



# From myth to man: The humanization of gods as a reflection of 21st century social consciousness in shiva trilogy

Dr. Annoo Kumari

Assistant Professor, Department of English, School of Humanities, Starex University, Gurugram, Haryana, India

\*Corresponding Author: Dr. Annoo Kumari

Received 13 March 2026; Accepted 22 Apr 2026; Published 18 May 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64171/JSRD.5.S2.156-159>

## Abstract

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* comprises, *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas*, and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*. It reimagines the Hindu god Shiva not as an eternal divine figure, but as a mortal tribal leader from Tibet who becomes a god through his actions and karma. This approach humanizes ancient myths by adding rational and scientific explanations. Shiva's blue throat comes from consuming toxic Somras. His third eye represents strategic insight. The divine weapons, like the Brahmastra, resemble modern nuclear arms. Tripathi blends Puranic stories with contemporary sensibilities, portraying Shiva as a relatable character dealing with love, anger, doubt, and leadership. These emotions resonate with 21st-century readers. This shift in narrative shows a changing social consciousness and addresses important modern issues. The Somras, which grants longevity, symbolizes environmental harm due to its toxic byproducts. This echoes current concerns over pollution, climate change, and unsustainable development. The conflict between the Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis reflects global tensions like terrorism and cultural clashes. Meanwhile, the end of Vikarma (untouchability) critiques caste discrimination and promotes equality. Issues of migration, globalization, and humanism stress the need for harmony and ethical governance similar to Ram Rajya. Shiva's journey empowers people, suggesting that divinity comes from human potential and moral choices, not from fate. This aligns with secular and rational views during a time of scientific progress and social change.

In the end, the trilogy refreshes mythology as a way to express self-empowerment and social responsibility. It connects ancient wisdom with modern ethics. By humanizing gods, Tripathi encourages reflection on how myths can critique and inspire current thought, promoting a dialogue between tradition and progress in a fast-changing world. The sources of paper is journals and going through some text books like Shiva Trilogy etc.

**Keywords:** Humanization, Mythology, Shiva, Shiva trilogy, Social consciousness, Reimagine

## Introduction

### Research methodology

This study uses a Qualitative and interpretive approach, focusing on textual and contextual analysis. The design is suited for exploring subjective themes like humanization and social reflection, as it allows for in-depth examination of narratives rather than quantifiable data. This research methodology outlines a methodical approach to investigating how Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* (*The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas*, and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*) makes mythological figures like Shiva more human. It shows them as flawed individuals instead of perfect deities. This narrative choice also reflects current social issues like equality, environmentalism, gender dynamics, caste critique, and secularism in 21st-century society. Mythological retellings in contemporary fiction often mix ancient narratives with modern ideas. This design helps analyze how Tripathi demythologizes gods to make them relatable, showing shifts in social awareness toward humanism and rationality.

Primary sources centered on the *Shiva Trilogy* as the main artifact, with comparisons to traditional Hindu mythology (e.g., from the *Shiva Purana*, *Rig Veda*, and *Mahabharata*). Secondary sources encompass scholarly articles and journals.

## Objectives

This paper examined the methods Tripathi uses to humanize gods in the trilogy (e.g., depicting Shiva as a tribal leader with feelings, doubts, and moral dilemmas), also to identify how these humanized portrayals reflect 21st-century social awareness (e.g., anti-caste themes represented by the Suryavanshi-Chandravanshi divide and environmentalism through the Somras as a metaphor for resource exploitation). This research paper juxtaposed Tripathi's retelling with traditional myths to highlight changes in cultural interpretation and evaluates the broader implications for contemporary Indian literature and identity.

## Research questions includes

How does Tripathi use narrative techniques to change mythical gods into human figures?

In what ways do these humanized elements critique or reflect 21st-century social issues like secularism, feminism, and globalization?

What cultural and philosophical ideas support this humanization, and how do they connect with modern humanism?

## Introduction

“A man becomes a Mahadev, only when he fights for good. A Mahadev is not born from his mother's womb. He is forged in the heat of battle, when he wages a war to destroy evil. Har Har Mahadev - All of us are Mahadev.”

— From *The Immortals of Meluha*.

In the realm of modern Indian literature, Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy, which includes *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010), *The Secret of the Nagas* (2011), and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* (2013), reimagines ancient lore through a fresh lens. This series presents Lord Shiva not as an all-powerful, transcendent god but as a human who rises to divine status through his actions, moral dilemmas, and weaknesses. This choice reflects a wider cultural shift in the 21st century, where ancient myths are examined and reformed to connect with today's issues, like environmental sustainability, social justice, ethical dilemmas, and the blend of science with spirituality. Tripathi's work connects the old and the new, encouraging readers to see gods as representations of human desires and societal advancement.

Set in a fictional ancient India around 1900 BCE, during the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization (renamed Meluha in the books), the trilogy follows Shiva, a tribal leader from the Guna tribe in Tibet, who travels to Meluha for safety and prosperity. His journey begins when he is identified as the Neelkanth, the blue-throated savior foretold to eliminate evil. Throughout this adventure, Tripathi demystifies Shiva's legendary traits with scientific explanations. For example, the famous blue throat, usually explained as Shiva swallowing cosmic poison during the ocean's churning (Samudra Manthan), is instead viewed as a physical response to consuming a healing potion meant to fight a plague in his tribe. This perspective removes the supernatural elements and roots the story in believable historical and scientific scenarios.

The way Tripathi humanizes Shiva and other deities reflects the spirit of the 21st century, characterized by secular thought, scientific reasoning, and social activism. In a world facing climate change, identity politics, gender equality, and ethical questions about technology, Tripathi's retelling challenges traditional divine hierarchies. It suggests that divinity is not something innate but is created through good actions and contributions to society, fitting in with theories where myths are seen as exaggerated stories of historical figures. This method represents a "neo-mythic" approach in literature, where ancient tales are revived to critique and discuss present power dynamics, promoting human ideals like empathy, inclusivity, and responsibility.

Critics have observed that Tripathi's trilogy shows a renewed interest in mythological fiction in India, especially among younger audiences, by mixing adventure, romance, and philosophy in a way that's easy to access. However, this humanization has led to debates: while many praise it for making mythology relevant, others argue it may dilute the sacred essence of divine figures, reducing them to simple human archetypes. Still, the series' commercial success selling

over six million copies worldwide—highlights its cultural significance, leading to adaptations in film, television, and graphic novels. This essay will explore how the trilogy humanizes its characters, reflects 21st-century social awareness, philosophical roots, the author's techniques, critical reception, and broader impacts. By breaking down these components, we aim to show how Tripathi uses myth to promote modern reflection, ultimately arguing that humanizing gods makes divinity an achievable ideal for people in uncertain times.

## Discussion

Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy skillfully combines a speculative historical narrative with mythological elements, crafting a world where ancient legends are interpreted through human experiences. The series begins with *The Immortals of Meluha*, introducing Shiva as a tough, battle-tested leader of the Guna tribe from the harsh landscapes of Mount Kailash in Tibet. Escaping constant conflict and searching for stability, Shiva brings his people to Meluha, a thriving empire inspired by the ideals of Lord Ram, known for its engineering feats, fair laws, and merit-based society of Suryavanshis. In contrast, the Chandravanshis are portrayed as artistic yet disorganized, showcasing cultural differences that Tripathi explores to examine social structures.

Upon reaching Meluha, Shiva unwittingly fulfills the Neelkanth prophecy by surviving the effects of Somras, an anti-aging potion that turns his throat blue due to a rare physical reaction. This moment thrusts him into a role he doesn't seek or fully comprehend, setting up his transformation. The Somras, essential to Meluhan longevity and wealth, turns out to be a double-edged sword: while it offers near-immortality, its production creates toxic waste that contaminates rivers and leads to birth defects, giving rise to the Nagas—a secretive, outcast group depicted as "serpent people" in myths but portrayed as victims of environmental damage.

In *The Secret of the Nagas*, the story deepens as Shiva ventures beyond Meluha to explore the complexities of good and evil. Encounters with Naga queen Kali and her son Ganesh—reimagined as noble warriors despite their disfigurements—challenge Shiva's biases and expose systemic injustices. Kali, often seen as a fierce goddess of destruction, is shown as a determined leader fighting for her people's rights, while Ganesh's elephant-like appearance is explained as a surgical adjustment to hide disabilities. This part delves into themes of exclusion, paralleling real challenges like caste discrimination and rights for people with disabilities.

The series concludes with *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, where Shiva teams up with the mysterious Vayuputras, guardians of ancient knowledge, to tackle the moral dilemmas presented by Somras. The climax features a war that questions the ethics of technological advancements, leading to Shiva's choice to destroy the Somras production sites, symbolizing that fighting evil means enacting necessary reforms rather than outright destruction. Throughout, Tripathi weaves philosophical conversations inspired by Hindu texts like the Vedas and

Puranas, but he presents them in rational terms: the Trimurti (Brahma as creator, Vishnu as preserver, Shiva as destroyer) represents the cyclical human roles taken on by exemplary individuals.

Tripathi's writing is engaging, mixing thrilling action scenes, tender romantic moments (especially between Shiva and Sati), and thoughtful reflections. He builds a rich world, incorporating historical details from the Indus Valley Civilization such as city planning and metallurgy while adding elements of fantasy. The series has been praised for its accessibility, making complex mythological ideas understandable for a global audience. As Tripathi mentions in interviews, he aimed to "make mythology cool" for younger people, shifting passive admiration into active interaction. This overview shows how the trilogy's structure helps humanize its characters: Shiva's journey is a classic hero's path, transforming from a reluctant outsider to an enlightened leader, emphasizing that gods are formed through human struggles rather than being born divine.

At the center of the Shiva Trilogy is the deep humanization of Lord Shiva, transforming him from a mythical ascetic with cosmic powers into a mortal hero dealing with everyday emotions and moral challenges. In traditional Hindu stories, Shiva is the eternal yogi and destroyer of worlds, depicted with symbols like the third eye, representing wisdom and destruction, the trident, and the blue throat, originating from Halahal. Tripathi demystifies these images by presenting Shiva as a Tibetan warrior: impulsive, smoking marijuana, passionate in dance and combat, and deeply flawed. His blue throat comes from a medical procedure, not a divine act, fitting with a scientific perspective.

This depiction draws from euhemerism, which suggests that gods were once real people who became legendary. Shiva's psychological depth shows in his self-doubt: "I am no god. I am just a man," he admits, revealing his inner struggles. His journey resembles a coming-of-age story, where missteps like his initial prejudice against the Nagas lead to personal growth. Tripathi highlights emotions: grief over Sati's death, anger at injustice, and challenges of leadership, making Shiva relatable in a time when media heroes, like Tony Stark in Marvel, are often portrayed with flaws.

On a philosophical level, divinity is gained through karma: "A man becomes a Mahadev only when he fights for good. A Mahadev is not born from his mother's womb. He is forged in the heat of battle." This idea resonates with modern individualism, where success is based on merit. Symbols are reinterpreted: the third eye as intuition, the trident as a practical weapon. As an immigrant, Shiva critiques social hierarchies, breaking down the Vikarma system that punishes the deformed, similar to current anti-discrimination movements.

Statements like "Evil is not a person or a nation. It is a set of ideas" illustrate ethical relativism, questioning binary views in today's world. By humanizing Shiva, Tripathi inspires readers to pursue divinity through their actions, reflecting a secular trend where faith becomes personal and pragmatic.

Further exploring this theme, Shiva's humanization extends to his relationships. His love for Sati is depicted with genuine

passion and vulnerability, including moments of jealousy and protectiveness, which make the connection between the divine and human relatable. In battle, Shiva's tactics rely on intelligence rather than miracles, emphasizing the mind over sheer power. This perspective challenges traditional views of theism by suggesting myths arise from human experiences, embellished over time. Some critics argue this approach risks secularizing the sacred, but Tripathi defends it by maintaining spiritual depth through discussions on dharma. Ultimately, Shiva's transformation from myth to man makes the concept of godhood more accessible, reflecting humanistic philosophies that celebrate the potential of humanity.

The humanization in the trilogy extends to a range of mythological characters, creating a narrative where gods are seen as complex people dealing with societal issues. Sati, similar to Parvati, is reimagined as a fierce warrior princess, exhibiting independence and defying patriarchal boundaries. She fights, questions societal norms, and sacrifices herself in battle, reframing the sati ritual as a choice of heroism rather than oppression. This portrayal empowers her, resonating with feminist movements like #MeToo, where women reclaim their agency.

Ganesh and Kali, typically viewed as the elephant-god and destroyer-goddess, are reinterpreted as Nagas—humans affected by mutations caused by Somras. Ganesh's "elephant head" serves as a mask hiding scars, symbolizing acceptance of differences, while Kali's fierce nature arises from righteous anger against exclusion. Their stories address the concept of "othering," reflecting modern issues of racism, ableism, and refugee crises.

Brahma and Vishnu are portrayed as historical figures who took on creative and preservative roles, with Lord Ram depicted as a reformer whose influence shapes Meluha. This collective demystification presents divinity as a social construct, shaped by postmodern theories that deconstruct power dynamics. Through these characters, Tripathi supports pluralism, demonstrating how human flaws can lead to divine legacies in a diverse, interconnected world.

Expanding on this, characters like Daksha, the king of Meluha, humanize authority figures by revealing their ambitions and mistakes, criticizing blind leadership. The Nagas' society, which emphasizes justice despite physical deformities, challenges aesthetic standards and promotes body positivity. Tripathi's reinterpretations face criticism for changing sacred figures, but such storytelling is defended as a way to revitalize myths. Quotes like "People do what their society rewards them to do" emphasize how social structures influence behavior, making even antagonists more relatable. This rich humanization enhances the narrative, allowing mythology to serve as a catalyst for social change.

Tripathi's humanization offers a means to critique contemporary issues, using myth to explore reality. Environmental concerns take center stage; Somras production devastates the Saraswati River, leading to ecological destruction and mutations that parallel climate change and pollution. Shiva's ban on Somras reflects calls for sustainable technologies, similar to those seen in discussions about the Paris Agreement.

Social equality is examined through the Vikarma system, comparable to caste discrimination, which Shiva seeks to dismantle, advocating for equal treatment in line with Dalit rights and affirmative action. Gender issues are highlighted through Sati and Kali, humanizing goddesses to challenge patriarchy, relating to women's empowerment in the #MeToo age.

The blend of science and myth rationalizes miraculous events Somras is viewed as alchemy, and Daivi Astra are seen as ancient nuclear weapons reflecting ongoing debates about faith versus reason found in movements like New Atheism. Ethical dilemmas, such as the "terrorism" linked to Chandravanshi, echo post-9/11 geopolitical contexts, with Shiva learning that evil is rooted in ideology, promoting acceptance amid division. Identity and multiculturalism are woven into Shiva's immigrant journey, bringing together various groups while critiquing nationalism, comparable to the issues raised in India's CAA debates. Subtle critiques of cultural imperialism expose colonial legacies, with Meluha's superiority complex scrutinized. These insights humanize gods, encouraging critical dialogue and using myth as an allegory for change.

To deepen the discussion, the trilogy addresses human nature: "A person's ethics and character are not tested in good times. It is only in bad times that a person shows how steadfast he is to his dharma." This line examines resilience during crises, like pandemics. Politics is analyzed through the faults of empires, offering warnings against unchecked authority. Tripathi's incorporation of modern events such as terrorism after 2000 positions myths as contemporary reflections. Critics suggest this risks anachronism, but it enhances the relevance of the narrative, turning the trilogy into a tool for social awareness.

Philosophically, the trilogy integrates Hindu concepts like karma and dharma into relatable situations, presenting them as practical guidelines. Shiva's divinity through karma aligns with existentialist thought, suggesting meaning arises from choices rather than destiny. Ethical relativism is evident: "There are no bystanders in a dharmayudh - it is a holy war," yet concepts of good and evil depend on context.

The cycle of creation and destruction humanizes cosmic roles, paralleling ethical questions in fields like AI and biotechnology. Tripathi merges Vedanta with humanism, making philosophical ideas accessible, similar to modern mindfulness movements.

Statements like "Stability allows a person the freedom of choice" highlight society's role in fostering personal development. This aspect critiques rigid belief systems, promoting ethical flexibility in a diverse world.

Furthermore, the series explores the tension between free will and fate, with Shiva questioning prophecies, reflecting uncertainties found in quantum science. Viewing evil as "ideas" invites critique of moral ambiguity, showcasing a more complex understanding of ethics.

#### Author's approach and reception

Tripathi, a finance professional turned author, researched extensively. He blends history, science, and myth to attract millennials. His self-publishing journey faced many rejections but highlighted market-driven storytelling.

Reception is mixed. Some praise him for engaging young readers, while others criticize him for taking liberties with history and for humanizing divinity. Regardless, he leads in pop-mythology and influences similar works.

Tripathi's neutrality encourages reader discussions. He creates a space for dialogue, as seen in his exploration of 'virtue' and 'vice.' This method reflects today's interactive storytelling.

#### Broader cultural implications

The humanization in the trilogy has wide-ranging effects. It rekindles global interest in Hindu myths and fosters cultural pride in a time of globalization. It also challenges Orientalist views by showing Indian stories from Indian perspectives. In education, it stimulates conversations about the links between history and myth.

However, some critics warn of possible cultural dilution and call for more balanced reimaginings. Overall, it shows how myths change to reflect society's consciousness.

#### Conclusion

The Shiva Trilogy's humanization of gods goes beyond simple storytelling. It acts as a deep reflection of 21st-century social awareness. By turning myths into human stories, Tripathi tackles urgent topics from environmental sustainability to social justice encouraging readers to envision a better world. This method revitalizes Indian mythology and supports essential human values for modern society. As global challenges grow, such literature reminds us that our divine potential lies in our shared actions, connecting the past with the present.

#### References

1. Tripathi A. The immortals of Meluha. New Delhi: Westland Press; 2010.
2. Tripathi A. The secret of the Nagas. New Delhi: Westland Press; 2011.
3. Tripathi A. The oath of the Vayuputras. New Delhi: Westland Press; 2013.
4. Humanizing the divine in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy. International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT). n.d.
5. Twenty-first century imagination in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy. Dialog. n.d.
6. The act of humanizing gods in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy. YMER. n.d.
7. Humanization of mythical Shiva. Academia.edu. n.d.
8. A critical study of Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy. Journaloi. n.d.
9. Beyond myth: The human face of "Shiva" in Amish Tripathi's trilogy. International Journal of Development Studies and Social Sciences for Humanity (IJDSSH). n.d.
10. Analyzing mythological reinterpretation in Amish Tripathi's works. Journal of Information Systems Engineering and Management (JISEM). n.d.
11. Mythical paradigms in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy. AIIR Journal. n.d.