratives. The Shiva Trilogy exhibits several archetypes that reinforce its mythic resonance:

- **The Hero (Shiva):** A reluctant warrior turned saviour, Shiva embodies the archetypal hero whose journey leads to self-realization and transformation. “Fate is not what governs us; it is our actions that define our destiny” (Tripathi, 2010, p. 298) ^[9]. This aligns with the mythic notion that destiny is shaped through individual choices.
- **The Wise Old Man (Vasudev Pandits):** These sages guide Shiva with cryptic wisdom, akin to Merlin or Dumbledore in Western mythology. “A man is defined not just by his actions, but by his intent” (Tripathi, 2011, p. 146) ^[10]. Their presence signifies the importance of knowledge and mentorship in mythological journeys.
- **The Shadow (Evil in Society):** Rather than a singular villain, evil is depicted as systemic corruption, aligning with Jung’s notion of the shadow self. “Evil lives within us, not outside. To conquer it, one must first conquer oneself” (Tripathi, 2012, p. 289).
- **The Anima (Sati):** As Shiva’s consort, Sati embodies strength and wisdom, balancing Shiva’s impulsive nature with her composed resilience. “Strength is not in brutality; it is in the courage to do what is right” (Tripathi, 2011, p. 213) ^[10].

Reinterpretation of Hindu Mythology

Tripathi’s approach to myth-making modernizes traditional narratives while retaining their philosophical essence. By humanizing Shiva and presenting him as a mortal with divine potential, the author aligns myth with contemporary ideologies of leadership, morality, and existential struggle. This reinvention allows modern readers to connect with ancient myths beyond religious dogma. “A god is not one who is worshipped, but one who inspires” (Tripathi, 2013, p. 376) ^[11].

Conclusion

The *Shiva Trilogy* exemplifies how myth and archetype remain vital in contemporary storytelling. Through a synthesis of historical realism, mythic structures, and archetypal imagery, Amish Tripathi crafts a narrative that resonates across generations. This study underscores the trilogy’s success in revitalizing ancient mythologies through a modern lens, reaffirming their cultural and psychological significance.

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