The Reflection of Myth in Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series and Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy

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Abstract

Mythology is considered a pillar of literature. In recent years it has regained its former glory of playing a pivotal role in the field of literature. Mythology and fiction have worked hand-in-hand to create some of the master pieces that of the past. Two such mythological works of the contemporary era are focused to correlate the world of reality and mythology and also to discover the reflection of myth in literature. Mythological works like Odyssey is recounted more as a historical fiction rather than fiction alone. In recent times, a series of novels focusing on the Greek mythology has been published and has achieved great appreciation from audience of all ages; Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series portrays the life of a teenage boy who is a half-blood, half-god and half-human.

Percy Jackson is a normal boy who spends his day being bullied and alone but soon he discovers that he is the son of an ancient god from the Greek myth, this is the plot of the first book from the series of novel and from there the story goes on to elaborate on the protagonist's various endeavors interconnecting both the mythical world and the world as one see. Rick Riordan, an American author is best known for his work, the Percy Jackson series. The author has also taken the effort to portray the Greek Gods in a more sophisticated manner which blurs the line between them being gods or humans. The paper focuses on the inter-relation of the mythical world and the reality from the perspective of the Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson series and Amish Tripathi's, The Shiva trilogy.

Amish Tripathi is an upcoming prolific writer who has gained recognition for his debut novel. God Shiva of the Hindu mythology and unlike the actual myth the whole of novel is from a new and thought-provoking perspective of the writer. The main aim of the paper is to stress on the idea of how the contemporary authors utilize the age-old myth to weave a story that inter-mingles with myth and modern world.

Keywords: Mythology, Reality, Shiva, Gods, Demigod, Trilogy

The reality is formed by the mundanity and confinement of rules and regulations which paves way for a predictable course of action in every aspect of the human world. The mythological world is based on the unpredictability of its actions and also the actions of the characters in it, be it God, human or demigod. The works of Rick Riordan and Percy Jackson series portray the life of a young teenager torn between the real world and the Greek mythical world. Some of the well-known Greek myth is about the adventures of Hercules, the various endeavors the hero, Odysseus has gone through and other such Greek heroes. Rick Riordan attempts at reviving the myth literature and connect it to the modern world. Percy Jackson is a modern-day Greek hero of the Twenty first century. While worrying about his school

grades and homework, the protagonist and his friends have to protect and save both the Greek and modern world from various threats that has its roots in Greek mythology.

The existence of Hindu mythology has brought forth a vast number of Gods into reality in the course of time but there exists the God Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma whom have been accepted by all in unanimous notion. According to the mythology, Lord Shiva is an entity that ever existed and has no beginning or end, according to the legends or myths, he is an omnipotent entity that exists in a level above the humans and though He is said to dwell in the human realm, Shiva is unattainable. Amish Tripathi is an upcoming prolific writer whose debut collection, the Shiva trilogy, brings down the being from the heights of omnipotence to the lands of human nature and emotions. Lord Shiva is portrayed as the leader of a tribe surviving in the harsh weather of the mountains. Furthermore, the writer has taken great interest in vividly detailing the various terrains of India, bringing forth its beauty through words. Along with the imageries of the ancient India the author also portrays the emotional attachment between humans, both related by blood and bonded by act. The relationship that develops between Shiva and Ganesh, the bond between Shiva and Bhadra is an example in the trilogy for bond beyond blood. The balance of myth and reality is well maintained from a historical perspective.

The time line may be different, the myth may be different but the collision of the real-world elements with that of the mythological world is a commonality between the Shiva trilogy and the Percy Jackson series. Rick Riordan is an American writer who spotlights the literature with his well-received and acclaimed fictional work, the Percy Jackson series. Before pursuing writing as a profession Riordan was a professor of English and Social Studies in a school in San Francisco. The germ of an idea for the book and the character Percy Jackson took form in Rick Riordan's mind as a bed time story for his son; his son who was diagnosed with ADHD and Dyslexia gave him the inspiration to portray the title character with the same abilities. Unlike the real world, the world of Percy Jackson is filled with monsters, magic and unexplainable, yet completely normal situations. Furthermore, the author explains how the ancient world exists within the present one, this gives an idea to the young readers that there might actually be a Greek world unseen to those not related to that world.

The author explains that the supernatural incidents occur in present world is shrouded by a "Mist" that allows people unrelated to the ancient world to perceive unnatural occurrences as natural. For instance, the repercussions of a battle between Gods and monsters are shown as a natural calamity in televisions. The author gives somewhat a logical explanation to the novel's inter-relation between American culture and the Greek by saying that the Greek civilization shifts in time to those civilization which is more prominent at that time. The Western civilization was a prominent and globally popular civilization. Similarly, the entrance to the Greek version of hell is located in Hollywood, Las Vegas and other such locations related to the Greek mythology shifted with the Mount Olympus towards the prominent locations in the Western Civilization.

Monsters are an integral part of the Greek for without them the heroes are unable to achieve the great heights of heroism. Rick Riordan's hero too requires monsters to defeat and there they are all the monsters that are popular in the ancient Greek myth. The "Mist", a veil between the mythical world and the real world is not to conceal the aftermaths of the God's wrath alone but it is also used by the

mythical creatures to survive in the plain sight for instance the centaur Chiron who is a known character in Greek myth for training heroes in the past. It plays a prominent role in the Percy Jackson series in molding the protagonist as a proper hero and when not in his centaur form Chiron passes as a man in a wheelchair. Similarly, the monsters too are shrouded by the mist to appear human in public. Another interesting theory Rick Riordan co-relate myth with the real world is about how a food franchise grows in number each day, "The Monsters Donut", a donut shop is simply another franchise that spreads around but according to the half-bloods and those related to the Greek world in this novel that shop is more than a donut shop, it is a nest for monsters. Monsters join together and at times new monsters are born in such nests and each time a new franchise opens up the number of monsters multiply. The author has shown his imaginative prowess but making an insignificant situation and changing it in favor of his work and in turn piquing the interest of the young readers who are encouraged to grow their own imaginative skills. It is imperative to appreciate the works of Rick Riordan for it has widened the doors of fiction by bringing back the myth literature to the present world and to the hands of the future generation who have impressionable minds.

Amish Tripathi's the Shiva trilogy is not simply a repetition of the same old myth rather he has retold the myth in such a manner that it includes logic and reasoning to it which may be validated in the modern world. Another important aspect is its depiction of geographical areas, which is detailed in the novel in lucid style and with elaborate description. This may only be viewed as the author's creative and highly imaginative mind which has recreated the old and forgotten beauty of India. Tripathi has romanticized the Indian land and the age-old Indian culture to bring it to the level of the best culture to ever exist in this planet.

According to the mythology, Shiva is an omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient being who according to the old myths has no beginning, is a being that has ever-existed; to people who try to unravel the mysteries of Shiva, he is literally the essence of the universe. The Shiva trilogy retells the whole myth in such a manner that there is a logical reasoning to all that happen in the novel and so Shiva of the novel series is a human who resides in the mountains of Himalayas but is roguishly handsome and at the same time is filled with insights to knowledge beyond a mountain dwellers sense, this set him aside from rest of the characters "There is only this life; this moment. That is the only thing we can be sure of. Everything else is only theory" (*The Oath of the Vayuputras*, 2013), a saying that resonates with the Shiva of the collection. The Lord Shiva of ancient myth is mentioned in various texts by different names and one of them is 'Neelkanth'. Based on the novel he is seen as the god who would abolish evil from the world and win victory for the Meluhans.

While in the ancient myth, Veerbhadra is an alter-ego of Shiva in the novel. He is the dear friend of Shiva, though minute this point does have its relevance of giving a logical sense to the existence of that character both in the old myth and in the myth written by Amish. Similarly, several other characters in the old myth with alter-ego's play prominent role in the trilogy and their alter-egos are people separate from them. "Whatever appears as the unshakeable truth, its exact opposite may also be true in another context. After all, one's reality is but perception, viewed through various prisms of context." (*The Immortals of Meluha*, 2010) The Shiva trilogy truly connect the mythical world of Hindu with that of the real world in manner that the people of the twenty first century is able accept it and at the same time

reconnect with the Gods of their religion and the author strives to achieve this through the use of science, which is a concept leaning towards modernity.

The modern world is based on scientific theories and fact that has solid proofs to substantiate and back its claim in the world and most people are willing to accept only such theories. Yet in this modern world of ever-changing interests, there are a few people who are willing to accept theories as they are without any reliable proof. In the olden days such theories were popularly known as myth or mythology. It is safe to say that the beginning of myth is through such verbal passing of information without any proof and as time shifted this myth was accepted by people without them demanding for any proof and it is only in the more advanced age, when science came into prominence, people started to question the genuinity of the mythology that have been passed down from generation to generation. It is important to note that the lack of physical evidence is overshadowed by a few people, in today's world, who believe in said myths due to their experience with divinity, is inexplainable and thus in turn such people believe in myths.

There are a greater number of myths in the recent world expanding from wild theories of the Bermuda Triangle to the speculations of alien attack or that the existence of aliens among humans has already happened. One such recently rising theory is that of the 'Matrix', though this paper neither confirms nor denies their existence, the notion of such a society's existence is a much-conversed topic. Even though people do not have any reliable proof they tend to believe in it. Often used as a theme for pop culture, the superhero scenario has had a huge impact in the mindset of the people by which it means at least a few people in the present age believe in the arrival of a being capable of achieving feats unachievable by normal people and basically this had its origins from different types of myths, all of which contained the adventures of humans with extraordinary abilities that set them apart from other humans. While topics such as science and history may have a definite backing, they belong to the black and white zone. They are either black or white but in the matter of myths or legends or any such similar topic they are considered to be in the gray area, between the black and white world of literature. Though the relevance of myth has seen a rise in the recent times there is still the issue of myth being forgotten in the present world due to several reasons and one issue among them is the co-relation of myth to the present world. Those myths may not be co-related with the present are likely to be forgotten, the present matter in the preservation of myth. As it is evident the modern literature has found a way to preserve the myths that would otherwise be lost to them and the prime example for this is the two works considered for analysis. Amish Tripathi and Rick Riordan's works not simply a retelling of the mythology of the ancient times but also the reworking of myth itself into something that is acceptable and validated in the modern world. The Shiva of The Immortals of Meluha and Percy Jackson of Percy Jackson series depict a characteristic of the modern world thinking and this is evident in the novels. In turn, it is viable to conclude that the authors of the novel try to bring in the culture of the mythology to the modern world, a world that tends to forget the myth if they do not have the link to modern world. The mythical world of Shiva or the other Gods is something that one may not picture in their mind since Immortals of Meluha portrays of the story of Shiva with the symbolic lands of India. People have found it easier to picture it in their minds and in turn this familiarity has allowed them to revisit their religion and old beliefs. Both the works elaborate on how myth may be perceived in the modern world. Both authors skillfully blend mythology with modern elements, creating immersive and entertaining narratives that not only entertain

but also provide insightful reflections on human nature, morality, and the eternal struggle between good and evil. The reinterpretation of myths in these series serves as a testament to the timeless appeal of these ancient stories and their ability to adapt to different cultural contexts.

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