Appropriation of Mythology: A Comparative Study of *Immortals of Meluha* and *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu*

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "Appropriation of Mythology: A Comparative Study of *Immortals of Meluha* and *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu"* being submitted to the department of English, School of Languages, Doon University, Dehradun for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Arts, English is my original research work. The Dissertation embodies the result of investigation, observation and analysis carried out by me. I have neither plagiarized any part of the dissertation nor have submitted same work for the award of any degree, diploma or any other similar title.

Shweta Bisht
(VI Semester)

SLE 1062

Certificate

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled "Appropriation of Mythology: A Comparative Study of *Immortals of Meluha* and *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu"* submitted by Ms. Shweta Bisht has been done under my supervision. It is also certified that the work in this Dissertation embodies original research and hard work of the candidate. The assistance and support received during the course of investigation and all the sources of literature have been fully acknowledged

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Abstract

Myths are an integral part of every civilization. Today we are familiar with number of mythologies. Among these are the Greek, Norse, Celtic, Egyptian, Hindu, Buddhist and many more. In recent times, authors are trying to recast and modernize ancient mythologies to make it more relatable to the modern sensibilities. This dissertation undertakes the study of Amish Tripathi's *Immortals of Meluha* and Kevin Missal's *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu* to examine the appropriation of mythology. It seeks to examine to what extent the author has taken inspiration from ancient mythologies and has appropriated it into mythological fiction. The current dissertation is designed as a comparative study that seeks to explore and compare various elements through which both Tripathi and Missal have tried to modernize ancient mythologies. Today's fantasy fiction is very much inspired by ancient mythology and is gaining popularity in India and rest of the world. Works containing mythological elements are receiving positive feedback and immense popularity especially among the youth. Hence a study conducted in this area is significant and relevant.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Myths and mythology form an intricate part of every civilization throughout the world. The word mythology comes from the Greek words mythos = story and logos = speech. According to the definition given by *Oxford Dictionary* "myth is a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of the people or explaining natural or social phenomenon involving supernatural being or phenomenon". Devdutt Pattanaik in his book *Myth = mithya* has given the word myth a new definition that is "subjective truth expressed in stories, symbols and rituals that shape all cultures, Indian or western, ancient or modern, religious or secular" (Pattanaik 4).

For thousands of year people have associated objects in their physical world with the gods and goddesses of their culture. Therefore, mythology is part of almost every culture. The main characters in myths are usually non-human characters such as gods or other supernatural figures. Some also includes humans but set in a supernatural environment. The basic difference between a myth and a legend is that the stories of everyday humans are generally contained in legends whereas myths deal with gods and are set in a world that is different from that of the present.

According to psychiatrist Carl Jung "myth is a necessary aspect of the human psyche which needs to find meaning and order in the world" (Jung 23-24). Myth is created to explain the universal and original onsets, natural marvels or the origin of convections or rituals. Basically, it tries to explain what lies outside a given society's boundaries of explanation.

Over the last years, mythological genre has been gaining immense popularity in India. In India, religion and mythology are inseparable. *Vedas* are the ancient most literature in India and

the vedic literature is known as shruti. *Rigveda* is the oldest veda and consist of Sanskrit hymns devoted to God often worshipped in the form of nature. Later came Jainism, Buddhism and modified form of Hinduism with three major gods also referred to as "Trimurti", Brahma= the creator, Vishnu = the protector, Shiva = the destroyer. Then came *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. These two are India's greatest epics and are believed to be partially based on historical events. These myths & oral traditions are the backbone of Indian writing in English over the period of time. The character of Rama from *Ramayana* has inspired people from different languages and cultures and is part of India's diverse culture. As a result of this diversity, there are more than 300 different versions of *Ramayana*. Asamiya, Maithili, Bengali, Nepali, Naga, Mizo or Odia can all boast of several types of retellings. Many Indian writers are re-writing ancient mythology in the contemporary context. Some of the modern retellings of Ramayana are *Sita* by Bhanumati Narsimhan, Asura by Anand Neelakanthan, Amish Tripathi's *Rama Chandra Series*, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Forest of Enchantments*. All these are modern adaptation of *Ramayana* and are gaining popularity in India in recent times.

The television series *Ramayana* by Ramanand Sagar became the most popular series in Indian television history. The series became successful to the extent that the actors were linked with the roles they played with people giving them the status of God and seeking their blessings. The series was aired again after thirty-three years, on Doordarshan National in March 2020, during the lockdown phase. The same goes with the epic *Mahabharata* authored by Veda Vyasa which is full of greatest life lessons that can be learnt from it. Over the time people have read and interpreted it through different lenses and have used the storyline to create a new innovative retelling. Some of the modern retellings of *Mahabharata* are *Palace of Illusion* by Chitra

Banerjee Divakaruni which gives a fresh perspective of *Mahabharata* from Draupadi's point of view. Another example is *Jaya* by Devdutt Pattanaik which brings a fresh perspective of *Mahabharata* and portrays the conflicts of morals and the complex nature of Dharma. *The Great Indian Novel* by Shashi Tharoor juxtaposes *Mahabharata* with Indian freedom struggle and three decades of post-Independence India. Retelling of mythology is a common practice in literature. The tradition of using myth in literature was initiated by Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In present times, authors are trying to recast and modernize ancient mythology to make it more relatable to the modern sensibilities and specially to make people understand and learn about their culture.

Hindu mythology has overtime continued to remain favoured topic in Indian popular culture. In one of the articles published in *The Hindu*, Amish Tripathi says "I think that the mythology genre has always been the most popular genre in India. This is especially true of books published in Indian languages like Hindi, Tamil, Kannad, Telugu, Marathi, Malayalam, Gujarati, Bengali, besides others" (Daftuar). The *Immortals of Meluha* is the first book of Amish Tripathi's Shiva trilogy series published in 2010. Amish has chosen the most famous god of Hindu mythology lord Shiva, god of gods as his protagonist in Shiva trilogy. He is portrayed as a leader of a tribe who later got transformed as God because of his karma.

Every generation comes with its own way of interpretation. Today we have a long list of mythological works and well-known television series with characters and plot revolving around the ancient mythology. The source is same but the approach to it is different and unique in its way. These modern approaches to mythology have made people especially the youth to take interest in their ancient past. According to mythologist and bestselling author Devdutt Pattanaik

"mythology is subjective truth of people transmitted in sacred stories, while mythic fiction is about reframe or rearguing or reimagining old stories to suit contemporary needs" *(Pattanaik)*. Indian epics and myths hold an important position in literature and their adaptation into fiction by writers such as Amish Tripathi, Ashok Banker and Ashwani Sanghi has boosted the trend of mythological fiction. Kevin Missal is another new name coming in light while talking about the new trend of mythological fiction. Missal wrote his first book at the age of fourteen and at the age of twenty-two became a full-time writer who specifically writes on Hindu mythology. He has authored many books including *Karna: The king of Anga, Yama, Kalki trilogy* and *Hiranyakashyapa: The Narsimha Trilogy. Dharamayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu* is the first book of Kalki trilogy. It is a mythological fiction penned by Kevin and is published by *Fingerprint*.

The recent success of mythological fiction is significant for many reasons. Today's fantasy fiction is rich in mythology. Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson character, C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, the famous *Star Wars* movie, Tolkien's *Lord of Rings* and *The Hobbit* are all famous today and are loaded with characters and stories rooted in mythology. In India also, the spectacular success of *Bahubali*; Sujoy Ghosh's short film *Ahalya* crossing over twenty million *YouTube* views; huge success of India's first mythological thriller *Asur* by *Voot Select*; 2018 period horror movie *Tumbbad* and upcoming bollywood film *Brahmastra* are all inspired by Hindu mythology and are also the indicators of a new wave of creators and consumers especially the youth dipping into the rich well of Hindu mythology. Hence a study conducted in this area is relevant and is need of the modern world.

This dissertation is designed as a comparative study of two mythological fiction novels

that have become one of India's fastest selling novel and have created an impact on the mind of its reader. The research intends to explore some questions such as, to what extent today's fiction is inspired by mythology; why literary works that contains mythological echoes are becoming popular among readers and how mythological fiction has changed the way of people specially the youth to look at mythology and history. However, appropriation of mythology is not always acceptable to audience as their sentiments are connected with it. Therefore, a writer has to be extremely careful while interpreting or redefining a mythology or mythological character that he or she do not hurt the feelings of people. The objective is to explore the role of mythology in modern world and how the audience is perceiving the modern avatars of ancient mythologies.

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Chapter 2

Appropriation of Mythology: A Comparative Study of *Immortals of Meluha*

and *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu*

India has a rich heritage, history and mythology that even Indians themselves are unaware of and these tales are often lost within the archives and still there is so much to be explored. However, writers like Amish Tripathi and Kevin Missal are using their creativity by weaving fresh stories from mythologies and are giving a new life to Indian mythology. Their writings have incited the interest of readers to know about their history and religion. Both Amish Tripathi and Kevin Missal are well known writers especially for their mythological fictions. Nowadays mythological fiction is the most popular genre and have some of the bestselling books in the country. With authors like Tripathi and Missal the genre is gaining recognition worldwide.

Amish Tripathi published his first novel *Immortals of Meluha* in 2010. This is the first book of *Shiva* trilogy followed by other two entitled, *The Secret of Nagas* published in 2011 and *The Oath of Vayuputras* published in 2013 respectively. The trilogy became fastest selling book series in Indian publishing history making him an internationally acclaimed Indian author. After the success of *Shiva* trilogy Amish went on to write the *Ramachandra* series. His novels have been translated into many languages like Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannad, Odia, etc. The movie rights of *Immortals of Meluha* were bought by *Dharma Production* in 2012. Most of Tripathi's books deals with the religious themes. Today Amish Tripathi has established himself as a successful mythological fiction writer in India as well as abroad and also considered to be

India's first literary pop star in the year 2015.

Kevin Missal is an Indian born writer who wrote his first book just at the age of fourteen which was released by the chief minister of Delhi. At the age of twenty-two he became India's one of bestselling authors. His books *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu* and its sequel *Satyoddha Kalki: Eye of Brahma* became a runway success. The series have sold one lakh copies within a year of its release and made him a youth icon in Indian English literature especially the mythological fiction genre. His books also got featured in famous publications like *The Sunday Guardian*, *Millennium Post* and *The New Indian Express* and have termed it as a mythological phenomenon.

 Connecting Ancient Mythology to Modern World

Both Amish Tripathi and Kevin Missal have been fascinated by mythology and almost every work of them has been inspired by mythology. Their work is not totally based on mythology rather they've attempt to recreate the whole Hindu mythology to suit the modern world that tries to find logic and science in everything. Amish's *Immortals of Meluha* is not merely a retelling of ancient myth of Shiva rather a story that provides validation and logic for everything. For example, the use of Somras by the people of Meluha to increase their life span is backed up by a solid scientific explanation, Brahaspati explains to Shiva that, "After a lot of research, Lord Brahma invented the Somras, which when consumed, reacts with the [toxic] oxidants, absorbs them and then expels them from the body as sweat or urine…" (Tripathi 83). This shows that authors understand the scientific temperament of today's audience that finds it difficult to accept something magical or supernatural and provides a logical explanation to the reader.

There are many other instances in the novel that helps reader to connect the world of ancient mythology to the modern world. Also, the author uses many terms such as 'quarantine', 'oxidants', 'family planning', 'immigrant', which forms an important part of today's day to day life. It is also important to note that though the book was published in the year 2010, the term 'quarantine' became popular during the outbreak of coronavirus in the country. People who have migrated from other places had to go for quarantine for some period of time in order to prevent the spread of disease. Likewise, in the novel, Shiva and his tribe has to undergo a sevenday quarantine as they were the immigrants from the foreign land and may have come with new diseases Nandi explains it, "…quarantine is just a precaution. We don't have too many diseases in Meluha. Sometimes, immigrants may come in with new diseases. During this seven-day period, the doctors will observe and cure you of any such ailments" (Tripathi 21).

In *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu* also, Kevin Missal in the starting page of the novel makes it clear to the reader that his work is not a re-adaptation of Kalki purana but a fantasy book that takes inspiration from mythology and is an absolute work of fiction. Therefore, the author introduces various mythological elements from the kalki purana in modern ways. Kevin's portrayal of village as full of scenic beauty and lush green forest and that of a city of Indragarh as "…darkened with smoke and industrial waste from the armoury, mines, dirt and bazaars that occupied the thinnest of lanes" (Missal 88) shows the present time scenario of the village and cities. There's mention of 'panchayat' and 'elaborate judiciary system' which were not present in ancient time and are part of a modern society. Kalki is described in puranas as the tenth and last incarnation of Lord Vishnu who will take birth to end the Kali yuga and the end of Kali yuga will lead to the new beginning of satyuga in the cycle of existence. Therefore, the author took inspiration from the puranas but has created his own plot and character with lots of

twist and turns to make it enjoyable for readers. Both the writers have appropriated the ancient mythologies of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu to suit the modern sensibility of the time.

Portrayal of Protagonist (Shiva and Kalki)

Both Tripathi and Missal unlike mythology have portrayed their hero as a common folk who rose to the status of God only after undergoing a long journey of hard work, pain and sufferings. Shiva in *Immortals of Meluha* is presented as a chief of Guna tribe who resides in the hilly area of Tibet near Lake Mansarovar. He is presented as an ordinary human being who tries his best to save his tribe from the attack of Pakratis, the other local tribe. After getting fed up by daily battles with Pakratis, Shiva along with his tribe immigrates to Meluha. On arriving Meluha Shiva's throat turns blue after taking the somras. Thus, Shiva becomes the Lord Neelkanth whose arrival has been prophesied by the legend of Meluha as their protector against the Chandravanshis. The novel portrays the development of character of Shiva from a person who was initially afraid of his responsibility of being a savior of people of Meluha to a person who gracefully accepted his fate and his karma of protecting the Meluhans.

In Hindu mythology, Shiva is one of the gods in Hindu trinity who governs the universe. He is as described as a destroyer, a revered god, a supreme yogi, an excellent dancer and is worshipped in numbers of other forms. According to the Hindu mythology, Shiva destroys the universe at the end of each cycle of yugas which is then followed by a new creation. However, the author carved his protagonist Shiva in a different way from that presented in the mythology. He introduces him as an ordinary human being with and extraordinary fate. There are also some similarities in the character of Shiva in the novel and the character of Lord Shiva as described in the mythology. In the novel, Shiva is presented as an impeccable dancer. He dances in front of Sati and Guruji and resembles to Natraja. In mythology Lord Shiva is usually depicted as

wearing an animal skin. Likewise, Shiva also wears an animal skin before coming to Meluha. Shiva in the novel is associated with the tribe and is usually portrayed using *chillam*, smoking which is similar to the character of Lord Shiva in mythology who is associated with evil spirits and said to be followed by Ganas who are described as uncivilized beings. Similar to this, when Shiva and his tribe enters Devagiri, capital of Meluha, people of Meluha saw them as unhygienic and uncivilized.

In the novel *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu*, Kalki is the protagonist who is an ordinary boy born in the quiet village of Shambala who has no idea about his power and capabilities. Born to Vishnuyath and Sumati, Kalki lives an ordinary village life until he met with a series of tragedies and battles and learns about him being the fighter of dharma. In Hindu mythology, the only thing that is mentioned is Kalki will be the last and final avatar of Lord Vishnu who will take birth when Kali yuga will be at its peak. There's no story or mention of how Kalki will end Kali yuga. Therefore, author has made this limited information about Kalki and Kali yuga as his base and has created a marvelous literary piece of fiction out of it. Kalki Hari is presented as a common man who has his own flaws like every ordinary person. He has physical strength more than anyone but lacks perseverance and calmness which is needed to destroy the adharma Kali.

Both Tripathi and Missal through their portrayal of the protagonist is emphasizing that every god once was an ordinary man and in order to achieve great status one has to undergo a long journey of hardwork, suffering and losses. There are also some other similarities between both the charcters such as both Shiva and Kalki have their fate related to soma or somras in some or the other way. Soma became an important part of their lives. Shiva's life changed completely

after he drinks somras and that blue throat that gave him the status of God. Likewise, Kalki learnt he got his extraordinary physical strength because of the intake of soma when he was in his mother's womb. He tries his best to prevent the rise of adharma by stopping Kali from taking the soma but failed miserably and ended up losing his loved once. Therefore, soma or somras became an important part of lives of both the heroes and also is the major point around which the plot of both the novel moves.

Portrayal of Female Characters

In Hindu mythology, both gods and goddesses are worshipped and interestingly god is the term used for both male and female. In India, there are festivals such as Navratri celebrating the different forms of goddess Durga. In India worship of goddess dates back to Indus valley civilization where evidence of worship of Matri Devi also known as called as Mother Goddess has been found. In early Vedic age also, women were given equal status with that of men. Women such as Lopamudra, Ghosha, Apala have also contributed in the compilation of *Vedas*. However, condition of women started deteriorating with the passage of time and they became secondary to males. They lost their right to education, their right to marry according to their will, right to take part in public discussion and many more.

The two major Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* shows the condition of women of their time. Sita the heroine of *Ramayana* is portrayed as merely a submissive wife whose very existent is defined by her husband. Even after accompanying Rama, her husband in his whole journey she has to undergo agni pariksha in order to prove her chastity to her own husband. Likewise, Draupadi in *Mahabharata* is portrayed as a wife of Pandavas who follows her husband to the forest despite being a queen herself. Even though she was in love with Arjun and wanted

to marry him only, she could not stand for herself and accepted everything as if she was destined to suffer all her life. Other than these principle female characters, there are number of other female present in these epics who suffer all their life. Kunti, who abandoned her first son Karna because of society's fear; Gandhari who covers her own eyes with a piece of cloth because her husband was blind; Urmila who lives without her husband for fourteen years are just some of the examples. In all these ancient literary works women are presented as sacrificial, submissive and as someone whose very existence revolves around their male counterparts. All these works of ancient time are written by male writers. According to famous critic Elaine Showalter, there are two types of feminist criticism: woman as reader and woman as writer also called as gynocriticism. In the first category, women are just mere consumers of a male produced literature and women is mainly represented in stereotypical roles and is concerned with how patriarchy manipulated the female audience. This representation of the position of women in literary works is a male oriented standard criterion to define women. In this respect, writer Amish Tripathi and Kevin Missal deserve credits as they have totally redefined this concept. They both have created an ideal society in their fictional world by giving equal power and importance to their female characters.

In *Immortals of Meluha,* Ayurvati, Kankhala, Sati and Kritika are some of the major female characters. Each one of these is intelligent, independent and powerful. Portraying such status of women is totally opposite to the traditional role of women. Ancient Indian book *Manusmriti* regarding the role of women states 'the father looks after her during childhood, the husband protects her during her youth and the sons take care of her when she becomes old. Women is never fit for freedom'. However, Amish has created his own version of women independent from what's written in the mythology. His women characters are strong, intelligent

and highly professional. Ayurwati is the first female character introduced in the novel. She is a doctor and is highly respected by the people of Meluha. Describing her Amish writes "her head was shaven clean except for a knotted tuft of hair at the back, called choti. A loose string called a janau was tied from her left shoulder across her torso down to the right side". (Tripathi 21) Her appearance is described similar to that of highly qualified Brahmin male. Therefore, Amish has tied to create a society free of gender biasness. Another important female character in the novel is Sati. She is daughter of King Daksha. Along with her beautiful physical appearance, she is also a fierce warrior. She possesses an unmatched martial skills, courage and wit. Sati is a *vikarma*, an untouchable because she has given birth to a stillborn and lost her husband too. However, she still has courage to move on in life and fall in love again. Thus, by portraying the character of Sati, Amish has again challenged the traditional norms of society and especially the widows.

In *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu* also Kevin Missal presents an altogether different version of women characters. These women along with their physical beauty possess warrior like skills and wit. Lakshmi, Vikoko, Durukti, Ratri and Padma are the major female characters in the novel. Vikoko is presented as trusted general of kali who works along with her brother as a personal bodyguard to kali. She also works as a spy and carries various undercover missions for Kali. Through her character Kevin is breaking the stereotype of only male serving in the army and women are not allowed to perform such task. Lakshmi is another important character in the novel and is also the heroine of the story. She works alongside Kalki in order to save her village from the attack of Rakshas under Durukti. She tries her best to prevent soma from reaching Kali. She gives proof of her intellect and wit by entering the city of Indragarh which was heavily guarded by Nagas. She enters there by making fool of Naga gaurds and got

the weapons from the city they need to fight while giving new creative ideas to villagers to defend themselves from the attack of Rakshasas. She is an ambitious girl who wants to leave her village in order to get education and a better life. But she also has deep love for her village Shambala and she even dies fighting to save her village from the army of Rakshasas. Kevin has presented his female character as deeply patriotic and dutiful. Other female characters mentioned in the novel are Padma whose only goal is to take revenge of her brother's death; Ratri who works as a librarian and has deep knowledge about ancient books, warfare techniques and leads propaganda against the king; Durukti who along with chief Martanja launched an attack on Shambala in order to save her brother's life.

All these women characters have been assigned similar task and standard as that of male and are not depended on anyone. Women are presented as warriors, generals in army, physician, librarian, administrator and many more. There is no such gender biasness in both the novels. Not only Amish Tripathi and Kevin Missal but also a number of other writers like Devdutt Pattanaik, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kane have reinterpreted mythology and have created a world of mythological fiction that fits in the frame of modern society.

Portrayal of Society

In both the novel, society is presented having caste system. In earlier time caste system was known as varna system. According to *Rigveda*, there were four prominent varnas: Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Brahman were placed at the top of hierarchy and are the ones who enjoyed considerable amount of power over societal issue. Kshatriyas are secondary to Brahmanas and are a warrior class. Then came Vaishyas and Shudras who were placed at the bottom of this hierarchy and were the ones who were badly exploited by the upper class. However, in both the novels the caste system is not presented in the form of varna system and is based on the tribe to which people belong. In *Immortals of Meluha* everyone belongs to a certain tribe and wears an amulet on their shoulder as a proof of their tribe. Each tribe had their respective symbols: birds for Brahmins, animals for Kshatriyas, flowers for Vaishyas and fish for Shudras. There's also a concept of 'vikrama' in Meluhan society. The concept of Vikrama is explained as:

> People who have been punished in this birth for the sins of their previous births. Hence they have to live this life out with dignity and tolerate their present suffering with grace. This is the only way they can wipe their karma clean of the sins of their previous births. Vikarma men have their own order of penance and women have a different order. (Tripathi 61)

And if someone touches a vikra ma person then he or she has to undergo the process of shuddhikaran. According to the people of Meluha, if a woman has given birth to a still born child or if person is suffering from an incurable disease, then he or she will be declared as a vikrama. Vikrama people believe that they are suffering because of the sins they committed in their last birth.

In *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu* also Kevin Missal presents an altogether different version of caste system which is different from the varna system of ancient times. In the novel tribal people are referred to as someone belonging to the lower class and are also called as "casteless outcasts" (Missal 15) and Manavs are represented as belonging to upper caste and are the civilized one. However, in *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu*, the caste system is not as important as in the *Immortals of Meluha.*

Tribes

Tribes form an important part of both the novels. In *Immortals of Meluha*, the protagonist Shiva himself is a tribal chief who belongs to Guna tribe and in *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu*, the story starts with the war of tribes against the Manavas. There is mention of various tribes such as Nagas, Yakshas, Rakshasas, Asura, Danavs and constant fight between these tribes forms the major part of the plot. Also, the names and character of tribes are inspired by the Hindu mythology to a large extent. Character of Vasuki, Takshak, Kuvera are all mentioned in Hindu mythology.

Soma or Somras

Soma or somras is an important part of Hindu mythology mentioned in the ninth mandala of *Rigveda* for the first time and is said to have been extracted from the sacred soma plant. Soma was originally believed to have been consumed by gods. Both Tripathi and Missal have used soma or somras in their plots. Though soma is an important part of both the novel around which the whole plot revolves, the explanation behind the origin and use of soma is totally different.

In *Immortals of Meluha,* Amish gives a scientific explanation behind the somras increasing the life span of Meluhans. He explains that the somras removes toxic oxidants from the human body through sweat and urine thus increasing the life of a person. In *Dharmayoddha Kalki: Avatar of Vishnu*, soma is referred to as gift from the gods and is worshipped by the villagers but also provides a logical explanation that "soma caves were nothing but shinny blue stones that had developed due to intense heat and pressure, nothing else. They weren't magical per se", (Missal 39) thereby make it acceptable to his readers.

Both the writers have used modern terminology, modern day slangs and jargons thereby deviating from the traditional way of presenting mythology and making it interesting for the readers.

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Chapter III

Conclusion

The ancient myths and mythologies have always been a source of inspiration for the writers across the world. Retelling and reinterpreting mythologies has always been accepted by readers. In an interview with *The Hindustan Times*, Amish says that "the author of Mahabharata, Ved Vyasa realized that the *Vedas* and Upnishads were very complex to understand, and therefore wrote Mahabharata – a rocking story, to make that ancient wisdom accessible. The concept of communicating philosophies through stories – and multiple interpretations, localization, modernization – is as traditional as the stories themselves" (Dixit).

In modern times of science and development, mythical narratives had been losing their charm. A reader seeks logic and scientific explanation behind everything even in fiction also. It is where writers like Amish Tripathi and Kevin Missal comes, who have taken inspiration from ancient mythologies but have appropriated it according to the needs of present time. Over the last few years, mythological fiction has been gaining immense popularity in India. Most of us already familiar with the mythological stories but merely get any satisfactory explanation for the events that are mentioned in the myths. The events in myths are usually attributed to magic or some other supernatural phenomenon. But today mythological fiction genre offers much more than narrating the ancient tale. Writers use their creativity and try to provide explanation and logic for everything they have written and incite the interest in the reader. This could be one of the reasons why mythological fiction is gaining popularity nowadays.

Mythology also serves as a readymade material available to the writer. He already has the plot and characters and he just have to mold them in accordance with the contemporary time. But sometimes writing of mythological fiction could be a risky work as people are deeply connected to the myths and ancient tale of their respective cultures and are not ready to accept any alterations or appropriation with respect to their ancient texts. Therefore, there are high chances of a work containing mythological elements getting into a controversy or not performing well commercially. This dissertation is a study on how mythologies are appropriated in accordance with the time. The comparative study of Amish Tripathi and Kevin Missal's novel has exposed many similar and different features of both the writers and their novels. Both have used thematic concerns of contemporary time and have creatively woven it with the mythology. They have discussed about tribes and how they are in constant state of war. This issue of tribes is also one of the pressing issues of the present time. Today in most part of the world, tribes are still illiterate and lacks basic facilities. They are at constant war with the state and face the problem of assimilation with the non-tribal population. Other important issues that both the writers touched are class conflict, environmental problems and manufacturing of explosives. In both the novels soma is shown as something that have capability to cause explosions. Therefore, soma can be seen as symbolic of 'uranium' which when used in correct way is helpful in producing the nuclear energy but can also be used to manufacture atomic bomb which has become a major threat in today's time. Both the writers have used simple language and have tried to humanize their mythological characters and are well received by the readers especially the youth. Both the novels enjoyed immense commercial success which is proof of the popularity of the mythological fiction among readers.

This dissertation clearly illustrates how writers are appropriating mythologies in accordance with the present time but also raises the question of to what extent appropriation of mythologies is acceptable to society. To better understand the topic further research can be conducted on to what extent a writer is free to blend his imagination in the work of mythology or are there any restrictions on writer while working on or taking inspiration from the world of mythology.

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