

Ram, Scion of Ikshvaku: A Study of Demytholization

Dr. Sudhir Kumar

Professor, Department of English Ch. Bansi Lal University, Bhiwani (HR.)

E-Mail:sudhir27ckd@gmail.com

Abstract: Amish Tripathi is the new wave in the ocean of writing world. He not only gathers a large audience but also gives life to a genre that is almost dead and forgotten. As the current generation leads to facts and science, the concept like culture and mythology takes the back seat. Mythology is being reduced to the genre for kid's entertainment. The freshness that Amish Tripathi brings in mythology is really appreciable. The mythological writings of Amish Tripathi reach the audience of all ages. The concept of Demytholization is a fruitful experiment of the writer in the mythological stories. The removal of the mythological elements from the established stories is known to be demytholization. The previous Shiva trilogy of the writer arises the concept of demytholization. Lord Shiva is portrayed as human being who reaches to the level of God through his deeds. The same concept is applied to Lord Ram in *Ram; Scion of Ikshvaku*. Lord Ram is a captivating influence on the mind and soul of people. He is the reflection of Indian culture and civilization. The concept of humanization of the major mythological characters is the uniqueness of Amish Tripathi. The aim of the research paper is to realise the concept of demytholization in *Scion of Ikshvaku*.

Keywords: Culture, Mythology, Demytholization, Humanization.

Introduction: The mind and soul of people are captured by the personalities of Ram and Krishna. They belong to the two great epics Ramayana and Mahabharata that are influencing the life for thousands of years. They act as a mirror to culture and civilization. Ramayana means the journey of Ram but when one reads Ramayana, it becomes a journey of the reader towards Ram. The concept of Dharma and moral values can be explored from it. Dharma is not only the established institution of religion but the eternal duty of a person for his family and friends. The character of Ram creates faith among the people through his righteousness. Ram can be treated as an ultimate hero with all the heroic deeds. Ram has become the source of various ideologies. The idealized character of Ram is adapted in poetry, songs, art etc. it has been translated in multiple languages with multiple versions. Different versions represent the social and religious perspectives of the time in which the version is composed. The influence of Ramayana is matchless and no other work can stand in equivalence with it. It can not be contained in a single text as the content is so vast.

The story has been recreated again and again by the writers and poets according to their contemporary situations. it also comes out with number of deviations and variations. The issues of the present world are brought in light through the story of Ramayana. The latest example of such interpretation is *Ram; Scion of Ikshvaku* of Amish Tripathi. It is the first book in the Ram Chandra series of which three books have been published. His uniqueness lies in the formula of demytholization. The major deities of mythology are depicted as human beings in the mortal world. Amish Tripathi expresses his opinion on demytholization in the introduction of Shiva trilogy.

What if Shiva is not a figment of rich imagination, but a person of flesh and blood? Like you and me. A man who rose to become godlike because of his Karma. This is the premise of the Shiva Trilogy, which interprets the rich mythological heritage of ancient India, blending fiction with historical facts.

In religious context, Ram is taken as an incarnation. He is believed to be the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The Lord wants to relieve earth of its burdens so comes on earth as an incarnation. In opinion of Amish Tripathi, the title of Vishnu is achieved through hard work and dedication. Vashishtha is the teacher of Ram and brothers. He considers Ram to be the best suitor for the Vishnuhood. He supposes Ram to be the reliever who will rewrite the history by establishing the idealism. The title of Vishnu is given to the man who fights for the right in the society. the task of previous Vishnu is completed by the next in line. Vashishtha believes Ram to complete all the tasks left by the previous Vishnu, lord Parshuram.

The concept of incarnations is demytholized by Amish Tripathi in the trilogy. In the novel, Ram is not the God but is a prince who is tortured and ostracised from his very birth. Ram is shown to have all kinds of practical dealings. When Ram is born, his father loses a battle for the very first time. The birth is not celebrated as the birth of incarnation. He is supposed to be an ominous child by the father and the state. The realistic portrayal of the birth is shown. There is also a procrastination about the birth of Ram. If he is born before the midday, he would be the pride of the state but if he is born after midday then his life would be an ever-going struggle. The misfortune follows him and he is born on exact midday. The parents confirms that the child is a misfortunate one for the whole clan.

The economic front of the state is deteriorating in the reign of Dashrath. The lifestyle of the people is in the state of decay. The rich and powerful keeps the law in their pockets and mould it according to their needs with impunity. The state is shown in complete contrast to the one in Valmiki and other versions. Valmiki depicts it to

be the most flourished state with proper maintenance of law and order. He shows Dashrath to be a potent and capable leader.

There named a king of name revered,
To country and to town endeared,
Great Dasharatha, good and sage,
Well read in scripture's holy page;
Upon the kingdom's weal intent
Mighty and brave provident;
The pride of old ikshvaku's seed
For lofty thought and righteous deed.

The state of Ayodhya is also depicted in an opposite manner in *Scion of Ikshvaku*. The economy is falling, loot and treachery are going on, rape and molestation are at heights. Amish Tripathi wants to relate the story with the contemporary situation. It might be one of the reasons for him to show Ayodhya in a grim state. It can bring the epic closer to the people of the present age. The older versions keep on sagging with the same glory of Ayodhya. The state is described in beautiful words by R.K. Narayan, "Kosala was an extensive country and a few could claim to have crossed it end to end. Ayodhya was its capital- a city of places, mansions, fountains, squares and ramparts with the king's palace dominating the landscape. The city was imposing and compared well with the fabulous city of Amravati which was Indra's or Alkapuri of Kubera".

The character of Manthara has also a touch of modernity. She is like the new woman of twenty first century. In the older versions of Ramayana, she is portrayed as a hunchback, who brings evil influences. She blindfolds Kaikeyi and make her install Bharata on the throne instead of Ram. She also instigates her to send Ram in exile for fourteen years. In *Scion of Ikshvaku*, Manthara is a strongest businesswoman who trades all over the world. She is born in a poorer family and caught small pox in her childhood. The small pox makes her face discoloured and ugly. She is afflicted with polio also which paralyse her left foot. A splendid career is the result of her unflinching hard work and dedication. She handles all the economy and expenditure of the state.

She has a daughter, Roshni, who is a doctor. She is very dear to Ram and brothers and like sister to them. She is raped brutally by an adult Dhenuka and group. This incident causes a great shock in the everybody's mind. She is a charitable woman who also helps people without expecting anything in return. As Dhenuka is underage and the law cannot punish him harshly so he is left hard hearted by Ram. This incident adds to the rage of Manthara who expects Ram to kill Dhenuka. There is no mention of Roshni and her rape in any of the older versions of Ramayana. This episode may be added by the author to relate the epic in the modern context. The present generation can relate to it in a better way.

The author also deviates to some extent from the traditional images of the brothers. Bharata is shown to be ladies' man, who gets infatuated with beautiful women. The character of Sita is also different in *Scion of Ikshvaku*. She becomes the prime minister of Mithila. She is no longer a weak and meek woman but a warrior who fights to protect her state. Her body has scars like that on a warrior's body. Ram feels her intelligence when he sees her for the first time, "had the entire universe garnered all its talents into creating a perfect face- of delicate beauty and ferocious will- this world be it." (232)

Both Ram and Sita fall in love when they see each other for the first time. She invites Ram and Lakshman to watch the garden of Mithila. They make a conversation and get further impressed by the ideologies of each other. Another deviation is the involvement of Sita in making Ram marry her. She conspires with sage Vishwamitra to persuade Ram to marry her. Vishwamitra also blackmails Ram to use the Asurastra, which is forbidden to use, on the army of Raavan. The voluntary banishment taken by Ram for using the Asurastra is another twist added by Amish Tripathi. The science behind the working of Pushpaka Viman is also the new one. It is not a vehicle that fly with mantras but a proper scientific aeroplane. The convincing and realistic touch is given by the author in his work.

Most of the characters of Amish Tripathi hold some minor or major deviations. The character of Raavan is also touched with modernity. He is a very motivating personality regarding his success and achievements. He rises from the dust and make ways for his success. He becomes the most powerful and rich man in the entire sapt sindhu. He holds all the imports and exports in all the states of sapt sindhu. He loves his brother dearly. He is very proud of himself.

What you term monster is the fire every successful man has within him. A fire that will not let him rest. A fire that drives him to hard work. To be smart. To be restless. Focused. Disciplined. For those are the ingredients of success. That fire is like a monster that will not allow you to lead an ordinary life. What differentiates a successful man and a great man is great man controls the monster.

Conclusion: The efforts of Amish Tripathi to demythologized the epic Ramayana seems to be a productive one. The huge success and large readership are the proof of it. The gods are presented in the human form to bring them closer to humanity. The Ram Chandra series is interwoven in a beautiful manner. The three novels end at the same point where Sita is kidnapped by Raavan. The hyperlink technique also gives a fresh touch to the story. However, the novel leaves certain gaps that are supposed to be filled in the coming fourth and fifth books. The

new state of Ayothya which relates it to the contemporary society directly adds flavour to the story. The incident of gangrape of Roshni also links to the dull circumstances of the present world. The warrior image of Sita is the demand of twenty first century. This portrayal of woman is very suggestive and required one. The image of Raavan also adds new dimension to the story. Raavan is a negative character but the new version presents him as an inspiration. The science and practicality shown by the author suits the present scientific age.

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