



Myths as Moral Pedagogy: Integrating Moral Values Through Shiva Trilogy in Contemporary Retelling

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Abstract:

Stories convey the distinction between right or wrong in a most effective way even from a period prior to the textbooks. In these context mythological narratives plays a crucial role in education as it encapsulates moral and philosophical lessons, guiding individuals towards self-awareness and civic consciousness. This research paper identifies the pedagogical potential of Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy for imparting Ethics, Human Values and Character development qualities in Modern readers. The study explores how understanding the moral complexities, ethical choices, leadership qualities, that has transformed Shiva from a man to divinity, can become a transformative learning experience for holistic education. The reimagination of legendary deity Shiva as a human figure has made it relatable and hence imitable to the younger folks.

Keywords: Education, Ethics, Morality, Shiva Trilogy.

Introduction:

Today's age is scientifically and technologically advanced but, morality is at its decline. Our curriculum must include lessons on morality in addition to academic lessons. Mythological narratives would provide students an access to humanity's most powerful ideas and ideals. Shiva's journey depicts the struggle between Good and Evil, Dharma (righteousness) and Karma (action). Shiva Trilogy reinforces these lessons in a captivating way for modern learners. This paper studies how the Trilogy can be used as a pedagogical instrument for value education, historical insights and cultural grounding. Myths generate vivid imagery and excitement amongst students, creating a captivating learning atmosphere. Myths offer a stage for ideals to emerge, through dramatization of dilemmas, evaluating virtues and introspecting choices. The Trilogy depicts Shiva's search for evil, while exploring the relationship between good and evil, following Dharma and doing his Karma. Shiva's character evolves from an ordinary tribal chief to an extraordinary figure, 'Mahadev'. He is a dynamic friend, a selfless leader, loving and caring husband and father, braver warrior, justice seeker, social reformist and judicious decisionmaker. Amish Tripathi has used the allegory of Somras to put forth his philosophical teachings about the balance between good and evil and the theory of excess.

Good and Evil:

Somras is a medicinal potion invented by Lord Brahma, the greatest Indian scientist, thousands of years before. Consuming it at defined times, postpones death considerably. It also allows one to live his entire life, mentally and physically in the prime of his youth. That is why Somras is also called as the drink of the Gods. This elixir has made Meluhans the smartest people in the universe. It has given them the ability to create the remarkable and nearly perfect Meluhan society. Shiva was told by the Meluhan emperor Daksha that Somras is the greatest Good of their civilization. Over the years it was discovered that Somras has many side-effects. The drying and dying of River Saraswati is directly associated with Somras. If the river ceases to exist, the Meluhan society may also decline along with it. Deforestation and desertification are also associated to Somras. Treatment of Somras toxic waste is another serious issue. The improper waste management has released toxic waste in river Brahmaputra, causing plague and death havoc in Branga region. Birth of Naga babies are also the result of Somras consumption. Consuming Somras for a long time has drastically reduced the birth in Meluha. Shiva Trilogy states that “Good and Evil are two sides of the same coin”. (Tripathi, 2011, P.278). The greater the good, the evil also equally great. The same Somras that has triggered the progress and prosperity of a civilization is also responsible for its inevitable catastrophe.

Theory of Excess:

Shiva Trilogy promotes an old Sanskrit saying from ‘Bhagavad Gita’, “Ati sarvatrarjayet. Excess should be avoided, excess of anything is bad”. (Tripathi, 2013, P.97). We human beings are very greedy. We always desire to extract more and more out of everything. This is the reason why the Somras which is good for some has ended up being bad for others. “Good is not enjoyed excessively. Or else the universe will re-balance itself by creating Evil to counteract Good. That is the purpose of Evil: it balances the Good.” (Tripathi, 2013, P.97) This shows that the true battle between good and bad is fought with us. Unless and until we control our desire, the universe may get completely destroyed.

Karma:

Shiva strongly believes in being the architect of his own destiny. His uncle Manubho, his mentor, played a crucial role in building his character. Shiva recalls a small incident from his childhood, where he left a suffering woman without helping her. This incident distressed him for years. Manubho, taught him to always listen his inner voice for right direction. His taking an action might have changed the situation or might not have. “If you had tried to help her, there is a chance that she would still have suffered. But there is also a chance, however small, that she may have escaped. But if you didn’t even try, there was no chance for her, was there?” (Tripathi, 2011, p143) Since then he always stood by the side of good and fought against any wrong happening around him. Shiva strongly disagrees the theory of Karma extending over many births, as it does not stand on any logical ground. He abolishes the Vikarma law, where a man is marginalised for the sins, he committed in the previous life. Although Shiva Trilogy is a reimagination of a revered Deity, still this Shiva does not believe in magic or super powers, he has entirely rational and logical set of Ideas. “I, don’t believe anything till I’ve seen the proof. For anything without proof, I think we should believe the theory that gives us peace. It doesn’t matter whether the theory is true or not” (Tripathi, 2011, p110). He had a good strategy of happy life. He claims only current life and is committed to good karma. Happiness or suffering is determined by one’s own choice of karma. “I think the Parmatma does not interfere in our lives. He sets the rules by which the universe exists”. (Tripathi, 2013, P.57) The Almighty allows us to make our choices and build our destiny.

Dharma:

Dharma in Shiva Trilogy is duty or righteousness, the moral and ethical choices we make while performing Karma. Swadharma has been given utmost importance in Meluha, a civilization established on the principals

of Lord Ram. He has said that “If you have to choose between my people and dharma, choose dharma. If you have to choose between my family and dharma, choose dharma! Even if you have to choose between me and dharma, always choose dharma!” (Tripathi, 2013, p282). Shiva has chosen the path of Mahadev, to identify and destroy evil. While walking on the path he has to make many personal sacrifices, but he never stepped off. Sati while protecting the weak, many times risked her life and finally offered herself to save Nandi and others. General Parvateshwar is the perfect embodiment of Swadharna. Being a chief of Meluhan army, he finds his Dharma, in protecting his motherland. For that he has to make a choice between his living God Shiva and his country. He finds peace in dying by the hands of his God while serving his motherland. Another character who embraces death, for the sake of Dharma is Meluhan Prime Minister, Kanakhala. To avoid being the part of emperor’s conspiracy of Neelkanth’s assassination, she commits suicide. For her “dharma is that which is well judged by your mind, think deeply about dharma and your mind will tell you what is right”. (Tripathi, 2013, P435)

Indian mythology is more than charming tales of Gods and Goddesses; it is a repository of metaphorical meanings that offer profound wisdom and insight into human nature. Shiva’s journey in the Trilogy from man to Mahadev mirrors the individual’s quest for self- discovery. Progress without sustainability is disastrous. Evil is a strong force. It uses people as an instrument to serve its purpose. The balance between good and evil can be maintained by not being greedy. The concept of Swadharna is central to the novel. Characters adhering to their dharma, even in adversity, teaches the value of upholding righteousness over personal rewards. The symbolic interpretation of the trilogy uplifts it from an interesting story to a medium of imparting life lessons.

Conclusion:

Shiva Trilogy can be read as a moral compass navigating through complexities and ethical dilemmas. Students who read the Trilogy, learn that Evil is not a distant enemy, rather it is excess of good. It can be destroyed by controlling desires. When faced with similar situation students develop the ability to take right decision and its accountability. Exposure to temporal literacy and philosophical insights develop cultural pride. In short, they enjoy an engaging narrative and also learn ethics, human values, sustainable lifestyle, leadership qualities and the timeless relevance of Indian mythology in the contemporary world.

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