



SOCIAL VISTA IN AMISH TRIPATHI' S SHIVA TRILOGY

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ABSTRACT

Pre-Aryan history of India presents a glimpse of the highly civilized race in India. An overlook of Indian civilization can viewed through the Hindu scriptures such as Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Epics, Puranas and other works. The scriptures present Aryans superior while Non Aryans as Dada , Dasyu , fifth Vasna or Shudras, Ati- Shudras and untouchables. One section of Hindu society -Shudra-was badly treated. Among Shudras, 'Nirvasita' were treated even inhumanly. This chapter was pushed at the periphery of Hindu society and they were differently identified by insulting terms in different ages. They were mainly categorized as untouchables. Touching to them was polluting, even their shadows was polluting to the orthodox Hindus. In the modern times, marginal literature relates to the writings belonging to communities and classes living on the margins of the socio - political structures .The Immortals of Meluha, the debut work of the trilogy, asserts the ways of the justification to the people who have been marginalized since ages. The fiction inculcated social conciseness and encourages a novel sense of self esteem. Amish has given a new aroma to his plot. In his Shiva Trilogy, he has explored the pains and frustrations of oppressed people by depicting them in the form of Vikarmas through mythological characters. Through various sufferers in the novel like Sati, Vikarama people, Nagas and physically challenged people, Tripathi generates sympathy and compassion. Shiva, the protagonist, highlights the loopholes even in 'the perfect' culture of the Meluhan. The most ordered and well defined city of Meluha is deformed with some corrupt rules.

INTRODUCTION

The novel opens with a clash between Gunas and Pakratis, two tribes in Tibet. Shiva, a youth from Gunas begins his journey from Mt.Kailash to Meluha and Swadweep in search of better future for his tribe under the supervision of Nandi. Meluha acquaints us to ancient Indian culture especially with its social structure. As usual the Meluhan society has been divided into four categories - Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. In the Bhagavad Gita, chapter 4, verse 13 The Lord says: "The fourfold caste has been created by me according to

PRIYA E.

1P a g e

the differentiation of Guna and Karma". Brahmins represent teachers, lawyers, priests, and other intellectual professionals. The second group Kshatriyas are the warriors and rulers while Vaishyas are craftsmen, traders and business people and finally the Shudras who are the farmers and workers. In this social hierarchy, one caste cannot do another caste's job. Every caste has been allotted a particular amulet. The amulet symbolizing the shoulders of the Parmatma means that the wearer is a Kshatriya. Nandi gives a clear picture of this social structure as:

Well, if the lines are drawn to represent the head of the Parmatma, it would mean the wearer is a Brahmin. The symbol for a Vaishya would be the lines forming a symbol of the thighs of the Parmatma. And the feet of the Parmatma on the amulet would make the wearer a Shudra.(IM 38)

In this way every Meluhan is allotted amulets and ordained symbols. The amulets that categorically represent their castes are supposed to wear round the clock. The Meluhans claim themselves to be the followers of the Suryavanshi kings -the kings who are the descendants of the Sun. They are the devotees of Lord Ram who was a Suryavanshi king. They have firm belief in the teaching of Lord Ram. The rival Swadeepans come from Chandravanshi—the descendants of the moon. The Meluhans believe that these people are crooked, untrustworthy and lazy with no rules, morals and honour. They accuse Chandrvanshis as a blot on humanity. The Chandravanshis along with the Nagas represent the marginalized section of the Meluhan society in the novel. In the Vedantic tradition there is the concept of a natural 'Law of Karma.' The law of karma is similar to the rules of action and reaction in Newton's Law. The results of the law of karma are singular and there cannot be any error in them. The answer to the question, 'why bad things happen to good people?' is 'karma'. The law of karma continues even though an individual may not remember the action that has caused the current reaction. The wheels of karma are driven by the free will and desire of the embodied spirits. The following lines from the text will explain the concept in more detail. 'Now who the bloody hell are the nagas?' asked Shiva. "They are cursed people, my Lord," gasped Nandi. "They are born with hideous deformities because of the sins of their previous births. Deformities like extra hands or horribly misshapen faces."(Immortals of Meluha, 59) ...Deformities like extra hands or misshapen faces...They are not allowed to live in the Sapt Sindhu"(Indus, Saraswati, Yamuna, Ganga Sarayu, Brahmaputra and Narmada).The city of the Nagas exists to the south of Narmada,beyond the border of Meluha land. In a song Naga show the plight of their life and ask a question to God

*"You were my world, my God, my creator
And yet, You abandoned me
I did not seek you. You called me,
And yet, You abandoned me.
I honored You, lived by your rules,*

PRIYA E.

2P a g e

*coloured myself in Your colour
And yet. You abandoned me.
You hurt me, you deserted me,
You failed in your duties,
And yet, I am the monster.
Tell me lord, what can I” (SN 144)*

Besides Chandravanshis and Nagas, there is another category of marginalized people in the novel. This category includes women, old persons and all people having physical deformities. Such people have been termed as Vikarma in the fiction. Vikramas are enslaved groups in Meluha. They are untouchables and never allow touching others. They can be identified with their deformities and mothers of still- born child who are suffered by their ill-fate in life. Any person who touches a Vikrama has to observe Shudhikaran ritual. Shiva enquires about these people and Nandi reports:

Vikarma people, my Lord, are people who have been punished in this birth for the sins of their previous birth. 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 their own order (IM 92-93). Vikrama people have to live with dignity. They have to tolerate their present sufferings with grace. They are considered as outcasts and untouchables. Vikrama men and women have separate orders of penance. Vikrama women have to follow several strict rules:

“They have to pray for forgiveness every month to Lord Agni, the purifying Fire God, though a specifically mandated puja. They are not allowed to marry since they may contaminate others with their bad fate. They are not allowed to touch any person who is not related to them or is not part of their daily life”.(IM 93)

The Vikarma people have been ostracized from the main stream of the society. They are supposed to live a secluded life even they are not allowed to marry since they can contaminate others with their ill fate. Equally they are not allowed to touch any person who is not in their relation or is not part of their daily life. Meluhan ideology has the strategic insight to keep them as their other. If they begin to resist the dominant discourse, it might lead to instability:

“Many such discontented people can become a threat to society as a whole..... if you make a person believe that his misfortune in this birth is due to his sins in his previous birth, he will resign himself to his fate and not vent his fury on society at large” (IM 211).

If a woman gives birth to a still born child, she will be Vikarma because she might have committed some terrible sin in her previous birth. If a man suddenly contracts an incurable disease and gets paralyzed, it means he is punished by the universe for the sins of his previous birth. All these sins of people are decided by the Pandits in the temples. This ridiculous practice of branding a person Vikarma goes on irrespective of any other reason-hereditary, physical disorder or malnutrition whatsoever.

Shiva is captivated by Sati's wonderful dance. Once he touches her elbow to move it to the correct angle. She immediately recoils in horror and says, "Please go for a Shudhikaran, Shiva before nightfall" (IM 103). But Shiva says,

"I am sorry, but I think this system is completely unfair. I have heard that almost one twentieth of the people in Meluha are Vikrama. Are you going to keep so many people as outcast forever? This system needs to change." (IM 212)

Shiva touches Sati but does not undergo the purification ceremony. During his journey to the Meluhan Empire Shiva visits Kotdwaar and happens to see a blind man. That blind person has been marked as a Vikarma by the Meluhans because of his deformity twenty years ago. He is not supposed to touch the Neelkanth. Hence Vikarma people are considered to be the carriers of bad fate in the novel.

The Vikarma people are highly submissive and meek while observing Vikarma rules. They have completely surrendered themselves to the Meluhan social ethics. They have no personal grudge or complain against this social recognition. They believe and are made to believe that their low status is granted by the Almighty himself. This lowness is granted due to their terrible sins of the previous birth. Hence the sanction behind this meanness is supreme or godly. The person who even grumbles against this recognition is considered to be a double sinner. The spectacle of these people in the society is awesome. When the procession of Vikarma women walked silently on, the normally quiet market street becomes almost deathly silent. Though Sati is one of the finest women in Meluha, she is beautiful, honest, straight forward, brave and intelligent; she is declared a Vikarma her only fault is that she has given birth to a still born child. She genuinely believes that she deserves to be a Vikarma and consequent punishment. She strictly adheres to all other rules laid down for Vikarmas. When Sati's aid and confidant Krittika raises question over this system, Sati glares: "Rules are all that I live by. What have I got to do with happiness? Don't ever dare to speak to me about this again." (IM 214).

A Vikarma is normally not allowed to attend a yagna in Meluha. No Vikarma can be on the same platform while a yagna is being conducted. By being on the same platform the princess Sati defiles the yagna according to Tarak, a common Kshatriya. Open objection were raised



on Sati's presence there. It was suggested that she should either move to the other platform of the city or outside the city wall. In this way she was insulted in the public and blamed for polluting the yagna ceremony from far distance. Consequently, she was compelled to invoke the right of Agnipariksha- a trial by fire. Agnipariksha, is a duel unto death that enables a contestant to challenge an unjust tormentor. The duelists have to keep fighting till one person either surrenders or dies. So in this way an innocent woman's life is endangered without her any real mistake for the sake of Meluhan social values. Sati makes no complain against this practice and goes on as usual but her father Daksha feels the pangs of this humiliation and injustice. He says, "It breaks my heart that I cannot give my daughter the happy life that she deserves...that I cannot save her from humiliation that a good soul like her suffers daily. What can I do..." (IM 277).

The Nagas, representatives of the bad fate in the novel have vehemently criticized by Meluhans even if they perform a work of goodness. In the chapter 'Journey through Meluha', the Nagas save two women from the severe attack of the crocodile. While rowing through the sea they hear feminine screams of terror in the air. They instantly involve in the rescue operation without caring their own life. One of the Nagas was coming ashore carrying the other woman's limp body. His clothes were glued to his massive body. The disoriented woman took the crocodile's blood all over his clothes as that of her friend and shrieked, 'what have you done, you beast?' Suddenly she leaps to her feet and fled screaming for help as the Naga was eating her friend.

During his visit to Kotdwaar, Shiva faces an embarrassing situation when a blind man happens to touch him. The man's son feels extremely sorry that because his father was Vikarma. The blind man is treated very harshly by his own son at this and the latter apologizes for the same. The blind man continues to cry while folding his hands in a penitent Namaste. Shiva was shaken by the dignity of the blind man as he still loves a country that has treated him so badly. Thus the blind man represents all physically challenged person of Meluha and a voice of injustice against such people. Drapaku, the son of the blind man was also declared Vikrama along with his father though he was a great warrior. Serious objections were raised by the people against his inclusion in the Meluhan army. They say that fighting is a business that involves none but Kshatriyas. Vikarmas are weak that cannot fight. Later on Drapaku fights very bravely from the Meluhan's side and gets acclaim from all corners.

The Meluhans think that this concept of Vikarma provides stability to the society; it stops people to fight for survival. They believe that if you make a person think that his misfortune in this world is due to his sins in his previous birth, he will resign himself to his fate and not vent his fury on society at large. If that does not happen, many such discontented people can become a threat to the society as whole. Thus freedom for citizens is severely limited with social norms strictly maintained by ideological means and force. Parent-child bonds are deliberately eroded with the child segregated from mother and its identity diluted soon after

its birth. Healthy children are transferred to Maika, while the deformed and disabled ones deported from the kingdom and thus ideal society maintained and prided upon. Only royal class is allowed to keep track of their biological child brought up in Meluha. The country is facing low fertility rates following strict rules prohibiting mothers from reaching out to their children, almost immediately after birth. Except the royal class, children are allotted according to their knowledge and talent to the people of particular class. This intensifies caste discrimination and oppression.

Shiva, the central figure of the novel raises voice against the discrimination and injustice. He challenges 'the perfect' prevalent social order of Meluha. Shiva severely criticizes Meluhan caste system. He wonders that if a person is a warrior, he will not be allowed to trade at the market place. When Sati compels him for instant shudhikaran, he doesn't care much about it because he does not believe in impurity of the Vikarmas. Shiva is stunned to know how Shati was declared Vikarma only due to her giving birth to a still born child. He comments:

That sounds ridiculous to me. A woman could have given birth to a still born child simply because she did not take proper care while she was pregnant. Or it could just be a disease. How can anyone say that she is being punished for the sins of her previous birth? (IM 93).

Shiva doesn't mind touching of the Vikarmas. Shiva is the voice of this group. He always criticized the law of Vikarma. He says,

How illogical this entire concept is ? How can one believe that an innocent child is born with sin ? It is clear as daylight: a new born child has done no wrong. He has done no right either. He has been. He could not have done everything. (The Oath of Vayuputras,55)

In the trilogy Shiva was the only person who always tried to establish the social equality. Laws are unchangeable and they must be followed rigidly. There was no room for ambiguity. The ways of life are unique and inseparable from each other. While focusing on the dual nature of cosmos Amish holds: these are many hundred ways of life in this world. But if you actually distil the ways of people live, there are only two ways: the masculine and the feminine(SN 48). The masculine way of life was "life by laws" and the feminine way of life was "life by probability".

During his visit to Kotdwaar, he steps forward and touches the feet of the blind man, a Vikarma and seeks blessing from him. The whole crowd is spellbound as he openly breaks the Meluhan law.

"The entire crowd was stunned into silence by what the Neelkanth had done.



Forget the gravity of touching a vikarma, the Neelkanth had just asked to be blessed by one....Shiva had broken the law. Broken it brazenly and in public". (IM198)

He resolves to demolish this social structure and comes out as spokesman for the Vikarmas. He brings social reformation in totalitarian society of Meluha. His fulfilling harmonious and progressive life is lived in accordance with Dharma. He marries widowed Sati and promotes evolution that leads nation towards higher state of consciousness. This makes him an enlightened being, Neelkanth. He works as a link between privileged and non –privileged, between king and the subjects. People of Meluha, Swadeep, Branga and Naga become his followers. These people sacrifice their duty (swadharma) for the greater cause- Universal Dharma. Finally Shiva irons out the subjugation of Vikarmas and he brings dignity to the ostracized group.

This plot construction hints up to relate the present scenario. A society is blended with the people of certain group who are suffered with repression and injustice. They should be sheltered in secluded areas and excluded to avail the facilities . The group of people is ruled by the leaders of the society. People of that community are still back in many fields. To reach next level, they have to overcome many hurdles. They are tormented by upper class people. To rescue the pathetic community they are in need of rescuer like Shiva in this story. The scenario has to be changed. By considering the fact, Amish may create Shiva's character. As a writer he brings social reformation in the most ordered society of Meluha through the character of Shiva. Contemporary society also needs such a human to regularize the flagpole our system. Amish tries to emphasize this to us by this novel.

To destroy the domination of renegade Brahmins, Lord Ram has introduced the Maika system. This system never underestimates any particular caste and it helps to avoid all kinds of caste problem. Though Lord Ram has created this astounding system for the benefit of all people, it has some corrupted rules. All pregnant women deliver their babies in Maika without their husband and parents but they have the case of well trained staff. Husbands and parents of royal families exceptional from the rules. After the child birth, the movies has to travel back to her own city. The child is grown up in Meluha Gurukul which is near to Maika. In that Gurukul, each children gets equal education. The recompense their birth are kept confidential with the record keeper of Maika. When they enter the adolescence age, they are provided the Somras to taste. At the age of fifteen, a comprehensive exam is held, on the basis of which castes are allocated. After the allocation, the child has to undergo for a one more year of training, this time caste specific. In line with that, each caste has their own Varna's . Every child is retreated 've the respective caste schools to take up their education. In this way the privileges of caste and fair society is created. Families adopt a child at the age of sixteen according to their request. For example



If some Brahmin parents have applied to adopt a child, one randomly chosen student from Maika, who has won the Brahmic caste in the examination, is allotted to them. The child grows up with these adopted parents as their own child (IM 99).

This system paves way to the astounding and civilized society. In line Whittier Meluhans perception like teachers, lawyers, priests and etc. They are highly talented people. Kshatriyas, who are the warriors and rulers. Vaishyas are craftsmen, traders and business people and finally the Shudras are the farmers and workers. Ultimately, one caste cannot do another castes job.

Indian caste system has the powerful structure. It is designed with the values of the society's beliefs. The caste system is a division of society based on differences of wealth, inherited rank or privilege, profession, occupation or race. The caste system and creation of myth goes hand in hand. Rig Veda and Aryan if Laurence are the best evidence for the blooming of caste system. Society is segregated into four main class levels or Varna's in the caste system, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Ancient myth reveals that each level of caste is created from each body part of Purush. In Hindu myth, Purush is the primal man. To create the boundaries, Purush has destroyed himself. He has dedicated his top to bottom for the creation of the caste system. Brahmins are originated from the head of Purush are acknowledged as the highest bevel of the caste system. By following that Kshatriyas are from hand are having the next position of Brahmins. Vaishyas from his thighs and finally Shudras are created from his feet. So they are considered the profession of the community. With the influence of Aryan, again the caste system has slightly changed and it determined the profession of the community. In addition to that Brahmins are considered to be the priests, Kshatriyas are to be the warriors, Vaishyas are the traders and Shudras serves as labourers. Without myth there is no beginning for caste system. It assists the society to enrich and enhance their fundamentals. Every culture has influenced one another with great impact.

The system has originated with the aim of identifying the skills and to bring out the efficiency of the people. Caste system should felicitate the people. It shouldn't rule them. But now it is polluted and webserver inimitable trouble to the people. A free thinker, Amish tries to explain natural phenomenon with the help me natural causes. Through Shiva Trilogy, Amish has discloses many flaws of the society to us. Amish has tried his hand in resurrecting the mythological themes.

In the Shiva trilogy major concern of Amish is to remove the social inequality or evil and to highlight the inhuman treatment of untouchable peoples. The author is harshly ironical on the snobbery and hypocrisy, ostentation and fabrication of the aristocratic people. In the form of Shiva, Amish is the true voice of the Vikarmas and the Nagas peoples who seem to be like the untouchable and victimized by undeserved tyranny and



injustice from the time immemorial. By the medium of Shiva trilogy he express his great advocacy of the marginalized and defenseless against their age long humiliation, persecution and oppression. Amish has often declared that he has attempted to explore good and evil in his trilogy and in the process has portrayed a human turning into god. After this discussion, it is clear that alongside his declared intention, Amish seems to have taken a torch in his hand to highlight and remove the dead customs and misleading traditions. Through the medium of the Shiva trilogy, Amish shows us a true and clear picture of how we can rectify our errors, misjudgment, tradition and rules of law. All of us have the potential of a 'Mahadev' to enable the destruction of the prevalent caste system provide a new hope and perfect society for the oppressed and victimized people.

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