

# Tradition and Transformation: Humanizing Myth in The Immortals of Meluha

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**Abstract:** The Shiva Trilogy by Amish Tripathi is a well-known work of mythological fiction in India. The trilogy is a fictionalized euhemeristic treatment of the Shiva stories. This paper explores how Amish Tripathi, in his novel *The Immortals of Meluha*, presents a new way of understanding Indian mythology by combining tradition with modern thinking. Instead of showing Lord Shiva as a powerful god from the beginning, the novel presents him as an ordinary human being who becomes great through his actions and moral choices. This approach helps readers connect more easily with the character and understand that greatness is achieved, not given. The paper argues that this humanization of myth is an important transformation of traditional beliefs, where divine figures are brought closer to human reality. At the same time, important traditional ideas like dharma, karma, and duty are still present, but they are explained in a more practical and flexible way rather than as fixed religious rules.

The study further examines how the novel blends ancient traditions with modern ideas such as science, governance, and social responsibility. For example, the concept of Somras in the story shows both the attraction of immortality and its harmful effects, suggesting that not all traditions are perfect and should be questioned. Through this, Amish Tripathi encourages readers to think critically about tradition instead of blindly following it. The paper concludes that *The Immortals of Meluha* successfully creates a balance between respecting cultural heritage and adapting it for contemporary society.

**Keywords:** *Tradition, Transformation, Mythology, Humanization, Dharma, Karma, Modern Interpretation, Cultural Continuity, Rationality, The Immortals of Meluha, Amish Tripathi*

## I.INTRODUCTION

Indian mythology has always been an important part of the country's cultural and religious tradition,

shaping the beliefs, values, and moral systems of society for centuries. These myths, especially those related to gods like Shiva, have been passed down through texts, rituals, and oral traditions, often presenting divine figures as all-powerful and beyond human limitations. However, in the modern age, there has been a growing interest in revisiting these traditional narratives and interpreting them in new ways that connect with contemporary readers. The word myth is derived from the Greek word "mythos," which means "story" or "word." The explanation of the rhetoric and mythos of science conjures up the reassuring notion of a straight line leading to the truth. This wonderful viewpoint on the present day is admirable. Amish Tripathi, a well-known young personality, has beautifully told a mythological classified version of the Hindu Puran, a new fashionable and exploratory Shiva narrative. His work reflects a shift from blind faith to critical understanding, where tradition is not rejected but reimagined to suit present-day thinking.

The novel *The Immortals of Meluha* is a key example of this transformation. In this text, the traditional image of Lord Shiva is changed from a distant god into a relatable human character who grows into greatness through his actions and decisions. This approach is important because it makes mythology more accessible, especially for younger readers who may find it difficult to connect with purely divine and supernatural portrayals. At the same time, the novel does not completely abandon tradition; instead, it keeps important cultural ideas such as dharma, duty, and morality at its core.

This paper aims to examine how Amish Tripathi successfully blends tradition and transformation in

The Immortals of Meluha by humanizing mythological characters and introducing rational explanations for traditional concepts. It also explores how this reinterpretation encourages readers to question and understand tradition rather than accept it without thought. Through this analysis, the study highlights that mythology is not a fixed or unchanging body of stories but a living tradition that evolves with time. In doing so, the paper argues that the novel plays a significant role in keeping Indian mythology relevant and meaningful in the modern world.

## II.CONCEPT OF TRADITION AND MYTH IN INDIAN CONTEXT

The concept of tradition in the Indian context is deeply rooted in continuity, cultural memory, and collective identity. Tradition is not simply a set of fixed practices handed down from the past; rather, it is a living and evolving process that adapts to changing social, political, and intellectual environments. In India, traditions are preserved through rituals, customs, scriptures, and everyday practices that shape the moral and ethical framework of society. Mythology plays a central role in sustaining this tradition, as it provides narratives that explain the origins of the world, the nature of good and evil, and the duties of individuals within society. These myths are found in ancient texts such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, which have influenced generations through their stories of gods, heroes, and moral dilemmas. As the scholar A. K. Ramanujan observes,

*“No Hindu ever reads the Ramayana or the Mahabharata for the first time,”*

suggesting that these narratives are constantly retold, reinterpreted, and integrated into cultural consciousness across time.

Myth, in the Indian tradition, is not merely a fictional story but a symbolic and philosophical narrative that conveys deeper truths about human existence and cosmic order. It serves as a bridge between the sacred and the everyday, allowing individuals to understand complex ideas such as dharma, karma, and the cycle of life and death. Myths often present gods in human-like situations, dealing with conflicts, emotions, and

ethical choices, which makes them relatable while still preserving their divine significance. At the same time, these narratives reinforce social structures and cultural values, guiding behavior and shaping collective beliefs. As noted by Devdutt Pattanaik,

*“Myth is somebody’s religion in which you no longer believe,”*

highlighting how myths evolve in meaning depending on time and perspective. This view emphasizes that myth is not static; its interpretation changes according to the needs and understanding of each generation.

In the modern era, the relationship between tradition and myth has undergone significant transformation. With the rise of education, scientific thinking, and globalization, traditional beliefs are increasingly being questioned, reinterpreted, and sometimes challenged. However, this does not mean that tradition has lost its importance; instead, it has adapted to remain relevant in a contemporary context. Through reinventing mythical stories in ways that appeal to contemporary audiences while maintaining their cultural core, authors like Amish Tripathi play a critical role in this process. Modern reinterpretations of myths invite readers to interact critically with tradition rather than blindly accept it by presenting them through a logical and human-centered lens. As a result, tradition and myth in the Indian setting continue to be dynamic forces that are continuously altered by the times while retaining their fundamental importance in forming moral understanding and cultural identity.

## III.REINTERPRETATION OF MYTH IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

The reinterpretation of myth in contemporary literature reflects a major transformation in the way traditional narratives are understood, presented, and engaged with in the modern world. In earlier times, myths were largely treated as sacred, authoritative, and unquestionable truths that guided social behavior and religious practices. However, with the rise of modern education, critical thinking, and global exposure, writers have begun to revisit these ancient stories with a fresh perspective. Instead of accepting myths as fixed narratives, contemporary authors approach them as flexible and evolving texts that can be reshaped

according to the needs of present society. This shift has allowed mythology to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world, where readers seek meaning not only in tradition but also in personal experience and rational understanding. As a result, myth in contemporary literature becomes a space for dialogue between the past and the present, tradition and modernity.

One of the most important aspects of this reinterpretation is the humanization of mythological characters. In traditional texts, gods and heroes are often portrayed as perfect, divine beings who exist beyond human limitations and emotions. Contemporary writers, however, present these figures as complex and relatable individuals who face struggles, doubts, and moral conflicts. This transformation helps readers connect with mythological characters on a deeper level, as they begin to see reflections of their own lives and challenges in these stories. A significant example of this approach can be found in the works of Amish Tripathi, especially in *The Immortals of Meluha*, where Lord Shiva is depicted as a tribal leader who gradually becomes a revered figure through his actions and decisions. This portrayal shifts the idea of divinity from something that is inherited to something that is achieved, thereby redefining traditional beliefs in a more accessible and meaningful way.

Another key feature of contemporary mythological reinterpretation is the blending of traditional beliefs with rationality and modern knowledge systems. In today's world, readers are more inclined towards logical explanations and scientific reasoning, and therefore writers often reinterpret supernatural elements in ways that align with these expectations. This does not mean that tradition is rejected; rather, it is adapted to fit the intellectual framework of modern society. In *The Immortals of Meluha*, for instance, the idea of "Somras," which is traditionally associated with immortality, is presented with a more nuanced and critical perspective. It is shown to have both positive and negative effects, raising important questions about ethics, power, and the consequences of human actions. Such reinterpretations encourage readers to think critically about tradition and to understand that cultural practices and beliefs are not always perfect or beyond question.

Furthermore, contemporary literature uses myth as a powerful tool for both cultural preservation and social transformation. By retelling ancient stories in new and engaging ways, modern writers ensure that these narratives continue to live in the cultural imagination of society. At the same time, they introduce new interpretations that challenge established norms and promote progressive ideas. Writers like Amish Tripathi succeed in striking a balance between respecting traditional values and questioning them where necessary. Their works appeal to a wide audience, including younger readers who may not be familiar with classical texts but are interested in stories that resonate with their own experiences and worldview. Through this process, mythology becomes not just a reflection of the past but a dynamic and evolving form of storytelling that adapts to the changing needs of society.

In addition to humanization and rationalization, contemporary reinterpretations of myth often focus on giving voice to marginalized perspectives that were either ignored or underrepresented in traditional narratives. Many modern writers revisit well-known myths to highlight the experiences of women, lower social groups, or minor characters whose stories were previously overshadowed by dominant heroic figures. This shift allows for a more inclusive and diverse understanding of mythology, where multiple viewpoints are acknowledged and explored. By doing so, contemporary literature not only enriches the original narratives but also challenges the hierarchical structures embedded within them. This approach encourages readers to question whose voices are being heard and whose are being silenced, thereby making myth a site of critical inquiry and social reflection.

Myths continue to hold cultural significance, but their meanings are constantly reshaped by new contexts and interpretations. Through the works of authors like Amish Tripathi and texts such as *The Immortals of Meluha*, mythology is brought into conversation with modern ideas of identity, ethics, and rationality. This dynamic engagement ensures that traditional narratives remain relevant and meaningful, allowing them to inspire new generations while also adapting to the realities of contemporary life. In this way, myth continues to serve as a bridge between the past and the

present, offering insights into both cultural heritage and human experience.

#### IV.HUMANIZATION OF SHIVA IN THE IMMORTALS OF MELUHA

The humanization of Lord Shiva in *The Immortals of Meluha* by Amish Tripathi marks a significant departure from traditional mythological portrayals and presents a more relatable and realistic figure. In classical Indian mythology, Shiva is often depicted as a supreme and divine being who exists beyond human emotions and limitations. However, in this novel, Shiva is introduced as an ordinary man, a tribal leader from Mount Kailash, who gradually rises to greatness through his actions and decisions. This transformation plays a central role in the narrative, as it suggests that divinity is not something one is born with, but something that can be achieved through courage, moral strength, and a sense of responsibility. Shiva's personality reflects everyday human qualities, as he enjoys music, companionship, and simple pleasures, which makes him more accessible to modern readers. This portrayal allows readers to see him not just as a distant god, but as someone who shares their struggles and experiences.

The novel further strengthens this humanization by presenting Shiva as a thoughtful and questioning individual rather than an all-knowing divine figure. He does not blindly accept the customs and traditions of Meluha but instead evaluates them critically. His reactions to the rigid social systems, such as the treatment of Vikarma women and the strict caste structure, reveal his deep sense of justice and empathy. Shiva's relationship with Sati also highlights his emotional depth and humanity, as he respects her dignity and challenges the societal norms that label her as impure. His internal conflicts and moral dilemmas show that he is constantly trying to understand what is right and wrong, rather than simply following established rules. This approach makes Shiva a dynamic character whose growth is shaped by experience, reflection, and ethical decision-making.

In addition to Shiva, other characters in the novel contribute to the broader theme of humanization by embodying values such as compassion, courage, and

resistance to injustice. Characters like Sati, Ganesh, and Kali are not portrayed merely as mythological figures but as individuals who actively challenge oppression and support weaker sections of society. Sati, for instance, refuses to accept the limitations imposed on her as a Vikarma woman and demonstrates strength and independence in her actions. Similarly, Ganesh and Kali are shown protecting vulnerable groups and standing against powerful forces that exploit them. Through these characters, the narrative emphasizes that greatness and moral strength are not determined by birth or status but by actions and choices. This collective focus on human values reinforces the idea that mythology can be reinterpreted in a way that highlights ethical responsibility and social awareness.

The theme of humanization is also explored through the depiction of social systems such as the Maika arrangement in Meluha, which reflects both progressive ideals and emotional challenges. While the system promotes equality by ensuring that every child receives the same opportunities regardless of birth, it also raises questions about identity and emotional connection. Shiva's response to this system reveals his deeply human concern for the bond between a mother and her child, as he finds it difficult to accept the idea of separating them immediately after birth. This reaction highlights his ability to balance rational thinking with emotional sensitivity. Through such moments, Amish Tripathi presents Shiva as a character who not only questions societal structures but also seeks to understand their impact on human relationships. Ultimately, the novel portrays Shiva as a figure who embodies both strength and vulnerability, suggesting that true divinity lies in the ability to think, feel, and act with compassion, making him a deeply human and inspiring character for contemporary readers.

#### V.CONCLUSION

Amish Tripathi in *The Immortals of Meluha* successfully transforms the traditional image of Lord Shiva into a deeply human and relatable figure. By portraying Shiva as an ordinary man who rises to greatness through his actions, the novel shifts the idea of divinity from something supernatural to something

achievable through moral strength, courage, and compassion. This humanization makes mythology more accessible to modern readers and encourages them to connect with it on a personal level. At the same time, the narrative does not reject tradition but reinterprets it in a way that aligns with contemporary values and rational thinking. Through its balanced approach, the novel shows that myths are not fixed stories but evolving narratives that continue to hold relevance in changing times, thereby bridging the gap between tradition and modernity.

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