

SHIVA IN POPULAR CULTURE: READING AMISH AND DEVDUTT PATTANAIK

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I (Ms. Saroj Bala), Roll No. 2K18/PHDHU/505 student of PhD. (English), hereby declare that the project Dissertation titled **“Shiva in Popular Culture: Reading Amish and Devdutt Pattanaik”** which is submitted by me to the Department of Humanities, Delhi Technological University, Delhi in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree PhD, is original and not copied from any source without proper citation. This work has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma Associateship, Fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

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Certified that **Ms Saroj Bala (2K18/PHDHU/505)** has carried out her search work presented in this thesis entitled **“Shiva in Popular Culture: Reading Amish and Devdutt Pattanaik”** for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy** from Delhi Technological University of Technology, Delhi-42, under my supervision. The thesis embodies results of original work, and studies are carried out by the student herself and the contents of the thesis do not form the basis for the award of any other degree to the candidate or to anybody else from this or any other University/Institution.

Signature

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Date: 24th January 2024

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ABSTRACT

“The essence of all mantras consists in letters or sounds, (and) the essence of all letters or sounds is Shiva”

Pratyabhigyanhridayam

The study deals with the legend of Shiva in popular culture and literature with special reference to the two most popular writers of our time, Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik. The thrust of their works has Shiva mythology at its centre which delves into the problematics of contemporisation for addressing current problems of the world. However, there is a substantial corpus of books on the legend of Shiva where he has been reimagined and represented in various forms keeping in view the tempo and tenor of representations, Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik revisited the Shiva mythology to proclaim its existential utility in a contemporaneous landscape awash with crises unique to the times. Despite an abundance of literature, primary and secondary, available on Shiva, there is an apparent dearth of a critical study that examines the representations of Shiva in the cultural frame of reference taking up the works of two different genres attempted by Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik respectively. The study titled **Shiva in Popular Culture: Reading Amish and Devdutt Pattanaik** is an endeavour in the direction of a comparative study of the two well-known authors who have gained phenomenal success in the field of popular culture and literature.

Mythology has become part of popular culture which can be seen in visual media with serials like *Vighnharta Ganesh*, *Sankatmochan Mahabali*, *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev*, *Mahabharat*, *Ramayana*, *Sankat Mochan Hanuman*, *Siya Ke Ram*, *Baal Shiva*, *Karamphal Data Shani*,

Radha Krishna, Suryaputra Karn etc. to name a few. Mythological fiction is one of the genres of popular literature and the sway of this genre can be seen in the works of Ashok Banker, Anand Neelakantan, Chitra Divakaruni, Amish Tripathi, Devdutt Pattanaik, and Kavita Kane to name a few. Besides entertainment, these retellings of epics, characters, and episodes serve as a moral guide for the readers facing a peculiar paradox of choice in today's time. Moreover, with the advent of generative AI, such literature is particularly significant in reminding us of the utility of our ancient wisdom in resolving grave socio-cultural issues. The proliferation of mythological fiction in different Indian languages and its absorption by visual media is a new trend sweeping in its reach and impact. This new trendsetter in Indian Writing in English has created waves and attracted writers to revisit mythology from an uber-modern perspective. The thesis speculates on the various cultural and socio-economic dynamics for the proliferation of mythological fiction from the second decade of the millennium by eclectically applying ideas from several theories like popular culture theory, subaltern theory, post-feminism, post-diaspora, and ecocriticism. Retellings of legends are triggered as much by critical requirements as by the creative verve of the authors. The protagonist of their selected works is highlighted in the context of popular culture. The legend of Shiva is revisited and re-represented by both authors in different genres. Amish Tripathi's Shiva is an ordinary tribal chief of the Guna tribe who is frustrated by the frequent attacks of a rival tribe which makes him agree to leave his native land along with his tribe to migrate to Meluha for a safer life. His destiny takes him to Meluha, a near-perfect Kingdom of the Sapt Sindhu region. Shiva is given a superhuman role to eradicate evil and help marginalized people which eventually leads to his being deified with time by the people of India. The shrewd king Daksha of Meluha is in search of the Neelkanth, the legendary saviour who will save Meluha from their rivals. When Shiva's neck turns blue after Somras is injected into his body he is declared to be the long-awaited Neelkanth who will save Suryavanshis/Meluhans from their

enemy Chandravanshis and Nagas. He fights against the evil of Somras which harms the environment and causes cancer, plague and physical deformities in children. In his journey as a saviour, he includes Vikarmas and Nagas into the mainstream of society and disowns King Daksha who abandoned his own children for power and pelf. In his struggle after great personal loss and disillusion, he fights against evil and attains godhood. Pattanaik's Shiva is not fictional he is from the scriptures and epics but his way of interpreting the legend of Shiva is tinged with the influence of Western writers like Stella Kramrich and Wendy Doniger. In his three books on the legend of Shiva, he has interpreted abstract concepts in simple language for the uninitiated readers who cannot understand Sanskrit texts. His Shiva is kind to everyone, from ascetics to hunters, gods to Asuras, divine to humans, he obliges them with boons without any prejudices.

Although a substantial volume of works on the representation of Shiva is available an integrated critical work of the two authors with different genres is hardly available. The proposed study intends to fill this gap of critical requirement by critiquing the two popular authors on Shiva, namely Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik. As such, the larger rationale of the study is marked by the need to analyse the treatment of modern-day problems like environmental crisis, identity politics, parenthood, and discrimination based on caste, culture, and physical features as contained in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*. The study has also attempted to gauge the extent and impact of rendering mythological fiction to fulfill purely commercial objectives at the expense of the essential principles that form the very core of these popular texts.

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DEDICATED TO

MY DEAR PARENTS

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

“Whose heart was compassion incarnate,

Mounted the bull

And appeared on the Ariel highway

With His matted locks, the Nursery of the Moon.

Trailing behind Him.”

The Periyapuram (571)

World Literature has always been enriched with traces of mythology in it. All the genres irrespective of age, culture, and language carry grains of mythological elements, making them more appealing to viewers/readers. Indian literature has also taken themes and stories from the epics, Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, and other scriptures. These have contributed to Southeast Asia's classical and popular literature and culture. A country's popular culture includes its traditions, customs, languages, literature, fads in different spheres, folk songs, beliefs, gods and goddesses, etc. Popular literature and popular culture are both interrelated as they are complementary to each other. Recently, popular literature across the globe belonging to Indian English writing has acquired a special status with allusions to our rich mythology. A considerable magnitude of literature coming from the West has exploited Indian myths and characters lending them a new direction and dimensions for example T. S. Eliot has contributed to the classical and popular literature and culture of Southeast Asia. He

has made extensive use of Indian mythology in his works thereby putting a stamp on the eternal relevance of it in our spiritual life. Diaspora writers are also using myths to describe different shades of displacement, nostalgia, and rootlessness. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, and other diaspora writers produce mythological fiction with characters and stories from Indian mythology. Innumerable literary works of regional languages of India have also used mythological episodes as the central base of the narratives, plots, and sub-plots of their works. Indian mythology has inspired writers and directors to retell myths in a modernised context for popularity and lucre and to find solutions for recent issues as well. Moumita Mukherjee (2020) in this context clarifies writers' intention to use myths:

Myths have been used by the authors as a significant tool to expose some crucial debates of contemporary India. Through myth narratives, authors have found a new way to express and discuss multiple issues like casteism, poverty, men-women relationships, economic inequalities, social injustice, extinction of cultural rituals, the problematic of non-secularism, scientific horrors, politics, diseases, and communal riots, various movements, extinction of cultural heritage, freedom movement and so on (14).

Consequently, there has been a surge of re-visiting, re-telling, and re-imagining of the myths with contemporary problems and perspectives. The proliferation of mythological fiction in different Indian languages has also introduced a new trend that is being absorbed by visual media. Chatterjee (2017) finds that "Fictional writing offers itself as a paradigmatic object of analysis in this respect not only because its highly absorbing quality allows us to observe the ways in which a number of other cultural discourses and forms of knowledge come together to blend or clash with or to de-essentialize one another." (73)

In the current era of globalization, the perpetual demand in media for mythology and its fictionalized version has aroused interest in the original epics and ancient literature. Mandal (2016) declares that “In this way, the neo-mythical writers have structured a parallel domain of logic and reason, which offers a fresh and alternative outlook to our past. The intertextual references make the reading as well as the interpretation even more pleasurable” (63). This new trendsetter in Indian Writing in English is creating waves and attracting writers to revisit mythology from a modern perspective. All media platforms are flooded with mythology, be it fiction, YouTube videos, TV serials, or Web series. According to the taste of readers, myths are being moulded and revised to increase the TRP of the program/serial on TV and OTT platforms. Dwivedi (2020) claims that “The newer representations are essentially assertive and intended to protest and disown the earlier narratives. In the process, they emerge as a counter-discourse for the critical thinkers in the contemporary time” (34). The poetics and politics of these writings in the present century need even more exploration, keeping in mind the complexities of the myths’ hidden layers. Many questions related to the upsurge of interest in mythology seek suitable reasons which are answered in this work. In the era of new-age technology and hyper-globalization, why this new genre is becoming part of popular literature and culture? What has triggered the interest of young readers who are generally interested in Western culture and lifestyle? How does the agency of culture refine their understanding of life? This study has answered these questions regarding mythological writers and their famous works with special emphasis on Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik whose books on Shiva revisit the legend of Shiva in the modern context.

The word **Shiva** means ‘The auspicious one’ and his other popular name **Mahadev** stands for the great God who is the god of all gods. He is one of the deities of the Trinity which is called the Trimurti. The supreme divinity of the trinity comprises Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva that has pre-Vedic roots. Sharma (2016) states that “The worship of Shiva or Rudra goes back to

the Vedas. In the Yajurveda, we have the Shatrudriya. The Taittiriya Aranyaka tells us that the whole universe is the manifestation of Rudra” (386). He creates, protects, and transforms the universe as the supreme Lord. Shiva is also one of the five deities of the Panchayatana puja of the Smarta tradition which has five principal deities equivalent in power and popularity. The benevolent and fearsome aspects of Shiva are depicted in calendar art across India and neighbouring countries that are popularised by Pattanaik in his books. The benevolent aspect represents an omniscient yogi and ascetic residing on Mount Kailash who is a householder as well with goddess Parvati as his wife and two sons, Ganesh and Kartikeya. His fierce aspect portrays him as a demon slayer for the protection of the gods and the universe. He is also an Adiyogi, the patron god of Arts, Yoga, and Meditation which paves the way for salvation. His five-syllabled Panchakshar mantra (*Om Namah Shivay*) is very popular among the masses for attaining peace and prosperity. His physical form consists of five mantras which are called Panchbrahman. The five-faced god has five forms: Sadyujata, Vamadeva, Aghora, Tatpurasa, and Isana. Stella Kramrich, a famous Indologist has described these transcendent categories as the cause of all that exists and Shiva as an ultimate reality. Shiva is ubiquitous in Indian mythology and religious literature of Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. Epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* contain details of His grandeur and hymns associated with His worship. The Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads are full of details about his life and exploits, proving his supremacy and uniqueness among the gods. Literature of the Indian sub-continent and countries, with a significant Hindu population, has stories and anecdotes related to his democratic ideals and indifference towards the material world, making him a very popular religious icon worldwide. In contemporary literature, he is fictionalized as superhuman for setting standards of goodness and virtuosity. Popular culture portrays him as a family man with many ups and downs in his life journey. The TV serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* is the best example of his popularity, in our time, among the masses

which has appealed to all age groups in society. Shiva is not limited to the scriptures and literature of India but we find his name in Western literature, cartoons, and animation also. This fascination for his peculiar persona can be traced in the contemporary popular literature in books like *Age of Shiva* (2014) written by James Lovegrove who is a New York Times best-selling author. An Indian-origin Maryland-based author Manil Suri (2008) has also written a trilogy by the title *The Age of Shiva*. Mythological figures have always attracted writers from all civilisations/cultures of the world. *Percy Jackson series* (2005) is a recent example of mythology-driven fiction that has gained huge popularity the world over. ‘*Circe*’ (2018) and ‘*The Song of Achilles*’ (2011) by Madeline Miller are also very famous works of the same kind.

Ashok Banker, Ashwin Sanghi, Devdutt Pattanaik, Nilanjan P Chaudhari, Anand Neelakantan, Amish Tripathi, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kane, and many other writers have fictionalized myths to make them more interesting and acceptable to the modern readers. **Ashok Kumar Banker** is the pioneer of the extremely popular genre of mythological fiction. He is also the most voluminous of these writers with his characters submerged in contemporary colours. Banker, an internationally acclaimed contemporary author, and screenwriter has started the tradition of mythological retellings with his eight volumes of ‘*The Ramayana Series*’ (2003-2012). The resurgence of Indian mythology in the Indian publishing industry owes a lot to writers like him for retellings of the *Ramayana* and other epics. The set of eight books on the *Ramayana* is *Prince of Ayodhya* (2003), *Siege of Mithila* (2003), *Demons of Chitrakut* (2004), *Armies of Hanuman* (2005), *Bridge of Rama* (2005), *King of Ayodhya* (2006), *Vengeance of Ravana* (2011), and *Sons of Sita* (2012). Over seventy volumes are placed in his Epic India Library which comprises myths, legends, and history of India, modified in a contemporary context for the entertainment of the readers. **Ramesh Menon** in his *Krishna-The Blue God* (2000) has presented Lord Krishna’s story in a

refreshing style of lyrical prose to express the beauty and mesmerising details of the deity. The author has also tried to make this spiritual literary classic available to the readers of old as well as new generations. He has succeeded in his attempt to capture the magnitude of the original scriptures and present their content in a more secular and effective way. **Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's** books on Draupadi in *The Palace of Illusions* (2009) and Sita in *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019) serve as feminist retellings of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* through the eyes of Draupadi and Sita respectively. Their layered characters show their inner strength to fight against the injustices hurled upon them during tough circumstances. Divakaruni's narrative style of 'story within a story,' is also noticeable as it evolves and operates myths in a feminine context. **Anand Neelakantan** glorifies the villain of the *Ramayana* in his book *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* (2012) by portraying him as a human being with flaws and aspirations. As a young leader of the Asura clan, his point of view is highlighted and his stand on different matters is justified. *The Difficulty of Being Good: On the Subtle Art of Dharma* (2012) by **Gurucharan Das** and *Duryodhana* (2014) by **V Ramanathan** also try to identify the articulations of villains of these stories. Issues of Dharma and morality described in Hindu ethics are raised with a contemporary perspective to justify the stand of different characters. **Devdutt Pattanaik's** *Shikhandi and Other Tales, They Don't Tell You* (2014) and *The Pregnant King* (2008) reflect the marginalized voices of the great epics. His book *Jaya* (2010) is his interpretation of the *Mahabharata* in which the narrative employs many folks and regional variants of the *Mahabharata* like the 'Pandavani', 'Gondhal' of Maharashtra, 'Terukuttu' of Tamil Nadu, and 'Yakshagana' of Karnataka. It also has rich illustrations with sketches by the author himself. Pattanaik in his book on *Sita* (2013) illustrates the *Ramayana*, from many oral, visual, and written retellings composed at different times. The book portrays the layered personality of Ram through the various stages in Sita's life and the roles she plays. Pattanaik has tried to understand the metaphorical

meaning hidden in Indian myth. His *Myth=Mythya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology* (2006) is an attempt to uncover the philosophical meaning laced in literary and artistic expression in Indian culture. He interprets the hidden meaning in Hindu paintings and culture and expresses it through his *7 Secrets series* which includes *7 Secrets of Shiva* (2017), *7 Secrets of Vishnu* (2011), and *7 Secrets of Hindu Calendar Art* (2022). In **M. T. Vasudevan Nair's** *Randamoozham* (1984), the entire *Mahabharata* is narrated as a historical tale in the first person, from Bhima's perspective. Although Bhima is known for his valour, Arjuna or Yudhisthira always gets attention. The book talks about his joys, angst, and frustrations as he is unable to swallow the uncompromising expectations of a 'warrior'. **Ashwin Sanghi** is yet another successful writer of this genre who has tried to follow extremely successful Western author Dan Brown by adding mystery and suspense to his mythological fiction. His book *The Krishna Key* (2012) is the story of Vishnu (Krishna) in modern flavour. An invaluable possession of Krishna, which is in Dwarka, and a temple in Vrindavan which was destroyed by Aurangzeb are quested by a historian. *Thundergod: The Ascendance of Indra* is the first novel of the 'Vedic Trilogy' (2012) by **Rajiv G Menon** in which the protagonist is the god Indra who is generally portrayed as a power-thirsty, selfish, and cowardly god. The land was won by the leader of Devas, from the Euphrates River to the Harappa to establish the Aryans in the Indus Valley. Popuri Lalitha Kumari popularly known as **Volga's** book *Liberation of Sita* (2016) translated from Telugu by T. Vijay Kumar and C. Vijayasree is among many retellings written on the character of Sita by other authors, this one is certainly one of the most important ones for its unique portrayal of the protagonist. Volga's Sita sees herself in the grand design of life and destiny. Her relationships with other women characters like Urmila, Surpankha, and Renuka are narrated from a fresh perspective which adds more vitality to these characters. Her modern version of the *Ramayana* stands out for its different approach to the feminine aspect of dealing with the power praxis. **Kavita Kane** is also

famous for the same reasons as she has also written her novels on the marginal women characters of Hindu mythology. Her forte is the neglected or lesser-known characters that were not considered important enough to be given a reasonable space in the epic. These voiceless and marginalized women avoided by the mainstream narratives are empowered through self-representation in her books. The subversion of patriarchal narratives in this kind of representation is welcomed and appreciated by critics and readers as they feel and experience the same emotions. Some of her books are *Lanka's Princess* (2016), *Karna's Wife: The Outcast's Queen* (2013), *Sita's Sister* (2014), *Menaka's Choice* (2015), *The Fisher Queen's Dynasty* (2017), *Ahalya's Awakening* (2019), and *Saraswati's Gift* (2021). *Dharmyoddha Kalki* (2018) by **Kevin Missal** is the story of the tenth avatar of Vishnu, Kalki who tells the story of a sheltered boy who finds himself at the mercy of destiny which he must fulfil. At the age of twenty-one, Kevin Missal wrote this book which is full of politics, fantasy, and betrayals which make the plot engaging and realistic. **Arshia Sattar's** books on mythological themes are, *Uttara: The Book of Answers* (2019), *Valmiki's Ramayana* (2019), and *Maryada: Searching for Dharma in the Ramayana* (2020). *The Pandava Series* (2018-2022) by **Roshani Chokshi** has the touch of Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson*. The twelve-year-old Aru Shah's first-person story explores the land of the dead where Pandavas in their reincarnations can be found. The book is meant for children, who prefer to read Indian mythology books and enjoy the adventure and suspense. Aru's family, unfortunately, launches a chain of events when Aru lights up a lamp that is cursed. It wakes up the sleeping demon and a series of events start new happenings. Imagination and suspense are woven into the tale to make the story thrilling for the children. *Arjuna: Saga of a Pandava Warrior-Prince* (2013) by **Anuja Chandramouli** is based on the most popular Pandava, who plays an unforgettable role in the saga of the *Mahabharata*. As the protagonist, he focuses on the actual greatness of Lord Krishna's extraordinary charisma. The book also highlights the

flaws and human side of godly Pandavas. Besides this, she has written *Abhimanyu*, *Shakti*, *Mohini*, *Kamadeva*, and *Kartikeya* also. **Pratibha Ray** in her retelling of the epic *Mahabharata* under the title *Yajnaseni* (1995) tries to eliminate the belief that Draupadi is responsible for the greatest war of all time. The patriarchal patterns of thinking, the unspoken sufferings of the women, and a valid justification for Draupadi's actions are some of the themes in her book. **Neelanjan P Choudhry**'s debut novel *Bali and the Ocean of Milk* (2011) is a best-selling mythological thriller. According to Mahesh Dattani, it is a grand, frothy Manthan of myth, magic, palace intrigue, humour, and more. **Krishna Udayasankar**'s *The Aryavarta Chronicles* (2016) is a series of three books titled *Govinda*, *Kaurava*, and *Kurukshetra*. These books philosophize the story of *Mahabharata* by showing it as an eternal lust for power. Characters are humanized and core values of life are emphasized which makes them human in the true sense of the word. **Sharath Komarraju**'s *The Winds of Hastinapur* (2013) narrates the epic from Ganga and Satyawati's points of view. Despite playing important roles they were not given a voice to express their side of the story. **Irawati Karve**'s book *Yuganta: The End of an Epoch* (2007) discusses the main protagonists of the *Mahabharata* from a humanistic point of view. The historical aspect is emphasised in comparison to their mythological significance. The author has tried to explore the *Mahabharata* from a socio-political context which is more relevant in our time. The *Mahabharata* is presented as an account of historical events that occurred thousands of years ago in the social and political context of India. Irawati Karve reveals the *Mahabharata*'s characters by focusing on their human concerns with vices and virtues. She admires literary values and deals with social problems of the past with her secular, scientific, and anthropological perspectives. The blend of the modern world into her version of the *Mahabharata* entitled *Yuganta* narrates the original story of the *Mahabharata* from a rational point of view which makes it appear as the true story of ancient heroes. **Christopher C.**

Doyle's book on the all-time great epic, *The Mahabharata Secret* (2013) is his debut novel that narrates the adventures of Vijay and his friends who try to decipher clues for a Secret brotherhood known as the Nine Men which can lead them to find the hidden secret. The Indian epic *The Mahabharata* is dissected with scientific facts which inspires the reader to finish the book. The success of this book inspired Doyle to write its sequel *The Mahabharata Quest: The Alexander Secret* (2014) is the first book in a planned trilogy of sequels. While researching he also came across legends prevalent about King Ashoka and linked the story with him. Following its release, Other than these contemporary writers some famous writers of the modern era are also worth mentioning in this context. *Baramulla Bomber: Science Fiction Espionage Thriller* (2012) by **Clark Prasad** is a fantasy in which the Baramulla Bomber is an ancient weapon from the Vedas and the Bible. With the help of Quantum Physics, it would be unleashed for destruction. The sound of the universe gives it power and Nazis are in search of it for their selfish motives. To save the world amidst a dual China-Pakistan battlefield scenario, Agastya Rathore the Indian Home Minister, has to effectively deal with the challenge of finding a lasting solution to the Kashmir crisis. *Five Lords, Yet None a Protector & Sweet and Timeless: Two Plays* (2007) by **Saoli Mitra** is based on the 'Mahabharata'. The first story is of Draupadi, her humiliation at the hands of the Kauravas and the second is about the tragedy of the royal women like Satyawati, Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika, the abducted princesses, of Kunti, Gandhari, Draupadi, Subhadra, and the young Uttara. Both the plays are one-woman performances in the tradition of 'Katha Katha', a rural Bengali genre of dramatized storytelling along with the use of live music. Mitra has subverted traditional theatre of the Western type and gendered the stories. The recently published Trilogy *The Hidden Hindu* (2022) by **Akshat Gupta** is a hit among youth for its theme of seven Immortal characters from the epic Mahabharata. The story has a twenty-one-year-old boy Prithvi, who searches for Om Shastri an ardent Shiva devotee in the form of an

Aghori. When the Aghori is caught and drugged he claims to have lived in four yugas. The story is a mixture of mythology and science fiction with suspense. **Sai Swaroopa Iyer's** *Draupadi*, **Radha Vishavnath's** *Ashtmahishi: The Eight Wives of Krishna*, **Aditi Banerjee's** *The Curse of Gandhari*, **Manini J Anandini's** *Mandodari: Queen of Lanka* etc. are also admired by the readers for their fresh perspectives. The deluge of authors writing on mythological themes and characters is being appreciated by readers and publishing houses. Mythology is evolving with time with new representations by authors and inspiring critics to comment on this forever potential source of wisdom.

Over time, Writers have attempted to reinterpret the preceding myth for many centuries. Tales from the past have been passed down through the generations. Mythology has always attracted authors since time immemorial so many works of Hindi and Indian regional languages were re-representations of epics and their characters. **S L Bhyrappa's** *Parva* (1979) is a narration of *Mahabharata* as a monologue originally in Kannada in which several principal characters found in the original *Mahabharata* recollect almost their entire lives during the war of 'Kuruksheetra'. It is a transformation of an ancient legend into a modern novel where Bhyrappa tries to give voice to each of the characters in *Mahabharata* to bring out their perspective of life and make the readers think about the possibility of a plurality of the truth. The distinct literary voice of the late **Shivaji Sawant** is heard far and wide for his famous Marathi novel *Mrutyunjay* (1967). This masterpiece is often hailed for giving insight into the mind of the most discriminated and unfortunate character of Karna in the epic which narrates the story of the *Mahabharata* war. It has been translated into many languages for the superb self-representation of the protagonist. **Ram Kumar Bhramar's** series of novels on the characters of the *Mahabharata* in Hindi are psychological interpretations of their aspirations and trauma faced by them. Innumerable authors from different languages of India have written on mythological themes to interpret and revisit the epics and epical characters.

Raja Rao, R K Narayan, Girish Karnad, Toru Dutt, Shashi Tharoor, and Namita Gokhale have also written a lot on mythological characters and themes. In the particular case of writings on Shiva, Devdutt Pattanaik and Namita Gokhale have historicized the deity through their interpretations to simplify the myths for the general readers whereas Amish Tripathi has fictionalised Shiva in his trilogy.

What is Popular Culture?

The history of culture will explain to us the motives, the conditions of life, and the thought of the writer or reformer.

-Leo Tolstoy

Popular culture or pop culture is generally recognized by members of a society as a set of beliefs, practices, and objects which are prominent or prevalent in a society at a given point in time. It is the result of daily interactions, needs, desires, and practices about mass media and many facets of entertainment such as music, literature, sports, and films. The main driving force behind popular culture is its appeal to the masses. It often contrasts with a more exclusive and elitist 'high culture.' It has multiple origins and in conditions of modernity, the set of industries that profit by inventing and promulgating cultural material has become a principal source. These industries include popular music, fashion, films, TV, radio, video games, comics, the internet, book publishing, etc. The studies on Popular Culture mainly focus on how the culture is made, publicized, and consumed. In his work, *Understanding Popular Culture*, John Fiske (2010) interprets the commodification/commercialization of popular culture in society. In the chapter titled, "*Commodities and Culture*", he states, "To be made into popular culture, a commodity must also bear the interests of the people" (19). He further writes, "Popular culture has to be, above all else relevant to the immediate social situation of the people" (21). The popular culture of contemporary society is taken into

consideration for analysing the perception of people in general. The word ‘contemporary’ is used in the context of the new millennium and the works of the two authors for the current study are associated with the legend of Shiva. The popularity of these authors and their works in the era of globalization proves the relevance of myths as they help in understanding the past and provide answers to current problems. A new elite class of readers, who prefer to read Indian writings in English, is emerging in India as the consumers of these works. Moreover, mythology has become part of popular culture the world over because of its presence in visual and print media. Different genres like fiction, cinema, poetry, and drama are immersed in this flow of current trends. Pattanaik (2017) in his book *Culture: 50 Insights from Mythology* declares that:

The Western story celebrates a linear construct of life – with one beginning, one ending and one life in between. The Indian story celebrates a cyclical construct of life – with many beginnings, many endings, and many lives in between. Thus, stories reflect the culture they emerge from while reinforcing the culture at the same time (5-6).

Shiva has always been part of rural, tribal and urban culture with his extraordinary lifestyle. Recently during the G-20 Summit in Delhi, a very large Nataraja statue was installed at Bharat Mandapam in Pragati Maidan to showcase the popular Indian culture.

Popular Culture and Popular Literature

The popular culture of a society or country reflects its traditions, habits, literature, thoughts, and beliefs to name a few. Every faith has its own deities and religious icons for the rites and rituals of worship. In contemporary Indian culture, Shiva has a special place as he is considered a cool god for his alleged interest in weed and cannabis. His non-conformist approach towards life makes him the obvious hero of the young generation. In calendar art,

he is the favourite of artists for his iconic and physical form which has innumerable images. His family portrait shows him as an ideal family man with his consort, two sons, and one daughter. Although his daughter Ashok Sundari is not commonly shown in paintings and calendars, her role is very important in his life. One can see him everywhere in art, frescos, tattoos, T-shirts, paintings, etc. as his image reflects peace and indifference towards traditions and conventional life accepted by the norms of society.

According to the well-known philosopher Aristotle, literature carries the universal element that is true for all times and ages, and which is true of the men, events, customs, culture, and manners of an age. The subjective and objective outlook of every author is reflected in his work with the spirit of the age in which it is written, for Goethe everyman is a citizen of his age as well as of his country. The *Zeitgeist* or the time spirit is reflected in the theme, style of writing, mood, culture, and influences in the works of authors. All types of writing (literature, history, or criticism) have the social function of improving, documenting, and refining according to societal changes. Literary and other writings mirror life in which national and personal interests can be mingled with great élan to reflect a clear image of that particular time. Intellectual and moral developments documented in written works sharpen and enhance the texture of society in the long run. Chaucer and Langland represented the 14th-century society in their works. Spencer is considered the child of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Ben Johnson felt that Shakespeare was not of an age but for all time and his observation has been proven true with Shakespeare's ever-growing popularity till now. Milton was as much a child of the Renaissance as of the Reformation and he revolted against his age. Alexander Pope was for a whole generation so he was considered 'the poet of a great nation.' As the product of his age, he gave new morals to the kings, queens, nobles, and the gentry. Political freedom and social reconstruction of the French Revolution influenced Romantic poets who longed for new hopes, ideals, and aspirations. Tennyson was the

representative poet of the Victorian Age. Modern poets and authors have represented the plight of human suffering of their time. World wars brought a drastic change in the manner and attitude of modern authors according to the conditions/situations but the 21st century has revived the interest of writers and readers in areas that were not considered prestigious and engrossing earlier. In this context, multicultural literature comprised of popular literature can provide the right understanding of the world which is necessary for global citizens of the new millennium. Globalization has changed the social fabric of society so it is important for citizens to have better cultural harmony among themselves. The inclusion of Popular literature from different countries in the curriculum can make it possible. With the popularity of Greek and Western mythological themes, Indian mythology has become a new hot ticket for the writers of popular literature in India and abroad where the diaspora has taken the lead. Not only literature but popular culture is also submerged with mythological themes. This refreshing change is welcomed by readers of all age groups as elements of fantasy and thriller are being added to it. In this context, Nandhini and Sarvanan (2017) point out that “Literature, that is the work of art is one of the most important and effective mediums to express the collective unconscious of the people. The symbols, themes, and characters in literature reflect traits common to the human experience across cultures” (2). Mythological stories are psychologically relevant to the development of a society for retaining tradition and culture. Mythological thrillers have become a new genre as the number of writers who are writing in this genre is increasing in this area. The list of the best-selling authors of the new millennium is filled with authors whose literary works are based on or have themes adopted from mythology. Mythological writing is also increasingly attracting the attention of critical/literary discourse in India and worldwide. It is becoming a distinct literary genre with politics and poetics of its own. It is literature that articulates contemporary problems like discrimination based on race, caste, and physical features, the issue of immortality, power

politics, parenthood, and environmental crisis. The language used by the writers of mythological fiction overturns the decorum and aesthetics of the epics. The language and expressions are similar to the language of 21st-century youth who mixes slang and colloquial expressions with ease. Famous writers of this genre are Ashok Banker, Anand Neelakantan, Abhishek Sanghi, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Kavita Kane, and Amish Tripathi to name a few. The list of such authors continues to grow due to the increasing interest of readers and viewers in mythology. The theoretical foregrounding of these representations includes facts, myth, fantasy, suspense, drama, and recreation. The popularity is even more marked by the commercial success of these newer representations of legends in general and Shiva in particular. The multifaceted Shiva has different avatars like Shiv, Shankar, and Pralayankar. The ancient scriptures based on the life of Shiva are the *Shiv Maha Purana* (1969), the *Peria Puranam* (1985), and the *Linga-Purana* (1970) which present the various aspects of Shiva's mythologies, cosmology, and pilgrimage associated with him. Shiva-related literature developed extensively across India, particularly in Kashmir, Karnataka, and Tamil Shaiva traditions. Shiva has been depicted in various forms throughout the history of Hindu culture. He is associated with creation and destruction simultaneously and represents virtues, benevolence, and protection but gradually the *Tantric* tradition has developed a darker side related to evil spirits and destruction which is opposite to the actual purpose of the same. Shiva also represents the Mahakaal or 'Time' which has larger dimensions of life and death. As the guru of Yoga, Dance, Fine arts, and Meditation he surpasses all other deities of the Hindu religion. According to Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (1975) "The earliest mythology of Rudra-Siva reveals a process of assimilation well underway; the dark outsider is already beginning to be included more in fear than in the spirit of devotion which came to characterize the later cult of Siva". (Hindu Myths, 116) Shiva is often depicted as having a snake around his neck, matted hair, holding a trident in the right lower arm and a crescent

moon on his head, and sitting on a tiger skin. Pattanaik in his book *7 Secrets from Hindu Calendar Art* (2009) illustrates Lord Shiva's trident which "indicates the dissolution of the three worlds into one", the three worlds being "our private world, our public world and all the rest there is." (83).

The selection of primary text for the present study has been done to compare works of popular authors/best sellers who have represented the legend of Shiva. Among many authors who have written on the legend of Shiva, Amish Tripathi, and Pattanaik stand out separately for the fame and accolades they have received for their works. Although their genres are different their theme of popularising Hindu mythology remains the same. Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* has played a major role in establishing the genre of mythological fiction among new-age writers of popular literature. This *Trilogy* consists of *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010), *The Secret of the Nagas* (2011), and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* (2013). It has been translated into many languages which include Indian and foreign languages. The form of retelling is subversive as Amish Tripathi has blended fantasy, science, myth, and elements of a thriller in the *Shiva Trilogy*. His four books in the *Ram Chandra Series* are also a favourite among readers. The present study will discuss only his representation of Shiva as a superhuman entity in his *Shiva Trilogy* where he starts his journey as an ordinary mortal and attains godhood with his extraordinary deeds in his struggle to destroy evil. Pattanaik is more famous as a mythologist and management consultant than as a medical doctor as he is a prolific writer in the field of mythology. His unprecedented contribution to popularising Indian mythology is recognized by readers who cannot understand the abstract concepts of the original texts of the scriptures. His books on epics, mythological characters, and stories are more than eighty in number which consist of his interpretations of the Sanskrit texts. He has also written on Western/European mythology which has received recognition from readers. His three famous printed books on Lord Shiva are *Shiva –An Introduction* (1997),

From Shiva to Shankara (2006), and *7 Secrets of Shiva* (2011). The three online books on the legend of Shiva available in Kindle edition are *Shiva the Destroyer* (2016), *What Shiva Told Shakti* (2017) and *The Ultimate Tapasvin* (2018).

In the secondary readings seminal research papers, the *Shiv Maha Purana*, the *Linga Purana*, and the *Peria Puranam* are consulted. These scriptures give us exhaustive and comprehensive information on Lord Shiva. *Speaking of Siva* (1973) by A K Ramanujan is a selection of *vachanas* or free-verse sayings from the Virashaiva religious movement, dedicated to Shiva as the supreme god. Originally written in Kannada it is translated by A K Ramanujan. Basavanna and other Virashaiva devotees' poems are majorly explained in the book with great devotion. *The Dance of Shiva* (2012) by Anand Coomaraswamy, the *Shiva Trilogy* of Preetha Rajah Kannan, and various books on Shiva by Indian and Western writers like Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty and Stella Kramrich are consulted. Out of the considerable corpus of Shiva literature, the most important Indian and Western authors and research articles were explored. Critical receptions of popular literary representations are also incorporated in the study for comparison and analysis. The genre of Mythological fiction adopted by Amish Tripathi has gained popularity in India and the world over in recent times so a study in this field is relevant for understanding the reasons behind this mushrooming of the genre in popular literature. The current study falls under the domain of popular culture and cultural Studies.

The Legend of Shiva in Popular Culture

Lord Shiva is the most unique of all Hindu gods as He is the only godhead who is forever in meditation. Worshipped in the form of *Panch Bhootas* which means that the five faces of the deity stand for the five elements our body is made of. Shiva is one of the triumvirates of Hindu Gods. The concept of a trinity of gods in Hinduism is credited to the generator,

organiser, and destroyer which are named Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahesh. In our spiritual texts, Shiva is the *Anadi* (one who has no beginning) and the *Anant* (who has no end). His character is incomparable to any of the deities of Hinduism due to his unique persona and philosophy of life. Shaivism has a huge following among Hindus across the world and persons who are converted to Shaivism from their religion. From the point of view of representation, Shiva's character has been a favourite among writers who reinterpreted mythology. With a variety of genres and themes in popular literature, the study of legends has surfaced as one of the major fields in vogue these days among writers, critics, and readers. One of the reasons for this popularity is the abundance of mythology-related serials on TV channels such as *Devo Ke Dev Mahadev*, *Kali*, *Ganesh*, *Vishnu Purana*, *Upanishad Ganga*, and *Sankat Mochan Hanuman*, to name a few. Mythology is in demand perpetually so writers are producing this kind of fiction to earn name and fame. Given the phenomenal eternity of Shiva, literary critics and movie makers have been inspired to recreate His supreme reality, which has also brought success and fame. The Gujarati film *Har Har Mahadev*, Kannada film *Gange Gowri* and TV serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* on LifeOK have made the legend of Shiva very popular. *Om Namah Shivay* TV serial on DD National was also based on mythological Shiva's character. Video games also portray the character of Shiva for example in *Shin Megami Tensei* and *Smite*. In the latter, he is shown as one of the last Hindu gods. 'Shiva of the East' is a Character in Dark Souls where he is the assumed Second-in-Command of the Forest Hunter Covenant. He can be found standing next to the castle where Alvina lives, and he will give you some friendly advice if you speak to him after joining the Covenant.

Many authors have tried their hand at representing the legend of Shiva in popular contemporary literature, among these authors, the most prominent ones are Amish Tripathi, Namita Gokhale, and Devdutt Pattanaik. Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik stand out in their

conception and portrayal of Shiva through their peculiar style and thematic agenda. While Amish Tripathi portrays Shiva as a superhuman entity and has humanised the divine character for the sake of discussing and solving contemporary problems, Pattanaik has imagined Him in the sensational spirit driven by the objective of mundane popularity and lucre. The widely acclaimed *Shiva Trilogy* of Amish Tripathi is based on the fictional adventures of Shiva as a human being whereas Pattanaik's retelling of the legend of Shiva, on the other hand, is a provocative portrayal with a tilt towards historicisation and sensationalisation. Simultaneously, a comparative analysis has been conducted to distinguish the narrative style of Pattanaik and Amish Tripathi and how they have dealt with the significant aspects of the Indian socio-cultural milieu. This research work is an endeavour to find the modern take on Hindu mythology with special reference to the legend of Shiva. Although the genres of these authors are not the same, rather different from each other, their thematic concerns are the same in discussing the grandeur of Shiva's character. As for the critical reception, there is no dearth of research work on Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* but a comparative critique of the two authors is not much available, especially on the legend of Shiva. So, it calls for a need to take up the two authors, namely Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik in the comparative frame of reference and present a critique of their attempt to contemporise Shiva in their unique style.

Hypothesis

The present study hypothesized to explore the multifarious representations, across genres and derive therefrom the solutions for the modern-day problems in the extant contemporisation of Shiva.

Literature Review

The treatment of legend as a coveted subject of writings in popular literature has emerged with various conceptions and retellings across the genres. As such, Shiva has been recast and moulded in various forms by authors who have attempted to contemporise the Supreme Being. Keeping in view the different forms of representations, Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik reimagined the Shiva mythology in their respective conceptualisations of God to modernize the divine entity. The creative ventures of the two authors have met with an equal amount of criticism. Even though there is an abundance of literature, primary and secondary, available on Shiva, there is an apparent shortage of a critical study that examines the representations of Shiva in the cultural frame of reference taking up the works of two different genres attempted by Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik respectively. The proposed study titled *Shiva in Popular Culture: Reading Amish and Devdutt Pattanaik* is an endeavour in the direction of a comparative study of the two popular authors who have revisited the legend of Shiva in different genres.

Ancient Indian scriptures, epics, and folklore are full of stories associated with Lord Shiva's greatness as a protector and destroyer as well. The ancient texts of Hindus are *Vedas*, *Vedanags*, *Upvedas*, *Agamas*, *Upanishads*, *Brahmans*, *Aryanaks*, *Sukatas*, *Sastras*, *Dharma Sastras*, *Itihasas*, *Puranas*, and *Sutras* where Shiva is mentioned and eulogized. According to our scriptures, Shaivism was always there since time immemorial but modern history records six main schools of Shaivism: *Shaiva Sidhantam*, *PashuPatism*, *Kashmiri Shaivism*, *Vira Shaivism*, *Siddha Sidhantam*, and *Shiva Advaitam*. The most prominent sacred books on Shiva are the *Shiv Maha Purana*, the *Linga Purana*, and the *Peria Puranam*. *Shiva Sutras: The Yoga of Supreme Identity* (1979), *Commentary on Pratyabhujnhrdayam: The Secret of Self-Recognition* (1963), *Spanda-Karika: The Divine Creative Pulsation* (1980) and

Vijnanabhairava or Divine Consciousness (2002) by Jaideva Singh are also popular among Shiva devotees. Shiva exists in the popular imagination of people in general which is reflected in cinema, TV serials, fine arts, and theatre. The festival of Maha Shivratri is a common festival across India and in many Asian and non-Asian countries. His perennial presence in popular culture of all times can be measured by his 1008 names, of which 108 are still very famous among Hindu devotees in the popular local culture of India.

Shiva in the works of Indian Regional Language Writers

Innumerable literary works of regional languages of India have made use of mythological episodes as the basis of their narratives, plots, and sub-plots of Indian mythology. The inevitable presence of Indian mythology in our lives has allowed writers to reinterpret myths in the modern context. The popularity of Lord Shiva can be seen in the writings of almost all regional languages, especially Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Gujarati, and Malayalam. In Sanskrit and Hindi also number of books on this deity is many as he is considered the god of gods. Every aspect of Lord Shiva is part of our Hindu way of life. Tamil Shaivism is an important and peculiar form of philosophy and tradition regarding Shiva. The great Puranam or The *Peria Puranam* contains the lives and devotional works of Nayanmars who lived and died for Shiva. The name Sekkizhar is synonymous with the *Peria Puranam* which is a great work of Tamil Shaivism. G Vanmikanthan has translated this work into English language for the Ramakrishna Math Press, Madras. T A Gopinatha Rao, Dr W D Venketaramanayya, P Jash, Mahadev Chakravarti, and R Siddhantasastree have researched and published comprehensive works on the history of Shaivism and various aspects of Shiva. *Virmaheshwara/Virshaivism* and *Lingayatism* are two more or less similar forms of Shaivism in Karnataka which focuses on equality and a casteless society. *Somnath Bhashya* and *Shaiv Siddhant* are also rich in information regarding the deity. The book *Speaking of Shiva* (1973)

originally written in Kannada and translated by A K Ramanujan into English has poems of Shiva devotees of Virshaivism like Basavanna.

Shiva in the Works of Foreign Authors

The legend of Shiva has been a favourite among foreign authors due to his extraordinary philosophy and lifestyle. Indologist, intellectual, and a convert to Shaivism **Alain Daniélou** was a French historian, writer, musicologist, and translator. As a Shiva devotee and a convert to Shaivism, he received a fellowship in 1991 from the prestigious Sangeet Natak Academy. He wrote books on Shiva and Indian mythology like *Myths and Gods of India*, *Hindu Polytheism*, *The Phallus*, *Sacred Symbol of Male Creative Power*, and many more.

Stella Kramrisch's book *Presence of Shiva* (1981) describes the Shiva legend beginning from the Vedas to the different Puranas and it also details the metaphysics and ontology associated with the deity. She interrogates the primitive wild god Rudra's nature and existence which seems close to the great ascetic and whose being comprises and transcends everything. His innumerable names, attributes, duality and paradoxes can't define him as he is beyond all these. This great Yogi is the absolute Consciousness and soul of the universe. His nature is manifested in his actions which are taken up as themes by critics to elaborate on the Shiva myth. Professor Kramrisch unfolds the paradoxes in Shiva's nature which has a duality that makes him a living god who is part of Indian epics, Puranas and other scriptures. She argues in this regard, "Cooperating opposites within Siva's boundless orbit- or alternatives such as snakes and jewels- would also reverse their meaning. What is poison or death to the ignorant is bliss or release to the knowing" (430).

Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty's *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva* (1973) critiques ancient scripture like the *Shiv Maha Purana* by discussing Shiva's ascetic and erotic activities. She states in this regard:

The contrast between the erotic and the ascetic tradition in the character and mythology of Siva is not the kind of ‘conjunction of opposites’ with which it has so often been confused. Tapas (asceticism) and Kama (desire) are not diametrically opposed like black and white, or heat and cold, where the complete presence of one automatically implies the absence of the other. They are in fact two forms of heat, tapas being the potentially destructive or creative fire that the ascetic generates within himself, Kama the heat of desire (35).

Orthodox Hindu cults have questioned her interpretation of Hindu traditions, especially right-wing activists who have criticized her stand on non-Western topics. Wendy Doniger is an authority on Indian religious thought and history but she has been criticised for being harsh on the practices of Hinduism. **Sheldon Pollock** is also a prominent foreign author who has written extensively on Indian mythology. As a Sanskrit scholar, he was awarded the Padam Shree by the Indian government. **Fritjof Capra**’s book *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (1975) explores the parallel between modern Physics and Eastern mysticism. The cosmic dance of Shiva seemed similar to the dance of waves and sand on the seashore. His article titled ‘*The Dance of Shiva: The Hindu View of Matter in the Light of Modern Physics*’ finds a resemblance between Shiva’s dance and the quick movements of sub-atomic particles. It aroused his curiosity into Eastern religions specifically Hinduism and Zen Buddhism which made him inquire about this phenomenon. In 2015 Aravindan Neelakandan, a Tamil scholar got his article published in an online Sutra journal on ‘Fritjof Capra and the Dharmic Worldview’. The government of India gifted a huge Nataraja statue to the CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research in Geneva) in 2004. which has put a seal on this connection between the most cutting-edge Physics research and Eastern mysticism/spirituality.

Shiva in the Works of Other Indian Writers

There is an ever-increasing corpus of Indian writings on Shiva on account of the revival of interest in ancient literature and mythology. The popularity of myth-related books in the current time has inspired many authors to write about this mystical deity. There are books in different genres on Shiva as he is closer to the heart of young people who can relate to the different forms of Shiva. Saint Swami Lakshmanjoo, Pundit J L Shastri, Ananda Coomaraswamy, A K Ramanujam, Amish Tripathi, Devdutt Pattanaik, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, Namita Gokhale, Preetha Rajah Kannan, etc. have written on the legend of Shiva extensively. The Puranas and their English translations like the *Shiv Maha Purana* (1970), the *Linga Purana* (1990), and the *Peria Puranam* (2012) are readily available on Internet platforms. Even translations of all the Upanishads, the Puranas, and other scriptures, that speak elaborately on Lord Shiva are not hard to find on several websites. The *Vigyan Bhairav Tantra* and books on its interpretations are also many as Swami Lakshmanjoo, Osho, Jaideva Singh and other writers have written on this work extensively.

The most cited and important research papers on the theme are numerous but some are particularly related to the subject of the current study. Lata Mishra, Vijay Karthik, Uttam Boruah, Indrajit Patra, Aritra Basu, Sandip Paul, Vikram Singh, Suprodipta Mandal, Kavitha Kusugal, Ritika Paul, Ambari Shukla, Moumita Mukherjee, Medasani and Cauvery and Jaya Dwivedi are few names whose research papers were explored for literature review. PhD thesis of Kirti Kumar B Vitthani, Gaurang Bavchand Bhai Patel, Dipanvita Sehgal, Dharmendra Kumar, P Narahari Murthy, Tayenjam Rajesh Singh, Seema Devi, Phad Bibhishan Rokdiba, Suganthi Medasani and Suresh Kumar posted on Shodhganga were also consulted.

Books on Shiva are also too many to be documented here but some prominent ones in the category of Popular literature are available in print and Kindle editions. **D K Hari's** *Understanding Shiva* depicts Lord Shiva as the Supreme consciousness of the universe that fills the physical and spiritual space. This book decodes the multilayered persona of the legend of Shiva which is omnipresent and omniscient. *Shiva the Ultimate Outlaw* (2014) by Isha Foundation pioneer **Sadhguru Vasudev Jaggi** describes Shiva, the Adiyogi or first yogi, as the ultimate outlaw, because he flouts laws made for society for both his unique lifestyle and to be in service of people. He is beyond the reach of material and physical dimensions that may hamper his meditation and solitude. The graphics of the e-book are sprinkled with wisdom and ethical notions for expressing lesser-known aspects of mystical Shiva. **Santosh Gairola** has written five books on the legend of Shiva, *The Love Story of Lord Shiva & Goddess Shakti: A Tale of Divine Love* (2019), *The Incredible Qualities of Lord Shiva*, *The Benefits of Om Namah Shivaya* (2019), *The Magnificent Shiva: Why there is no one like Lord Shiva and Mahadev* (2020), *The Lord of the Lords* (2019). All these books are available in Kindle editions. Santosh Gairola's *The Love Story of Lord Shiva & Goddess Shakti: A Tale of Divine Love* describes the well-known story of the Shiv-Sati and Shiv-Parvati union. The book establishes the story of Shiva and Parvati as different from other gods' stories where integrity and trust are missing. The most powerful god Shiva is omniscient and harbours kindness for everyone, from gods, and Asuras to the other lower beings. *Shiva: The Ultimate Time Traveller* by **Shailendra Gulhati** (2015) describes Shiva to be the supreme god in the pantheon of Hindu gods. His contribution to the art of Yoga is elaborated to establish him as the Supreme Lord of Yoga. Through the divinity of the Lord's magical generosity, one can find one's 'true self'. *The Book of Shiva* by **Namita Gokhale** (2012) presents Shiva as the supreme ascetic who is also a protector and a destroyer as well. He is the Lord of the universe who is Ardhnaarishwar so he manifests the best of both

feminine and masculine qualities. There is a kind of dissolution of the aforementioned contradictions as Shiva expresses the best of all there is. *Dance of Shiva* by **Anand Coomaraswamy** (2012) is a compilation of essays with an introduction by Romain Rolland. Besides other essays, the essay on Shiva elaborates on His cosmic dance and his Nataraja Form. His opinion over the Nataraja form has been an inspiration for many critics and authors. **Preetha Rajah Kannan**'s *Shiva in the City of Nectar* (2016) has fifty-four stories that take the reader through heaven, earth, and the underworld. Her next book *Son of Shiva* (2017) details the legend of Kartikeya, the great son of Shiva who was Commander in chief of the army of gods. The third book, *The Hounds of Shiva* (2018) is a rich storehouse of tales of sixty-three Nayanmars whose devotion to Lord Shiva was extraordinary. Her source of information has been Sekkizhar's *Peria Puranam*, a twelfth-century epic. *The Reluctant Family Man: Shiva in Everyday Life* by **Nilima Chitgopekar** (2019) presents Shiva as all-pervasive and present in birth and death as well. It presents the unique lifestyle of Shiva, his detachment, and lessons that readers can apply to their practical lives. **Ranjit Chaudhri**'s *The Shiva Sutras* (2019) narrates sage Vasugupta's dream in which Lord Shiva instructs him to go near a stream and touch a specific stone which turns out to be inscribed with the Shiva sutras. The magical Sutras can be a keystone to realise fulfilment in life helping one rise beyond the everyday human suffering. **Haroon Khalid**'s (2015) *In Search of Shiva* searches for ancient roots of religious symbols, shrines, and traditions. The antiquity of Indus Valley civilization is spread through the shrines of phallic offerings, sacred trees, and sacred animals which are in danger of being destroyed by the extremists. Moreover, economic development, growing extremism, and the rising tide of Islamic puritanism are posing a threat to the ancient traditions and shrines which had been inseparable threads of the fabric of Pakistan. *Shiva: The Stories & Teachings from the Shiva Maha Purana* by **Vanmali** (2002) interprets *Shiva Maha Purana* in her own way and provides the stories and teachings for a wholesome

understanding of life itself. The paradoxes, the contradictions and his benevolent form juxtaposed against his fierce form depend on the needs of the devotee. **A K Ramanujan's** book, *Speaking of Siva* (1973) contains Basava's devotional poems for Lord Shiva. **Chitralekha Singh's** *Siva: The Greatest God* (2005) narrates the greatest god of the Hindu Pantheon who is called the God of Gods. Lord Shiva envelops the powers of the genesis of existence and ultimate consummation and he destroys the universe as well. He has numerous manifestations which are described in the mythological scriptures. Vimanika Comics has introduced a series on Shiva's grandeur by the name of *Shiva - The Legend of The Immortal Book 1* (2011) by **Kshitish Padhy & Abdul Rasheed** which deals with the origin of the universe. Lord Shiva's glorified persona in these graphic novels carries information according to Hindu mythology in a special Vimanika style. *Mystic Tales from Shiv Maha Purana* (2022) by **Dr Prashant Pareek** presents the *Shiv Maha Purana* as the essence of all the Vedic and Puranic literature for the readers. The book offers a collection of stories that are translated from Sanskrit and Hindi into the English language.

Retellings of legends are triggered as much by critical requirements as by the creative verve of the authors. Consequently, the considerable corpus of creative writings on the legend in general, and Shiva's in particular, and an equally considerable volume of criticism on the subject are available. But, an integrated critical work of the two authors with different genres is hardly available. The proposed study intends to fill this gap of critical requirement by critiquing the two popular authors on Shiva, namely Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik. As such, the larger rationale of the study is marked by the need to analyse the treatment of modern-day problems like environmental crisis, cultural imperialism, parenthood, good vs evil, Immortality, and discrimination based on caste, culture, and physical features as contained in Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*. Amish Tripathi is responsible for attracting the attention of the young generation toward mythological literature by revisiting it and adding a

masala of suspense and thrill. His works are thoroughly embedded in Indian culture and spirituality, and so there has been an ever-growing interest in his books. The study attempts to measure the appropriation of commercial and lucrative objectives in the re-interpretive treatment of the legend done by Pattanaik in particular. The subject of the contemporisation of Shiva juxtaposed against the novel departure from the legend of Shiva instils a sustained interest in the readers in general and researchers in particular. The success of these writers in this era of generative AI and hyper-globalization indicates a revival of legends and mythology among youth. The redefined myth of Shiva proves the greatness of virtues over vices and the victory of good over evil. The young generation is in dire need of such works which give them information as well as knowledge of our past and make them proud of their heritage and mythology. The spiritual direction provided by the legend of Shiva is the need of the hour when people's mental health is at stake due to overdependence on technology and the pursuit of material comforts. This study aims to inspire more such comparative investigations in the field of mythological writings in general and Shiva's legends in particular. Although many writers have written about the legend of Shiva, due to the paucity of space, only the most famous authors have been chosen for the study. The thesis attempts to look at the poetics and politics of representation, problematics of contemporisation of mythology, and subversion of the myth of Shiva in popular writings in English. The thesis analyses and critiques the following sources/books by Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik:

1. Tripathi, Amish. *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010)
2. Tripathi, Amish. *The Secrets of the Nagas* (2011)
3. Tripathi, Amish. *The Oath of the Vayuputras* (2013)
4. Pattanaik, Devdutt. *Shiva – An Introduction* (1997)

5. Pattanaik, Devdutt. *Shiva to Shankara: Giving Form to the Formless* (2006)

6. Pattanaik, Devdutt. *7 Secrets of Shiva* (2011)

The primary texts chosen for the study is based on the rationale of popular culture and literature in the current time zone. Both authors have written about the legend of Shiva in different genres. Although many other authors have written about Shiva these two authors have acquired fame and recognition in the 21st century and tried to contemporise the legend of Shiva. Pattanaik's portrayal of Shiva is based on the stories available in Puranas and other scriptures but Amish Tripathi's Shiva is a fictional character inspired by Hindu mythology.

Thesis Statement

The study critiques the legend of Shiva in popular culture and its contemporisation by Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik to suggest solutions for present-day problems like environmental crisis, marginalisation, parenting, and cultural imperialism.

Amish Tripathi

Amish Tripathi is one of the celebrated novelists in the popular mythological fiction category which has become a genre in itself. His maiden publication *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010) became immensely popular claiming the title of best-seller. Born in Mumbai on 18 October 1974 he was brought up in Rourkela, Odisha. He graduated from Saint Xavier's College and joined IIM Kolkata. Amish Tripathi had a great interest in history as a student and he always wanted to become a historian but he started his career in finance. He has worked in financial services for almost fourteen years. During these fourteen years, he worked at Standard Chartered, D B S Bank, and IDBI Federal Life Insurance. Most of his books deal with religious themes, as he is a great Shiva devotee. He hails from a family where his grandfather was a Sanskrit scholar and a Pundit at Varanasi. As a young man, Tripathi favoured atheism

but faith beckoned him to write his first book on a deity. He believes that religious faith and liberalism are complementary to each other. The liberal ideology of Amish Tripathi regarding discrimination, class, caste and gender is lauded by young and old readers. He believes that his success lies in his visits to Shiva temples and he also requests his true fans to visit the Shiva temples. He became a popular Indian English writer with the publication of his first book *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010). This is the first of the series of three novels dedicated to Lord Shiva entitled *Shiva Trilogy*. The other two novels of the Shiva series are *The Secret of the Nagas* (2011) and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* (2013). After the phenomenal success of his *Shiva Trilogy*, Amish Tripathi decided to start another series of novels entitled “*Ramchandra Series*”. He has published the first four books of the Ramchandra series under the titles *Scion of Ikshvaku* (2015), *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* (2017), *Raavan: The Enemy of the Aryavrat* (2019), and *The War of Lanka* (2022). Amish Tripathi wanted to write the retelling of *Mahabharata* which he admits in the final book of the *Shiva Trilogy* but decided on starting with the *Ramayana* before moving on to the *Mahabharata*. He has also written non-fiction books like *Immortal India* which was launched in August 2017. Another nonfiction book *Dharma: Decoding the Epics for a Meaningful Life* was released in 2021. The success of his books has led to their translation into many Indian and foreign languages. He agrees that the publishing industry is going through a new phase where readers are taking interest and pride in their own culture. In 2012 *The Immortals of Meluha*'s movie rights were given to Dharma Productions. The publicity and marketing in the Indian market proved lucky for Tripathi as large sales of his books made him a celebrity across India. The credit for his success in the Indian market goes to his marketing skills and strategies. Amish Tripathi himself admits that marketing is extremely important for publicising books to most people in India. According to him, a good book needs proper publicity for selling and he argues that due to the lack of marketing and publicity, many books are forgotten easily. His effective

strategies for promoting his books in different ways helped him to reach readers and critics as well.

Before his first book appeared in bookshops, he did his homework assiduously by getting sample copies of the first chapter printed for distributors to give to visitors for free. Presentations were made to target social media websites for the promotion of his debut novel. YouTube was used for uploading a trailer film with a background score for publicity of the first book. His marketing strategies continued till the publication of the first book of “The Ramchandra Series” entitled *Scion of Ikshvaku*. TV advertisements were released during IPL to promote this book.

As a producer, he produced an adaptation of his novel, *Legend of Suheldev: The King Who Saved India*, with Immortal Studios Wakaoo Films and Casa Media in 2020. He was awarded the 21st Century Icon Award in London (2021) and The Golden Book Award for his book *Legend of Suheldev* was received in 2022. He was also listed among the Top 50 Most Powerful People by India Today (2019). He received an Honorary Doctorate from Jharkhand Rai University for his outstanding contribution to Art & Literature (2019) Hello Hall of Fame Awards for Literary Excellence he received in (2019). Another award, Jashn-e-Youngistan Award he received in (2018). He was given the Ustad Bismillah Khan Award for his contribution to Indian culture in (2018). He also bagged the Kalinga International Literary Award (2018). The distinguished Alumnus Award from IIM-Calcutta was given in 2017. Raymond Crossword Popular Fiction Award was received for his book *Scion of Ikshvaku* in (2016).

He was awarded the ‘Society Young Achievers Award for Literature’ in 2013 and has been listed as one of India's “New Icons” by the DNA newspaper in its eighth-anniversary special. He has also received many other notable awards, including ‘The Icon of the Year Award’ in 2017, ‘The Dainik Bhaskar Reader’s Choice Awards’ in 2016, ‘Pride of India in 2014 &

2015, 'India's First Literary Pop Star' in 2015, '50 Most Influential Young Indians' 2015, 'Communicator of the Year Award' 2014, and 'Man of the Year 2013' by Radio One. Amish Tripathi is currently working as a diplomat at The Nehru Centre, in London. The Government of India appointed him as the Director of Nehru Centre in 2019. Speaking to News4Masses in an interview at the Kolkata Literary Meet in March 2022, Tripathi revealed his plans to come up with a book on the *Mahabharata* soon.

Amish Tripathi's use of mythology for contemporizing the problems of the present time has made him famous in the field of popular literature. He justifies the mythological reality to make it relevant through logic and reasoning. He builds a logical argument for his characters and events by setting them in a historical context. He has chosen the Indian legend of Shiva as his superhero with a different perspective for immortalizing the victory of good over evil. Patra (2018) acknowledges this by stating "The fact that myths no matter in which way one constructs and reinterprets them always exert a tremendous constructive force in the development of the narratological and mythographical culture of future generation" (236).

Though the story of Shiva told by the Amish Tripathi is altogether different from the original mythological stories of Lord Shiva it has many characters from mythology. Moumita Mukerjee (2020) declares that "Amish has carried out a daring venture by projecting Shiva as a human being despite the criticisms that will arise. In other words, Tripathi has captured the pulse and imagination of the readers" (18). He has taken most of the mythological stories to build a new story of his imagination and modernized it with the incidents and language of our time. He also deals with the Geography of India in the context of its historical developments which makes his stories realistic. The glorious past of India is imaginatively depicted by inserting the events and characters accordingly. His philosophy based on the divine principle of equality is exemplified through the concept of Vikarma and Nagas who are assimilated

into the mainstream by the protagonist of the *Shiva Trilogy*. The current trend of liberal democracy finds its place in his other works as well. Besides this, he has placed Indian culture in line with the best cultures in the world by presenting it in an inspirational manner. A discussion in his family on Ahura Mazda aroused his interest in the concept of good and evil. During the discussion, he came to know that in ancient Persia demons were known as Daeva, and angels were known as Ahuras as the 's' sound was missing in their language the word Asura became Ahura. His decision to present a non-conformational and unconventional fiction on Lord Shiva made him write the *Shiva Trilogy* which has set a benchmark in the genre of mythological fiction. This same idea/concept is interpreted in different civilizations as good or bad depending on the principle a society is based upon. He has mixed adventure and fantasy with a philosophy that makes his story refreshing yet timeless.

He has gained international popularity for his *Shiva Trilogy* which has been translated into many regional languages. His books in the *Ram Chandra series* (2014-2022) are popular as well. His non-fiction book *Immortal India-Young Country, Timeless Civilisation* (2022) is also appreciated by a younger crop of readers. The next book *The Legend of Suheldev: The King Who Saved India* (2020) is based on the life of a brave King by the same name. He has also written a book *Dharma* with his sister Bhawana Roy. For the current study, his *Shiva Trilogy* is analysed in comparison with the works of Pattanaik on Shiva comprising three books. Amish Tripathi's *Trilogy* is based on the *Shiv Maha Purana* which glorifies the deity for his benevolent and protective nature. Its novels portray Shiva as a worldly, ordinary, and practical person in matters of leadership, war tactics, and humane concerns. After a series of adventures and good deeds, he is deified by the people for his contributions to the welfare of humanity. Shah (2021) observes that "This Trilogy can be visualized as Tripathi's attempt at reconciling religion/myth with science. By proposing that gods were not figments of

imagination, he seems to be suggesting that they were men of flesh and blood at a particular time in history” (141). Following are the three books of the *Shiva Trilogy*:

a) ***The Immortals of Meluha (2010)***

The first book of the *Trilogy* presents Shiva as a tribe leader who finds it difficult to fight pointless battles with the rival tribe ‘Pakrati’. He accepts the offer of Capt. Nandi, after consulting his tribesmen, and migrates to Meluha along with Gunas for a better and safer life. Meluha is a near-perfect empire established by Lord Rama and currently ruled by King Daksha. After reaching Meluha Somras is administered to all the tribesmen without informing them about it. It turns Shiva’s neck blue which leads to his new name-Neelkanth, who according to the legend is considered the saviour that will save Meluha from the Swadeepans who are in alliance with the dreaded Nagas. But after winning the war over rival Chandravanshi Shiva realizes that they are not evil but different from the Suryavanshis. His disillusion inspires him to search for evil. Shiva meets Sati, who is a Vikarma who cannot marry anyone due to the stigma attached to her social status. Shiva as the Neelkanth redeems all the Vikarmas by abolishing the law and including them in the mainstream. Mount Mandar, the Somras manufacturing facility is destroyed by a blast in which Brihaspati the chief scientist is killed. Shiva’s contemplation over fate, evil, and karma makes him choose the path of good and he decides to find evil and destroy it. In the last scene, there is a Naga attack on Sati which is foiled by Shiva.

b) ***The Secret of the Nagas (2011)***

This book reveals many secrets of the Nagas who were otherwise considered evil and partners of the rival Chandravanshis. The incident of Naga’s attack on Sati spills the beans as the coins left by the Naga belong to King Chandraketu from Branga. Shiva decides to find the truth and leaves for Branga with soldiers but finds that Branga people are suffering from

some kind of plague. Many new things come to the fore as Ayurvati says that the medicine used for healing Parvateshwar's wounds carries an herb that is available only in Panchavati, the land of Nagas. Sati and Shiva go to Kashi to meet Branga people to find out more about Nagas. Parshuram, the outlaw also helps Shiva in his search for the Nagas. The actual secret comes out when Sati is helped by the Nagas when she fights ligers to save villagers. Ganesh, Sati's Naga son, and her twin sister Kali are united with Sati after a long separation. They were abandoned by Daksha because of their deformities and his love for power. Shiva's entourage is attacked by Daivi Astras which was forbidden by Lord Rudra himself. Daksha and Bhrigu's plans to kill Shiva failed. When they reach Panchavati, the ultimate secret is divulged. Brihaspati, the chief scientist who was declared dead in the Mount Mandar tragedy, is alive and living with Nagas in Panchavati. Nagas are the best among them as they help people in trouble without any expectations. Despite their grudges against people who hated them for their physical deformities, they tried to save lives by supplying medicine. Sati was also provided medicine by Ganesh secretly when she was expecting. Brangas were also obliged by them for help in distress. Reunion of family members and acceptance of Vikarnas and Nagas bring positive change in the orthodox society.

c) ***The Oath of the Vayuputras (2013)***

This most voluminous book of the *Trilogy* is full of adventure and suspense. Shiva is convinced that Somras is the true evil that is causing environmental pollution and deformities in children. He wages war against the people who favour its use and promote its production. The toxic waste released after the manufacturing of Somras is responsible for the plague in Branga. The Somras production needs a huge amount of water from the river Saraswati which is on the verge of depletion. He is helped by the chief of the Vasudev, Gopal for his mission to eradicate the evil of Somras. He takes Shiva to the land of Vayuputras to acquire a

divine weapon to terrorize his adversaries in the war against the use of Somras. The legendary tribe of Vayuputras trains a member as Neelkanth so that when evil arises, he can save people from evil as the saviour. Although Shiva gets Pashupatastra on the condition that he will only terrorize the enemy with it and never use it in reality but, after Sati's death Shiva loses control and annihilates Devgiri with it. People associated with the preparation of the Somras are spared as the drink might become useful sometime in the future. The mastermind against Shiva's life, sage Bhrigu is spared as he is the reservoir of knowledge and wisdom. King Daksha, Queen Vireeni, Parvateswar, and Anandmayi all choose to die with the Devgiri. The end of the third book is unexpected as Shiva works for peace and equality all his life but suddenly, he turns violent and destructive after the assassination of his wife Sati by mercenaries sent by King Daksha. After using Pashupatastra for the annihilation of Devgiri the capital of Meluha, he retires to his native place Kailash Mountain with his sons, Kartik and Ganesh. Over time, they are gradually accepted as Gods by the people of Sapt Sindhu.

Devdutt Pattanaik.

Devdutt Pattanaik is a medical doctor who worked in the pharmaceutical and healthcare industry for fifteen years and then turned his part-time passion for mythology into his full-time profession. He has authored hundreds of articles and books on the relevance of sacred stories, symbols, and rituals in modern times. These have been translated into Hindi, Marathi, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, and many international languages including Russian, Polish, and Japanese. He is a much sought-after corporate speaker and acts as a consultant to organizations on matters related to leadership and culture. Pattanaik is one of the popular contemporary writers who interpret mythology to make it more interesting and easier to understand. He writes, illustrates, and gives lectures on the different interpretations of mythological stories in a modern context. Since 1996 he has been writing books and

columns on myths, symbols, and rituals. He gives consultations to corporations on leadership and governance. His major works include *Myth= Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology* (2006), *Jaya: An Illustrated Retelling of the Mahabharata* (2018), *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana* (2013), *Shikhandi: And Other Tales They Don't Tell You* (2014) and *The Pregnant King* (2008), *The Man who was a Woman & Other Queer stories from Hindu Lore* (2002), *Olympus-An Indian Retelling of Greek lore* (2016), *Marriage- 100 Stories around India's Favourite Ritual* (2021), *Eden-An Indian Retelling of Jewish, Christian & Islamic lore* (2021), *99 Thoughts on Ganesha* (2011), *How to become Rich-12 Lessons I Learnt from Vedic and Puranic Stories* (2019), *An Indian Approach to Learning: The Talent Sutra* (2016), *An Indian Approach to Power: The leadership Sutra* (2016), etc. Besides these books, he has written many other books on the same themes meant for children and other age groups. His three printed books on Lord Shiva are chosen as the main texts for the current study. He makes sketches for his books on his own, to illustrate the myth and the story described there. Pattanaik is well known for his books on mythology with a personal meaning attached to them that is easy to comprehend. He has made mythology part of our popular culture among readers and viewers in the new millennium. A popular TV serial on Star Plus channel *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* is based on his works on Lord Shiva. On TV also he is popular in the Epic Channel program *Devlok with Devdutt Pattanaik* and Business Sutras on CNBC-TV18. He was also consulted by Star TV network on mythological teleserials like the *Mahabharata* and *Siya Ke Ram*. He has made mythology a plaything that can be interpreted in any way one wants to, for a better understanding of life. However, he is criticised by pundits and Sanskrit scholars for divergence from the scriptural essence but he is liked by readers who bother less about the authenticity of the popular myths in Sanskrit texts and care more about the ease of interpretation of scriptures and their message. Moreover, many versions of the same epics/myths are also available so the veracity of the text is

doubtful. Interestingly a medical doctor has gained the new identity of a famous mythologist through his interpretations of mythological texts and epics. The mysteries embedded in our scriptures, old manuscripts, and epics invite intellectuals to reinterpret and uncover them. The recent market trends have shown a spurt in such mysteries and mythology. Following are the books on Shiva for the current study:

a) ***Shiva – An Introduction (1997)***

The very first book on Shiva, published in 1997 is like a Coffee table book with glossy pages and pictures. The justification for writing this book is given in the question the writer asks the readers, whether any parent would agree to give their daughter to a half-naked, inebriated mendicant who smears his body with ash, rides a bull, and has serpents around his neck. This problem experienced by Himavat is an ordinary human reaction that can be understood easily as all the parents look for a suitable groom for their child. The writer declares that the essential earthiness, enmeshed with sublime philosophy, inspired him to write this book. It carries basic information on the bull-bannered deity whose presence in hills, plains, villages, towns, and temples across the globe can be traced without any difficulty. It has evolved over time and in our time, we can find him in paintings, dance, icons, mime, music, TV serials, comic books, and mythological fiction which are the subject of this study. Pattanaik feels that what seems easy and accessible can be difficult to explain as the retelling of Shiva mythology is a herculean task due to its universal appeal. The magnitude of the subject and the limitations of language challenged the author but he tried to explain everything for the sake of the readers. The book is divided into fifteen chapters where he talks about the approach of Shiva, his marriage with the Goddess, his sons, and his various manifestations. The next part of the book presents his exploits, warriors, companions, and devotees. His history, attributes, temples, festivals, and ways of worship are also detailed in the next chapters. All in all, the

book is informative for a novice and suggestive for a devotee who wants to understand the character of Shiva.

b) ***Shiva to Shankara: Giving Form to the Formless (2006)***

In this book, Pattanaik has described the transformation of Lord Shiva from an ascetic to a householder. The book is divided into five chapters. The author justifies the reason for writing this book as a quest to find an answer to the question of why the Shiva symbol is the male reproductive organ placed within the female reproductive organ. He argues that the book can be seen as yet another effort to shy away from the obvious. There might be a deeper meaning which can be explored. In Pattanaik's words, the book seeks to decode the mystery of Shiva's Linga by exploring narratives, symbols, and rituals associated with him. The first chapter on 'Isolation of Shiva' describes Shiva as a hermit who has withdrawn from the world in the quest for serenity and stillness. Various stories from, the *Shiv Maha Purana*, the *Narad Purana*, the *Brahman Purana*, the *Kalika Purana*, the *Skanda Purana*, the *Vishnu Purana*, and the *Linga Purana* are interpreted to explain the basic nature of the God who is indifferent to the material world and meditates most of the time. The second chapter titled '*Seduction of Shiva*' seems to be influenced by Wendy Doniger's perspective of Shiva which is reflected in the title of her book: *The Erotic Ascetic*. It presents Shiva's marriage with Sati which engages him with the world. Here stories from the epic *Mahabharata*, the *Somnath Sthala Purana*, *Shiv Purana*, *Vaman Purana*, *Skanda Purana*, *Linga Purana*, and *Kashi Sthala Purana* are used to explain Shiva's venerable being. Some folklore from Tamil Nadu and other regions of India are also used for this purpose. The third chapter 'Grace of Shiva' describes Shiva as a hermit who becomes the accessible and benevolent householder called Shankara. This chapter also has anecdotes from the *Peria Puranam*, the *Linga Purana*, the *Matsya Purana*, the *Bhagvat Purana*, the *Sabarimalai Sthala Purana*, the *Vishnu Purana*, the

Skanda Purana, the *Vamana Purana* and folklore from Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Himalayan region. A few stories are from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Navnath Charitra and Virbhadra Mahatmya are also included in the stories of Lord Shiva. In the concluding chapter, he observes that Shiva is the inward-looking inert consciousness, whom Shakti stirs and excites so that life can happen. This parallel is drawn from the earliest school of philosophy in India i.e. Samkhya darshan, which puts forward a theory of creation owing to the conjugation of the Purusa (Shiva) with Prakriti (Shakti). Shakti wants Shiva to become Shankara, the householder. So, Shiva is the divine force within us who makes decisions by being the observer of life or 'Sakshin'. Shakti is the divine force around us which is the observation that is life or the material world that manifests around us for the enjoyment of Shiva (Purusa). Both are complementary to each other, without either there is neither so there is harmony in the material world that brings wisdom.

c) ***7 Secrets of Shiva (2011)***

From the Hindu Trinity Series, this third book deals with the seven secrets of Shiva as the name suggests. The writer argues that most Hindus become defensive and go out of their way to strip Hinduism of its sexual heritage. Accused of this cultural insensitivity, Western scholars strike back saying that Hindus do not know their heritage and are still viewing Hinduism through the archaic Victorian lens. This debate of academicians versus devotees inspired the author to write this book. There are seven chapters in this book. The first one, Lingeswara's Secret, talks about the meaning of Shiv Linga and the common titillation offered by a phallic symbol. The second one deals with the Bhairava's secret which focuses on Shiva's violent disdain for territorial behaviour amongst humans. The third and fourth chapters investigate the goddess's untiring efforts to make Shiva a householder. The next two

chapters present Shiva's sons Ganesh and Kartikeya and the last chapter revolves around the cosmic dance of Shiva as the Nataraja.

The **main objectives** of the study are:

To critically examine the representations of Shiva in popular culture

To look into the problematics of the contemporisation of Shiva in popular literature.

Sub-Objectives:

- a) To analyse Shiva's character in a comparative context of representation.
- b) To understand and evaluate critically the genre of mythological fiction.
- c) To find and analyse reasons for the spate in a fictional representation of legendary characters and themes.
- d) To study and critique the problematics of the representation of Shiva.
- e) To critically examine Shiva's legend in ancient text vs. representations by Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik.

Research questions:

The present research attempts to answer the following questions:

- a) Why has fiction become a predominant genre of mythological writing?
- b) What constitutes the poetics and politics of these books?
- c) Why is commercialisation appropriated in creative retellings?

d) What solutions are offered for contemporary problems in the *Shiva Trilogy*?

e) Why the retellings/representations of legendary characters have gained momentum in this era of generative AI?

Theoretical and Methodological Frameworks

The proposed study has employed an eclectic methodology that consists of a close reading of the text. It has also simultaneously placed the text within their socio-legendary and socio-historical contexts to understand the authors' perspectives. The research applies the comparative and analytical study of the authors as the purpose and genre of their work are different. As part of the methodology, textual and intertextual analysis of the primary reading and the review of the secondary readings have been undertaken to investigate the issues and their relevance in the present time. The study proposes to compare the creative techniques of the authors in reinterpreting the legend of Shiva. The qualitative and exploratory approaches are used to attain the objectives of the study. It is a study that interrogates various socio-cultural forces like class, caste, ecology, and ideology. The thesis speculates on cultural and social aspects that led to the deluge of mythological fiction in recent times by eclectically drawing upon various theories. The analytical perspectives of Postmodernism, Postcolonial Studies, Post-feminism, Post-diaspora, and Ecocriticism are applied to the texts to understand mythology's contemporisation in popular fiction. A systematic framework is developed to analyse contemporary mythological novels, especially the *Shiva Trilogy*.

Chapterisation

As a compact subject of critical representation, the present thesis is divided into five chapters including Introduction and Conclusion. A piece of brief information about the next chapter is given at the end of every chapter. The thesis comprises five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter titled 'Introduction' is like a brief survey of mythological writings with special reference to the legend of Shiva. It has tried to place mythological writing in a contemporary perspective. Emphasis is on presenting the nuances of the tradition of the portrayal of mythological characters by modern writers. It also delves into the reasons facilitating the rise of mythological fiction and assesses the current trend in this area. It carries a discussion on popular culture, mythological fiction writers, and Shiva in the writings of regional, foreign, and English language authors. Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik's biographies and works on Shiva are detailed with a methodological framework that is applied to analyse them. The literature review is also part of this chapter. A piece of brief information about the next chapter is given at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 2: Shiva in Mythological Texts

The second chapter, titled 'Shiva in Mythological Texts' on the textual knowledge regarding Shiva has covered different Shaiv traditions across India/world. It also discusses how the legend of Shiva is embedded in the very structure of Indian religions like Hindu religion, Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism which enhances and reaffirms our faith in the Supreme Being. It compares the Shiva of the Maha Puranas, the Upanishads, and other scriptures with the works on the legend of Shiva by modern authors like Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik. Especially the text of the *Shiv Maha Purana*, the *Linga Purana*, the *Peria Puranam*, and the books about the text of *Vigyan Bhairav Tantra* are discussed in detail. The main argument of comparison of the Shiva legend and his representations in the mythological fiction is done with Lord Shiva depicted in the Puranas and other scriptures. Different types of Shaivism prevalent in India and other countries with Hindu populations are also analysed. The

prominent books of the current era written on the legend of Shiva have formed part of the analysis.

Chapter 3: Shiva in Popular Culture (Devdutt Pattanaik)

The chapter under discussion focuses on the representations of Shiva in popular culture. Shiva in popular culture prevails through inter-genre representations in literature, both classical and popular, historical narratives, cinema, and T.V. serials. In this context, Pattanaik's works on Lord Shiva mediate through the historicization of the myth and its representations in popular T.V. serials like *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev*. His *Shiva: An Introduction* gives a substantial account of Shiva and Shaivism. *From Shiva to Shankara* by Pattanaik details the journey of Shiva from ascetic to a Householder. *7 Secrets of Shiva* is also about different aspects of Shiva. The chapter has also reviewed the cinematic representations of Shiva as a cultural phenomenon of retellings of myths and legends. It has analysed the legend of Shiva across the world in the popular culture of our time. Every aspect of culture and its relevance in our lives is discussed along with an analysis of the representation and presence of Shiva in fine arts, meditation, and visual and print media. The works of Pattanaik are also analysed as he has contributed towards popularising the legend of Shiva. TV serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev*'s phenomenal success is responsible for the spate of mythological TV serials. His books on Shiva carry information from different sources in an easy-to-understand language that has increased the number of readers who take an interest in mythology.

Chapter 4: Shiva in Popular Literature (Amish Tripathi)

The chapter titled 'Shiva in Popular Literature' attempts to critique the contemporisation of Shiva in popular literature. As such, the chapter majorly focuses on the *Shiva Trilogy* by Amish Tripathi intending to examine the creative representation of the contemporaneity of

the Shiva. Amish Tripathi's fictional account of Shiva as a superhuman entity is highlighted in a positive light. The protagonist's efforts in finding the evil, abolition of the Vikarma law, and assimilation of the downtrodden in mainstream society are analysed along with power politics, parenthood, and other contemporary issues. It discusses the books on Lord Shiva written by authors of Indian and foreign origin. It evaluates the role of humanized Shiva as the protagonist in the *Shiva Trilogy* written by renowned author Amish Tripathi. Pattanaik's Shiva narrated in his three books is juxtaposed against the Shiva of Amish Tripathi. The chapter has also unearthed how mythology can be used to find solutions for present-day society's current problems.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The concluding chapter integrates the issues and arguments that have emerged in the present study and discusses the findings based thereon. Critical observations and the conclusion of the entire study are documented here. This chapter has summarised the findings of the research and provided some suggestions and recommendations for further investigation. The valuable addition of the study to the existing knowledge system is elaborated from the futuristic perspective. The social significance of the study is long-lasting for its involvement in ancient mythology for finding answers to current issues of the present society. The chapter also includes suggestions and recommendations for further research in the field of Cultural Studies.

In the following chapter, **Shiva in Mythological Texts**, the presence of Shiva in various Maha Puranas, Upanishads, and other scriptures will be discussed in comparison to the works of modern authors like Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik. Especially the text of the *Shiv Maha Purana*, the *Linga Purana*, the *Peria Puranam*, and the *Vigyan Bhairav Tantra* are discussed in detail. The main argument of comparison of the Shiva legend and his representations in the

mythological fiction is done with Lord Shiva depicted in the Puranas and other scriptures. Different types of Shaivism prevalent in India and other countries having Hindu populations are also analysed. The prominent books of the current era written on the legend of Shiva form part of the analysis.

CHAPTER-II

SHIVA IN MYTHOLOGICAL TEXTS

“Whence the world came from, who was present? At the beginning. He who looks from above. He alone knows” - Rig Veda.

The myth of Shiva goes back to pre-Vedic roots with a variety of information that has been interpreted by scholars and learned persons at length. A commentary by Jai Deva Singh on *Pratyabhijnahridayam: The Secret of Self Recognition*, a Sanskrit text of Kashmir Shaivism establishes that:

The Saiva religion is perhaps the most ancient faith in the world. Sir John Marshall says in his *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilisation* that excavations in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa reveal an important fact, viz., that Saivism has a history going back to Chalcolithic Age or even further still, and that it thus takes place as the most ancient living faith in the world (1).

The book further states “In India, there are three main forms of this religio-philosophy, viz., the Vira-Saiva form in Deccan-Karnataka, the Saiva-Siddhanta in Tamil Nadu, and the Advaita Saiva form in Kashmir” (1). Mythology plays a significant role in shaping our culture and collective consciousness, suggesting solutions, and solving relevant problems. New myths are being added and modified with time and necessity for a better understanding of the world around us. Mythology consists of many legends that inspire and upgrade our thinking, but some legends remain popular due to their grandeur and relevance. The legend of

Shiva will remain new forever and can be understood in the light of Lord Shiva of the Sanatan Dharma, which is eternal and pervading in most of the Hindu scriptures. He is there in the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, Jain, Sikh, and Buddhist literature to name a few. From ancient to modern his presence can be felt in fine arts, yoga, literature, and even in politics (Shiv Sena). The traces of this primordial God's existence can be found across the globe as during excavations phallic images and Nandi's statues are retrieved by teams of archaeologists around the world. The iconography of Shiva is spread over the earth in the form of Jyotirlingas holding magnetic positive energy. Shaivism as a religion is practised by millions of people in India, Nepal, and countries having Hindu populations and Indian migrants across the globe. Followers avoid extremes like dogmatism and superstition but rituals, chanting, and pilgrimage are common practices. It is believed that He has neither a beginning nor an end, so the Lord Shiva of Sanatan Dharma has existed from time immemorial. Wendy Doniger (1981) in her book, *Shiva: The Erotic Ascetic* states that:

Siva is not only an extremely important Hindu god; he is in many ways the most uniquely Indian god of them all, and the principles which emerge from an intensive study of his mythology lie at the very heart of Hinduism" (1). Regarding the Shiva myth, she finds that "The Saiva myths involve many terms, and many permutations of each, so that literally hundreds of myths, all interrelated through their mutual characters and episodes, are required to elucidate even a relatively short sequence (17).

The word Shiva means auspicious or pure, one who is worshipped as an embodiment of grace and wisdom. His name/persona is used/misused by writers, filmmakers, shopkeepers, and people of other domains for professional success and positive vibes. Shiva has nondual energy which is free from attributes like Satva, Rajas, and Tamas and in the cosmos which is

forever changing, he is transcendental and devoid of these attributes called 'trigunas'. The iconic form of the Shiva Linga, statues of bull Nandi and other paraphernalia associated with the worship of Shiva can be found in cities, villages and forests. Folklores of India and Southeast Asian countries are rich in Shaiva traditions which carry different connotations but the streak/thread of faith is common among them. Lott (2017) in his essay 'Hindu Theology' comments "While complexity characterizes Vishnu-related history, paradox dominates the cultic and theological history of Shiva" (170). He further states:

What emerged was a Siva who combined seemingly contradictory features: starting sexual priapism detailed in many mythic stories, along with rigorous asceticism; wildly frenzied outbursts, along with serene yogic meditation; antinomian inhabitants of cremation grounds, as well as caring "Lord of the Cattle;" fierce destroyer and beneficent "healer" and above all, full of grace (170).

Our mythological texts are a reliable source of information on the deity who is considered supreme in the Hindu religious order. Among scriptures, ancient Puranas have a special place for having information regarding everything associated with life, existence, and the afterlife. The Purana is that class of literature which deals with faith in ancient times, social, political and cultural history, philosophy, and many other subjects. It is encyclopedic in form and provides various branches of knowledge and ancient wisdom for attaining worldly pleasures and salvation. The Puranas carry information on the process of Creation and dissolution, the Age of Manus and their Genealogies. They are glorified as an ancient piece of divine literature produced by the Creator Brahma himself. It is estimated that it contained a hundred crore verses (shlokas) in its earlier form and the great sage Krishna Dvaipayana Ved Vyasa out of compassion for humankind reduced this huge number of verses to four lakh Shlokas. This Purana was divided into eighteen Puranas, namely: *The Brahma Purana*, *The Padma Purana*, *The Vishnu Purana*, *The Shiv Maha Purana*, *The Bhagavata Purana*, *The Bhavishya*

Purana, The Narada Purana, The Markendeya Purana, The Agni Purana, The Brahmanvaivarta Purana, The Linga Purana, The Varah Purana, The Skanda Purana, The Vamana Purana, The Kurma Purana, The Matsya Purana, The Garuda Purana, and The Brahmanda Purana.

It is believed that Puranas are complementary to Vedas for carrying explanations of the great Vedas for the devotees who cannot understand the Sanskrit language. As the sacred literature of India, their relevance can never be neglected due to their ideas on a rich and wide variety of subjects such as religion, politics, philosophy, history, environment, and sociology to name a few. They represent various aspects and phases of life of different ages and illuminate the Vedic dharma which is Sanatan (eternal) in nature. They are like encyclopedias of ancient wisdom and knowledge with details of the creation of the universe, the periodical process of destruction/pralaya, and re-creation. Some Puranas concentrate on a particular deity like the *Shiv Maha Purana, the Linga Purana, the Markandeya Purana, and the Skanda Purana* are considered *Puranas* devoted to Lord Shiva. The *Garuda Purana* and *The Brahmand Purana* are also *Puranas* dealing with the story of Lord Shiva. The true purpose of Vedas, their philosophy and ethics is to guide the readers on the right path. The guidelines for the Dharma-Sutras magnify the true philosophy of the Vedas and Puranas. The real essence of Sanatan Dharam is documented in our scriptures which guides and directs the new generation to understand the true nature of life. Despite being very ancient Vedas are ever new and relevant as they are the storehouse of ancient wisdom and repository of various branches of knowledge. Jaideva Singh (2018) in *Pratyabhigyanhridyam*'s translation states that "The Saiva Philosophy does not conceive of the Supreme as a logomachist but as an Artist. Just as an artist cannot contain his delight within himself, but pours it out into a song, a picture or a poem, even so, the Supreme Artist pours out the delightful wonder of His splendour into manifestation or creation" (9-10).

The mythology of the legend of Shiva has been evolving over the years according to the changes in culture and society. Gavin Flood (1998) in his book, *An Introduction to Hinduism* emphasizes the early tantric rituals associated with Shiva as well as the later absorption of Saivism into the Brahmanical orthopraxy. He observes that:

At the one extreme, he is the highly revered, orthodox renouncer, the ideal of many high-caste male householders, yet at the other extreme, there is the feared unorthodox ascetic, openly courting pollution and living in the cremation ground. This ambivalent attitude is clearly demonstrated in the religions of Siva who is himself a god of paradox: both the ideal householder and the ideal ascetic (149).

The paradox of the entity of Shiva is highlighted by his ascetic and householder form. In the present time, Shiva is associated with his householder form rather than an ascetic. Bisschop (2009) remarks “Siva by nature defies definition and is, if anything, an ambivalent god of contrasts” (741). Regarding Shiva’s contradictory character Doniger (1981) comments:

Only a small portion of the corpus of ancient Saiva mythology has been translated from the Sanskrit; with this inadequate representation, it is The Central Paradox of Saiva Mythology not surprising that the mythology of Siva was considered contradictory and paradoxical by scholars who saw only the two ends of the spectrum. Siva the Creator and Destroyer, Life and Death, the *coincidentia oppositorum*—this much was accepted as consistent with Indian metaphysical thought, and the apparent sexual ambiguity of the god was regarded as simply one more aspect of a basically ambiguous character or a result of the chance historical assimilation of two opposing strains, a process well known in Indian religion (4-5).

The Shiv Maha Purana

The sacred literature of India incorporates Puranas as very important and Lord Shiva is mentioned as the Supreme God in many Puranas. The legend of Shiva has its origin in the Sanatan Dharam which has scriptures like the *Shiv Maha Purana* and the *Linga Purana* which provide details on the creation, the cosmos, and Shiva-related information. Shastri, JL (1970) writes in the preface of the *Maha Shiv Purana*:

Among the works of the Puranic literature, Sivapurana has always attracted a large share of interest. Since it embodies the essence of Siva's cult that has exercised for centuries a wide influence on the multi-tribal Indian community since it explains the mode of worship of Siva's phallic idol installed in thousands of temples spread over the vast Indian peninsula, and since it illustrates the elaborate ritual, feasts and fasts connected with Siva, the start of the series with this Purana needs no apology (xii).

His trajectory of life cannot be traced by human beings as he has neither a beginning nor an end. He has conquered death itself and is worshipped by all other gods and goddesses thereby acquiring the status of god of the gods. Amish Tripathi, Pattanaik, and many other writers' success stories owe to the text of *Maha Shiv Purana* and other Puranas as well. Suresh Kumar (2017) claims:

Amish Tripathi, contextualizes Shiva Purana, a sacred Hindu text into a fictional creation. While the first novel, *The Immortals of Meluha*, introduces the readers to ancient Indian culture, the second one, *The Secret of Nagas* philosophizes the concept of good and evil, which is an integral ingredient of Indian culture. The concluding novel, *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, argues and to a great extent convinces that the

culture of the nation, that ignores the Law of Nature, violates it, while the one that follows the Laws of Nature leads its nation towards enlightenment (398).

Vitthani (2017) credits Amish Tripathi for “His way of storytelling, style to weave philosophy into the plot and religious symbolism take mythology into another paradigm” (35). Pattanaik’s books on Shiva are non-fictional and narrate stories taken from various mythological sources. It is astonishing that the credit for the story of the TV serial ‘*Devon Ke Dev Mahadev*’ is given to Pattanaik and not to the original text of the *Shiv Maha Purana* which inspired the writer. The way purest gems lie hidden in the depths of the oceans and rocks and one has to find the treasure with great hard work, similarly, truth is also hidden in the language of sacred texts that can be deciphered by learned scholars only. Extrapolation might have altered the meaning and contents of this work, but its spirit is still intact. The *Shiv Maha Purana* highlights the glory and greatness of Lord Shiva who is the Supreme consciousness. It is a religious text associated with the Purana genre of Sanskrit texts belonging to Hinduism. Sage Vyasa’s disciple Romharshan is said to be the writer of this holy text which is an integral part of the corpus of Shaiva literature. Originally the manuscript contained 100,000 verses that were divided into twelve Samhitas (books). It also discusses how the legend of Shiva is embedded in the Hindu religion’s very structure, which enhances and reaffirms our faith in the Supreme Being. The *Shiv Maha Purana* is the most important and easily available text in India and South Asian countries on the legend of Shiva.

According to scholars, a Maha Purana contains characteristics that deal with the genesis, early religion or traditional history. The *Shiv Maha Purana* contains information on the origin of the universe and other important entities. Lord Shiva, the supreme god who is said to be devoid of attributes still expresses himself in three principles of Satva, Rajas and Tamas. The three deities represent the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Rudra. Goddess Sarasvati,

Lakshmi, and Kali, respectively are the positive energies associated with them which help in creating, maintaining, and dissolving the universe. The *Shiv Maha Purana* classifies creation into three categories:

- a) Five organs of knowledge and action, Ego and intellect and subtle elements
- b) Human beings, animals, insentient objects, sentient feelings
- c) Mind-born sons of Brahma

According to the *Shiv Maha Purana*, the cycle of creation in the universe goes on and ends in dissolutions which leads to a newer creation. The creator starts the process of recreating the Universe again after taking some rest. Thus, the process of dissolution and re-creations goes on in the universe according to the text of *Shiv Maha Purana*. The *Shiv Maha Purana* also explains several rites and rituals related to the worship of the deity and how to perform practices related to the spiritual aspects of Tantra, Yantra, and Mantra. A devotee of Shiva can express his/her dedication to Shiva by eulogising, listening to hymns and by meditation. These activities lead to spiritual enlightenment and the fulfilment of desires. With the control of the six chakras, yogic practices, acquiring knowledge and with the help of traditional rites one can attain an awareness of the deity which would ultimately lead to the union with Shiva. With many variations, the *Shiv Maha Purana* proceeds with the statement of genealogies and deeds of great kings and rulers. It has the conventional characteristics of a Maha Purana but it is called a Tamasic Purana as well.

The manuscript of the *Shiv Maha Purana* originally contained 100,000 verses that were divided into twelve Samhitas (compendiums). It also discusses how the legend of Shiva is embedded in the Hindu religion's very structure, which enhances and reaffirms our faith in the Supreme Being. The *Shiv Maha Purana* is a very popular text on the legend of Shiva which has encouraged many directors to make movies and TV serials in different languages.

This Maha Purana has various Samhitas which further have various chapters about the greatness of Shiva including stories, methods of worshipping Shiva, the importance of yoga, and the origin of temples and places. The extant text of the *Shiv Maha Purana* consists of seven Samhitas (compendiums) which give us a glimpse of the great *Shiv Maha Purana*. These seven Samhitas are *Vidyeshwar Samhita*, *Rudra Samhita*, *Shatrudra Samhita*, *Koti Rudra Samhita*, *Uma Samhita*, *Kailash Samhita*, and *Vayaviya Samhita*. The knowledge of the *Shiv Maha Purana* helps one understand the mysteries of the universe and the greatness of Lord Shiva and gives auspicious fruits just like a ‘Kalpa-Taru’ (A mythological tree that fulfills all the wishes). The text of the *Shiv Maha Purana* starts with the significance of the sacred text in which the story of Chanchula and Bindug is given which proves the kindness of Shiva as the supreme reality which is responsible for the welfare of the universe. Following are the seven compendiums (Samhitas) in the text:

1. The Vidyeshvara Compendium

This compendium proves the efficacy of dedication to Lord Shiva by explaining the methods and means of worship of the bull-bannered Lord. It describes Saint Vyasa’s meditation and visit of Sanat Kumar who explains the significance of chanting the name of Shiva which leads to enlightenment and salvation. Sanat Kumar advises the saint to sing, narrate and hear the glory of Shiva along with regular meditation for attaining salvation.

The Column of Fire (The Greatness of Shiva Linga)

According to Sutji, Shravana (hearing), Kirtan (glorifying), and Manan (meditation) are necessary before the worship of the Shivalinga. Once a pillar of fire appeared which baffled Vishnu and Brahma. Vishnu went downward to find its end but failed miserably. Similarly, Brahma also tried very hard to find its limit by flying in the form of a swan to the sky but to no avail. The lies of Brahma and the Ketaki flower angered Shiva who came out of the pillar

and punished Brahma by destroying his fifth head. Brahma was deprived of worship by devotees which is why temples of Brahma are missing except for Pushkar Dham. The festival of Shivaratri is celebrated on that day by the devotees but in the popular culture of our time, it is believed that Shivaratri is celebrated for the marriage/union of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.

Rituals of the worship of Shiva are detailed in this compendium. It is believed that worshipping Shiva at midnight is especially fructifying. The importance of Agni-Yagya is also proven by its cultural and divine implications in a Shiva devotee's life. Although separate days are dedicated to gods according to the scripture, currently in popular culture in the Northern part of India, Monday is for Lord Shiva, Tuesday (Lord Hanuman), Wednesday (Lord Ganesha), Thursday (Lord Vishnu), Friday (Goddess Luxmi) Saturday (Lord Shani dev) Sunday (Surya Dev), etc. The Glorification of Pranav Panchakshar (Five syllable mantra) is impossible to explain as its unfathomable nature and benevolent aspects surpass both the spiritual and philosophical significance of other Mantras. The worship of Parthiva Linga while facing the North direction and the importance of Naivedya, Bilva leaves, and Rudraksha are explained by Sutji. It is believed that the Naivedya offered to Lord Shiva is auspicious and the very sight of which can liberate a devotee from all of his sins. Rudraksha of a particular colour is assigned concerning the varna of a person for example for Brahmins white colour is prescribed. In the popular culture of India, Rudraksha beads are very common, and devotees wear them daily with rules meant to be followed. Spirituality attached to Rudraksha beads is commonly accepted and appreciated by Indian and Western Shiva devotees.

2. The Rudra Compendium

i) (Creation Episode)

This is the second compendium has the story of sage Narad's delusion, the glory of Shiva Linga, the act of Creation, the genesis of Creation, the glory of Shiva, the mode of worshipping Lord Shiva, and the story of Kubera who requests the lord to make Kailasha mountain His abode. This part describes supernatural deeds performed by Lord Shiva. It consists of the Creation episode, the Sati episode and the Uma episode in detail. Brahma preaches Narada on the Origin of Vishnu and Brahma for creation and sustenance.

ii) The Rudra Compendium (Sati Episode)

The Rudra-Sati episode of the compendium elaborates on the summary of Sati's birth, and life and also narrates how Kama is first cursed and then blessed by Shiva. The story of Sandhya's penance, a boon given by Shiva, and her marriage with Vashishth as Arundhati is also part of this compendium. Daksha's penance gets him a boon from the Goddess for having her as his daughter. Consequently, Sati is born and sacred rites of Nanda and hymns to Shiva are explained that are essential for devotees to recite to receive blessings. The marriage of Sati and Shiva and their divine sports are narrated in great detail drawing parallels from the Purusa-Prakriti Lila. Despite a warning from Shiva himself, Sati tests Rama's divinity due to which Shiva separates himself mentally from her. The differences between Daksha and Shiva get aggravated and Daksha does not invite him and Sati to his grand Yagya/sacrifice. Sati insists on going to her father's house to take part in the sacrifice to which all important sages are invited but she does not get the respect and attention that she deserves as a daughter. She feels humiliated and eventually immolates herself and casts off her mortal body in the fire. Lord Shiva sends Virbhadrha to destroy Daksha's sacrifice which represents the victory of Shiva over Daksha's arrogance as the Prajapati. Gods eulogize Shiva to pacify and Daksha

begs for mercy. Consequently, Shiva removes Daksha's misery by replacing Daksha's head with a goat's head. Shiva's grief over Sati's immolation is stopped by Vishnu by using his Sudarshan Chakra (divine disc) to cut her body into many pieces. The fallen pieces were immortalized by the devotees by establishing Shakti Peethas/Siddh Peethas at each place where they fell.

iii) The Rudra Compendium (Parvati Episode)

In this episode, Sati is reborn as the daughter of Himalaya and does severe penance for attaining Shiva. The twenty-seven years of penance of Himalaya and his wife Menavati result in the birth of Parvati who delights everyone with her childhood sports. Sage Narad predicts after reading her hand that she will marry an ascetic who will be devoid of passion for the material world. Narada suggests that if she can perform severe penance for Shiva, he can assume the form of Ardhnarishvar (half male and half female). When Shiva goes to Gangavataran, an excellent Himalayan ridge, to undergo penance he requests Himalaya to arrange for his privacy. Lord of the mountains brings Parvati along with her two maids to serve Shiva which offends Shiva but after much argument between Shiva and Parvati over the Purusa and Prakriti eventually, Shiva agrees to allow her to serve him. Despite all efforts she cannot entice Shiva so Indra sent ~~the~~ Kama to disturb the penance of Shiva but ~~the~~ Kama gets reduced to ashes by Shiva. Disappointed Parvati goes for an even greater degree of penance so seven celestial sages come to test her resolution. Her penance is again tested by Shiva himself who succumbs to her charms and gives her the desired boon of becoming her husband.

iv) Rudra Compendium (Kumar episode)

This part deals with the birth of Kartikeya who was born in very unusual circumstances. The semen of Shiva was stolen by Agni who could not hold it and threw it into the river Ganga.

When Ganga also could not bear the heat, she also threw it into the forest of reeds. Eventually, six Kritikas took care of Kartikeya and raised him to be the commander of the army of gods against the demon Tarakasur. The fight with the Asur Tarakasur is given in great detail to prove the worthiness of Bhakti of Shiva who is all-powerful in the universe.

v) Rudra Compendium (War episode)

The war between the gods and Tarakasur is the main theme of this chapter. The great army of the gods led by the Senapati Kartikeya fights the demon. Eventually, Kartikeya kills the demon and establishes a reign of peace and safety from the Asuras. Stories of the birth of Ganesha, Brahma's boon on demon Tripuras, Shankhchuda, Andhakasura, and Banasura are also narrated in this compendium. In Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* character of Kartikeya has a new twist as the child of Sati from her second husband, Shiva. He is devoted to his parents, and after Sati's assassination by an Egyptian mercenary, he takes care of Shiva and the people of India. For his bravery and untiring efforts, he is deified by the people of India along with his parents and older brother Ganesh. Despite subversion, his character stands out supreme for gallantry and dedication towards both his family and humankind at large.

3. The Shatrudra Compendium

The incarnations of the omnipresent Shiva are countless in different Aeons and Kalpas but some are very popular and significant. The text contains ten forms of Rudra that are prominent and in the first form, Shiva is *Ardhnarishvar*. The second one is as an incarnation of Shiva as *Nandishvara*. When Shilad performed penance to beget a son Shiva gave him a boon to have a son who was free from birth, death, and old age. The next one is *Grihpati*, who was immortal and crowned as the guardian of the quarters. The fourth one is *Hanuman* and the fifth one is in the form of a phallic image of *Achleshvara Mahadev*. *Avadhuteshvara* was the next incarnation of Shiva when he tested the devotion of Indra by appearing as a

naked mendicant. In his *Krishndarshna* avatar, he confers salvation to Nabhag and his father. As *Bhikshuvarya* Lord Shiva manifested himself in the role of a mendicant who bestowed happiness on his devotees. In the tenth incarnation as *Kirata*, Lord Shiva grants Arjuna his Pashupata Missile for his safety and destruction of the demons.

4. The Kotirudra Compendium

The whole universe is the manifestation of Shiva in different forms. There are uncountable Shiv Lingas and images of Shiva in the entire universe which proves his supremacy as the God of gods. In this compendium greatness of all the twelve Maha-Jyotirlingas, Atrishwar Mahadev, Amleshvara Mahadev, Nandkeshwar Mahadev and the Story of Shrikara is narrated.

The Origin of Mahakaleshwar

This Compendium gives the story of the origin of one of the most important jyotirlingas associated with Kaal or time. Dooshan, a demon who was intoxicated by the boons he received from Lord Brahma inflicted great atrocities on the people of Avanti. He tormented people by attacking the Brahmins for disobeying him. To punish him suddenly one day Lord Shiva appeared in the form of Mahakaal and reduced Dooshan and his army to ashes. The Mahakaal Jyotirlinga is symbolic of Shiva's specific form that manifested to vanquish the demon Dooshan.

Origin of Somnath

This part narrates the story of the installation of a very famous Jyotirlinga of Shri Somnath in Gujarat. It relates to the obsession of the Moon for Rohini, one of his twenty-seven wives. Consequently, he was cursed by Daksha to become weak and devoid of radiance as a punishment. The panacea of the 'Mahamrityunjaya mantra' brought Lord Shiva's mercy who

blessed the moon by alleviating his pain and suffering. The waning and waxing of the moon reduced the curse and the presence of Shiva at Somnath was welcomed by everyone. All the remaining Jyotirlingas and their significance are also detailed in this chapter.

5. The Uma Compendium

This compendium enlightens readers with diverse manifestations of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati. Lord Krishna's visit to Kailash to propitiate benevolent Lord Shiva acquainted him with sage Upamanyu, who himself was also performing penance to propitiate Lord Shiva. Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva showered desired boons on Krishna and obliged him. There is also a mention of the journey of the sinners and the righteous to the abode of the death god Yama. Parvati asks about the symptoms of impending death and ways and means to recover from them. Shiva explains many symptoms and suggests chanting Shabadbrahman for longevity and healthy life. As the name of the Compendium denotes there are diverse manifestations of Goddess Uma who is the Supreme Soul. She kills the Asur Mahisha, Chanda, Munda, Shumbha, Nishumbha, and the like to save people from their cruelty. Her incarnation of Durga and other forms for the welfare of humankind are also described in detail in this chapter.

6. The Kailasha Compendium

This Samhita deals with different forms of meditation, the significance of observing the four stages of life, the scriptural mode of renunciation, the technique of worshipping Ganesha, the various implications of the word 'Pranava' or 'Om', and the greatness of Lord Shiva. Sage Vamdev who was a liberated soul even while inside the womb was well-versed in the Vedas, the Puranas, and other scriptures. He adored and admired Kartikeya so he requested Kumar to explain the meaning of OM. Kumar explained the Pranav or OM as Lord Shiva himself. The five faces of Shiva are ordained by it and Pranava alone is the presiding principle of the sky

and is omnipotent. The four diverse forms of Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, and Maheshvara are mere offshoots of OM or Pranava. Rudra form is born of a part of Maheshvara and as a creator it becomes Brahma, as a preserver it becomes Vishnu, and as a destroyer, it is called Rudra. The entire universe dwells in OM, the supreme consciousness. The Om itself gets manifested in the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Rudra to create, preserve and destroy. Om is the doer, the deed and the cause, and Lord Shiva himself. A dirty mirror does not show the reflection, similarly, a mind plunged into the darkness of ignorance cannot have a vision of its splendour, i.e., 'Pranava' itself.

6. The Vayaviya Compendium

This Compendium describes the origin of Vidya, Meditation described by Vayudeva, Mental worship of Shiva by Shodashopachara, the Auspicious Day for Performing Shiva Worship, Time, Calculation, Yugas etc. '**Kaal**' (time) or **Kaalatama** is the radiance of Lord Shiva which cannot be translated into any language of the world. Introduction to the Universe and Classification of Yoga is also narrated in this compendium. The word Yoga means union and various types of yoga lead a person to his union with the divine/Lord Shiva. Five types of yoga are Mantra Yoga, Sparsh Yoga, Bhava Yoga (Union by devotion), Abhava Yoga and Mahayoga (The Great Union). Besides these, the importance of the Shiv Ratri fast, Brahma's adoration for Ardhnarishvar form, the third eye of Shiva, the gift of Sudarshan Chakra to Vishnu, Bhairava form of Shiva, the birth of Shukracharya, Mahamritunjay Mantra, devotee Pipplada, the greatness of Kandukeshvara etc. are also part of this compendium.

The *Shiv Maha Purana* dedicates chapters to Shaiva-Advaita philosophy as a system for attaining salvation. The *Linga Purana* and other Shaivism-related Puranas also advocate it for its significance in getting Moksha. Seth (2015) states the significance of the sacred *Shiv Maha Purana* in the following words:

The Shiva Purana holds a unique place in Hindu mythology. Mere listening to its sacred lore purifies the mind of a person. It is replete with so many such narratives of purification and salvation. Its perusal strengthens the spirit of devotion, cleanses the mind of all aberrations, and absolves the reader of all sins, let us comprehend the glory of the Shiva Purana through numerous narratives (09).

Shiva is said to be the epitome of renunciation, asceticism, love, and mercy. The origin of the river Ganga and the Moon on the head symbolizes life and the incineration of the pyre on the body symbolizes death. This life, like the currents of the Ganga, finally gets absorbed in the ocean of salvation. Sadashiv is the Jyotirlinga which hasn't been created nor can it be destroyed, that is untouched by time and age and is immortal. The devotee becomes free from the bondage of birth and death and in the end, dwells in the ultimate Shiva Dham. Getting inspiration from this Maha Purana many scholars and authors have written interpretations and altered stories of Lord Shiva. In the current popular literature, the legend of Shiva is quite popular among writers. Amish Tripathi has set a benchmark in the field of fiction derived from Hindu mythology. His protagonist is Shiva but the story is different and the characters are also given a makeover to bring newness and suspense. Karthic S. and Mukherjee S. (2020) claim that:

Tripathi has deconstructed various myths that are prevalent among people. The characters of Shiva, Sati, Nandi and Neelkanth are deconstructed to portray them as human beings rather than as mythical Gods and Goddesses. Similarly in the post-truth perspective, Tripathi used myth to climb up the social ladder by publishing mythological novels. He faced both controversies for projecting Lord Shiva as a human and was hailed for his creative work in literature (1260-1261).

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is inspired by Lord Shiva himself who is the supreme consciousness and responsible for keeping harmony in the universe. He is the moon-crested lord with Nandi as his stead and permanent companion. His ascetic and benevolent form is as famous as his fierce form which slays demons and Asuras to protect gods and other people. Amish Tripathi's hero has the same name but he is a tribal chieftain of Gunas living on the banks of Lake Mansarovar who considers himself an ordinary human being without any extraordinary talent and power. His arrival at the Meluhan kingdom proves his extraordinary traits after the consumption of Somras. The Somras administered by Meluhan medical staff to his tribe lead to a medical emergency as they all catch fever except for Shiva whose neck turns blue and his old injuries are healed magically. This is the turning point in his life for he is taken as the prophesied Neelkanth who will save Suryavanshis from evil. However, Shiva does not believe in the legend of Neelkanth and remains humble despite getting too much attention and respect. Besides Shiva's character, many other characters like Sati, Daksha, Ganesh, Kartik, Nandi, Veerbhadra, Parshuram, Brihaspati and Renuka are also taken from mythology. Moumita Mukherjee (2020) projects the spin in mythology by Amish Tripathi "Though the framework showing Gods in human forms is common Myths and Indian Puranas, Amish has modernized this framework by infusing the story of an immigrant Shiva becoming Mahadev" (18). In the original mythology, Lord Ganesh is propitiated before the worship of any other God. He removes obstacles from the path of the devotees and grants boons of many kinds. In the *Trilogy*, Ganesh becomes the Naga son (very powerful but physically deformed) of Sati and Chandradhwaj. He is older than Karthik, the second son of Sati from Shiva. As the 'Lord of the People,' he is second in command to Kali (queen of the Nagas) in the hierarchy of Panchawati, inhabited by Nagas exclusively. Sati is presented as a widow who is declared a Vikarma (unfortunate and outcasted) princess who is physically much older than Shiva but appears youthful due to the consumption of a magical drink called

Somras. Unlike the mythical Sati, she marries twice and Shiva is her second husband. In the original myth, Veerbhadra is Shiva's alter ego/fierce form who destroys the yajna of Daksha but in the trilogy, he is the extremely reliable and affectionate childhood friend and companion of Shiva. The mythological figure of Daksha Prajapati is altogether changed by Amish Tripathi to represent the power politics of over-ambitious people. He is the Suryavanshi king of Meluha who wants to win over the Chandravanshi kingdom of Swadeep and other regions of Sapt Sindhu. He is extremely selfish and cowardly as a king who is shrewd as well. He abandons his Naga daughter Kali and Naga grandson Ganesh to retain his power as a king. The character of Goddess Kali is also different from the original myth where she protects the virtuous from demons and Asuras. In the Trilogy, as the queen of Nagas, she is presented as rebellious to unfair and unjust practices but affectionate and kind to her subjects. Lord Parshuram is known as one of the avatars of Lord Vishnu but he is also given a makeover by projecting him as an outlaw who believes in the legend of the Neelkanth. Brihaspati, the great Guru of the gods is presented as a highly respected scientist in the Trilogy. He works hard to eliminate the evil of Somras to protect the environment of Sapt Sindhu by destroying the Somras manufacturing unit at Mount Mandar. Nandi, the bull, is portrayed by Amish Tripathi as a captain who invites the tribe of Shiva to the kingdom of Meluha for a safe and prosperous life. In the guise of this invitation, King Daksha is searching for the legendary saviour Neelkanth to protect them from the evil kingdom of Swadeep inhabited by Chandravanshis. The *Shiva Trilogy* as a subverted version of the *Shiv Maha Purana* is full of mystery, adventure, and fantasy but Amish Tripathi's faith in Lord Shiva presents the protagonist as a messiah who fights against evil to protect the good. The fictional account of Shiva's adventures is spellbinding and interesting enough to keep the readers' attention intact. Dwivedi M. and Burande (2017) declare that "Amish, the author is convincing in portraying how different cultures affect or influence people when they are

displaced from one society to another, and also when and how the unexpected hits the ‘others’ in a foreign land” (158). Amish Tripathi’s *Shiva Trilogy* comes under the genre of mythological fiction which has become an indispensable part of popular literature as well. Regarding mythological fiction Srivastava, N and Choudhary, Payel Dutta (2018) observe that:

These mythical narratives highlight the lives of gods and goddesses, deities and asuras, gandharvas and apsaras are also not consistent with pleasure and prosperity. Therefore, many maestro writers are replenishing their delectable works with mythical treasures. Revisionist writers are engaged in discovering new stories, imaginary characters, some delirious instances and many more to serve people worldwide with their own perception of life (172).

The humanized character of Shiva, the protagonist of the Trilogy, is an ordinary tribal chief of the Guna tribe at Lake Mansarovar who is fed up with continuous attacks by the rival Pakrati tribe. Capt. Nandi’s invitation/offer to migrate to Meluha seems to him a gift from the Almighty which can change the course of the life of the Guna tribe. Subversion in the story has not diluted the aura of the hero as a potential superhero of the people of the Sapt Sindhu region. He is a good orator who inspires his soldiers to action by delivering an impressive motivational speech. He is broadminded and a votary of equality and justice which he proves by breaking useless traditions like the Vikarma law for all in Meluha where he is accepted as the Neelkanth. He fights the evil of Somras and establishes a fair and just social system in Sapt Sindhu. Amish Tripathi’s use of the language of twenty-first-century youth has lured young readers who can identify themselves with the hero. In contrast to Amish Tripathi Pattanaik represents Shiva as a deity described in the scriptures like Puranas. He juxtaposes the image of Shiva in the Sanskrit and regional languages texts against the foreign critics’ image of Shiva. His three books- *Shiva-An Introduction*, *From Shiva to Shankara*, and 7

Secrets of Shiva narrate Shiva's grandeur in terms of his lifestyle, exploits and popularity among devotees. The TV serial based on Pattanaik's works, *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* has achieved tremendous success and popularised Shiva in comparison to these books on the legend of Shiva. Despite his personal interpretations of ancient mythology, he has gained name and fame along with money in abundance. His books are recognized for highlighting the relevance of mythology in modern times, especially in areas of management, governance, and leadership.

Pattanaik like Amish Tripathi has the same cultural agenda to help glorify India's mythological past in the eyes of the world. His perspective is influenced by Western critics like Stella Kramrich, and Wendy Doniger who look into the text from a Western lens. Amish Tripathi has fictionalized Shiva of mythology by adding elements of a thrilling movie to lure young readers. He has contemporized mythology by using current-era problems like environmental crisis, parenting, power politics, and much more. His Shiva is the hero who abolished Vikarma law to bring equality and justice to society. He accepts the Naga son of his wife from a previous marriage and her Naga sister out of compassion for them as both were abandoned by the king for his political ambitions. He rises to godhood with his extraordinary conscientious deeds and exemplary leadership. Pattanaik tries to demystify Shiva as a God with a strange appearance of matted hair, Trishul and River Ganga flowing from his hair. He is full of contradictory aspects, rough but ascetic, wrathful as well as kind and generous. Pattanaik presents Shiva from calendar art which has different avatars of the deity. His representation of Shiva is taken from various sources like Puranas, Upanishads, sculptures, and Tamil texts.

Pattanaik has also taken inspiration and material from the text of *Maha Shiv Purana*, the *Linga Purana*, and other scriptures to present his very own interpretation of Lord Shiva and his philosophy. He is interestingly called a mythologist even though he has no qualifications

in this particular area. His contribution to popularising Indian mythology cannot be denied for his extreme popularity due to his simplistic analysis of the complex Sanskrit texts.

The *Linga Purana*

As the title suggests the *Linga Purana* is one of the Maha Puranas dedicated to Lord Shiva which contain information regarding the cosmos, essential rituals, and customs related to Shiva worship. The iconic form of Shiva which is spread over the earth in the form of Jyotirlingas holding magnetic positive energy is discussed in detail. Although the author and time of the Purana is unknown but existing version has one hundred and sixty-three chapters. This Purana explores the origins of the universe, the Linga, the rituals necessary for the worship of Lord Shiva, and the emergence of Brahma, Vishnu, and all the Vedas. The iconic form is the unmanifested form so Shiva is also known as Alinga in this world which is full of delusions. Lord Shiva is both invisible and the root cause of the universe and is devoid of sign, colour, touch, motion and taste i.e. he is 'Trigunatita' or beyond the three Gunas. Through the *Linga Purana*, Lord Shiva sometimes directly conveys the importance of worship of the *Linga* and the essential rituals required to be followed during the puja of Linga. The origin of the *Linga* is described in the first part of this Purana. The *Linga*'s literal meaning is the distinctive sign by which it is possible to identify the character of someone. The *Linga Purana* describes Shiva as Ardhnaarishwar which indicates that he asserts his respect for both genders. All Vedas and other scriptures have emerged from the Shiv ling (including Brahma, Vishnu, and all other deities). It depicts the greatness of Lord Vishnu, a manifestation of Lord Nandishwar, Dhruva, and the story of Upamanyu. The text presents cosmology, seasons, festivals, geography, pilgrimage sites, Yoga, rituals for worship etc. Dimmitt and Van Bu Itenen (2012) state about the Puranas:

As they exist today, the Puranas are stratified literature. Each titled work consists of material that has grown by numerous accretions in successive historical eras. Thus, no Purana has a single date of composition as if they were libraries to which new volumes have been continuously added, not necessarily at the end of the shelf, but randomly (4).

The *Linga Purana* has many versions but the extant version consists of two parts. The theme of the text is based on the title itself which deals with the worship of Linga, and Shiva as a Supreme being. Besides Shiva, reverence for Vishnu and Brahma is also included in the chapters. The concept of Ardhanarishvara in the *Linga Purana* elaborates on the idea which gives equal importance to both genders. The goddess is accepted as the mother of the universe who takes part in the process of creation and as the divine centre of power.

According to French Indologist Alain Daniélou Linga is an important aspect of Shiva worship where the iconic form of Shiva is used for various purposes. The *Linga Purana* endorses this and declares that universes are manifested in this form. Shiva is beyond the organs of sense, signless, without quality, motionless and changeless. The *Linga Purana* text is full of a diverse range of topics/subjects in its two parts out of which the Purva-Bhaga is longer than the Uttara-Bhaga. It details the method of worship of Shiva, design, and consecration of the Linga and Nandi, cosmology, seasons, festivals, geography, guidance for pilgrimage, stotras and Yoga, etc. most elaborately, not found even in the *Shiv Maha Purana*. Although the *Linga Purana* does not confirm strictly the conditions required for being a Maha Purana it is placed at the eleventh position among eighteen Puranas. It has the necessary information on the Linga form, modes of worship of Shiva, vrat, upvas, eternal cycle of Creation, Destruction, and Recreation. The twenty-eight incarnations of Shiva, the evolution of humankind, mythology, idol worship, superstitions, festivals, ceremonies, and ethics are also included in

the text. Among other guidelines, giving help to others, and being compassionate to everyone is suggested as the best kind of worship of the Lord of eight forms/Lord Shiva.

Some scholars opine that the Puranas are sectarian and have contradictions in character but this is not true because each Purana has preferences, but no exclusions about the gods. In a Purana, whether it is a Saiva or Vaishnava or a Shakta, references are given to the exploits of respective Gods in each of them. For the intensity of devotion to one God, the deity is depicted as the Supreme Reality but this does not belittle other Gods. The *Linga Purana* pays homage to Shiva devotees so it speaks against those who disrespect Shiva. It is suggested that a Shiva devotee must lay down his life for the protection of Shiva worshippers even if he has to be aggressive for the effort. The virtue of non-violence is also emphasized in this Purana.

The text also has the story of sage Narada's arrival at the forest known as Naimisharanya where sages were busy in their pious routine of worship of Shiva. Sage Narad and Sutji narrated the tales of *Linga Purana* and related stories of Brahma the creator, who manifests himself with the sound and in the Omkar mantra. The Vedas represent his mouth (*Rigveda*), tongue (*Samaveda*) and heart (*Atharvaveda*). As the Supreme Being, he is beyond the power of Nature. Sutji also narrated characteristics of the Shiva temples, Kalpas, the greatness of Linga and its worship, etc.

The Beginning of Creation

This part is the same as given in the *Shiv Maha Purana*. The measurement of the period for the whole creation is one extremely long day of Brahma. Lord Brahma who has the power of creation started with static entities of nature and many other objects. Human beings came into existence in the seventh stage of creation. The Process of creation was done during the daytime and after that annihilation took place with the end of Kalpa.

Lord Shiva is the Supreme Liberator whose worship shows the path to pleasure and salvation. A Shiva devotee can purify himself/herself by rituals of Shiva-*Linga* worship. The three kinds of bathing are prescribed for the purification of body and mind. Water, Bhasam and Mantras have the power to purify a devotee's being for getting ready to worship the Lord.

Thus, the *Linga Purana* is more comprehensive than the *Shiv Maha Purana* and covers a wide range of subjects. Since it is devoted to Lord Shiva, Supreme power lies in the deity, and other gods are created by Him or part of His being. Amish Tripathi and many other authors who have written on the Moon crested Lord have taken inspiration and information from these Puranas. From Kashmir Shaivism to Tamil Shaivism, the glory of Shiva reigns supreme.

The *Peria Puranam*:

Some scholars opine that the word Siva in Tamil means auspicious and therefore He is a Tamil God. The Ancient Tamil literary works like Tolkappiam, Manimekalai, Silapatikaram, Purananuru, etc. mention characteristic features of Lord Shiva without referring to His name in particular. Iyengar, Srinivasa (2015) in the Forward for the English translation of the *Peria Puranam* writes:

The Tamil Saiva canon comprises the twelve Tirumurais: the first seven (collectively called 'Tevaram') being the outpourings of Tirugnana Sambandhar, Appar and Sundarar, the eighth (called 'Tiruvachakam') those of Manikkavasagar, the ninth (called 'Tiru-isaippa') a miscellaneous collection, the tenth (called 'Tirumandiram') being the mystic recordings of Tirumovlar, the eleventh another miscellaneous collection, and the twelfth and the last is Sekkizhaar's Periapuranam

that weaves into a splendid epic narrative the lives of sixty-three Tamil Saiva saints (ix).

The *Periya Puranam*, or Great Purana, is a major text of Saiva Siddhanta and a Tamil devotional classic. It is the narrative of the sixty-three ardent devotees of Shiva known as Nayanmars. Sekkizhar, during the 12th century, compiled this poetic account of the legendary lives of sixty-three Nayanmars. These Nayanmars were men and women from different strata of society like kings, hunters, and ordinary persons of various regions. The *Periya Puranam* written/composed by Sekkizhar has 4286 verses which describe the lives of sixty-three servitors of Lord Shiva, known as 'Nayanmars'. They pioneered the Bhakti movement between the third century BCE and the ninth century in the Tamil land. Sundaramurthy, a Nayanar wrote about Shiva in the form of short verses. The *Periya Puranam* is a compilation of Sundarar's devotional composition which narrates touching stories of the dedication of the Nayanmars and their pious lifestyle. It is believed that Sekkizhar as the chief minister of the Chola king travelled far and wide and sent emissaries to collect information on the lives of Adiyars for his work of epic proportion. He became an ascetic himself after the completion of his work by renouncing his job and the world. The three thousand Sivachariars inhabiting Thillai, (Chidambaram) are praised for their contribution and virtues in the invocation of eleven verses by Sekkizhar. Sundaramurthy Nayanar who was the first one to chronicle the lives of the Adiyars was pampered by Shiva himself as an old VEDIYAR. The Nataraja form of the bull-bannered deity was eulogised by Adiyars in a very poetic way. The devotional stories of other Nayanmars are narrated with great gusto and delight in the text of the Puranam which he concludes by narrating Sundarar's divine journey to Kailash. Sekkizhar has introduced some variations in the work by adding more events of Sundarar's life. The stories of Thirugnanasambandar, Thirunavukkarasar, and Sundarar are slightly changed from the original version. The great epic is also called 'Thiruthonda thohai/Thiruthondar Puranam',

the Purana of holy devotees. The canonical poets of Tamil Shaivism composed the liturgical poems of the Thirumurai. These servitors of the Lord adored Him and devoted their lives to the service of Shiva. Lord Shiva as the supreme creator, preserver and destroyer obliges His devotees when their devotion gets incandescent. The exceptionally pious lives of the saints and their sacrifices are inspirational for other Shiva devotees. The condensed English version of the Tamil epic by Sri G. Vanmikanathan under the editorship of N Mahalingam has highlighted the greatness of the *Peria Puranam*. To popularise the stories of Nayanmars, Preetha Rajah Kannan has written a *Shiva Trilogy* in which she has related stories from the *Peria Puranam* and Thiruvilayaadal Puranam. Kannan (2016) expresses her dependence on the epic in the third book's Authors' note by confessing, "I finally took the plunge into Sekkizhar's *Peria Puranam*, the 12th-century epic, which chronicles the lives of the sixty-three Nayanmars, and came up breathless with handfuls of precious gems" (viii). *Shiva in the City of Nectar* (2016), *Son of Shiva* (2017), and *Hounds of Shiva* (2018) are the three books of the *Shiva Trilogy* by Kannan which are based on the great *Peria Puranam*.

The Vijnana Bhairav Tantra

The *Vigyan Bhairava Tantra* or *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* is a key text belonging to the Shaivism of Trika school of Kashmiri Shaivism. This treatise is found in Rudra Yamala, one of the very ancient Tantra Sastra. It is a discourse between Shiva (Bhairava) and his wife Devi or Shakti (Bhairavi) which enumerates a hundred and twelve methods of meditation or focusing techniques (Dharana). This ancient treatise does not invest time in analysis and philosophizing but explains how to practice the techniques of meditation. It elucidates tools for attaining realization and lays stress on foundational consciousness to realize the Brahman. In the *Book of Secrets* (2010), Osho explains:

These are the oldest, most ancient techniques. But you can call them the latest, also, because nothing can be added to them. They have taken in all the possibilities,

all the way to cleaning the mind. Not a single method could be added to (these) one hundred and twelve methods. It is the most ancient and yet the latest, yet the newest. Old like hills, the methods seem eternal—and they are new like a dewdrop before the sun because they are so fresh. These one hundred and twelve methods constitute the whole science of transforming the mind (xi).

The present era needs these methods to acquaint the youth with their heritage and incredible spiritual knowledge which will make them feel complete in themselves. A commentary by Jai Deva Singh (2018) on *Pratyabhijnahrdayam: The Secret of Self Recognition*, a Sanskrit text of Kashmir Shaivism claims that “The Shaiva philosophy does not conceive of the Supreme as a logomachist but as an Artist. Just as an artist cannot contain his delight within himself, but pours it out into a song, a picture or a poem, even so, the supreme artist pours out the delightful wonder of his splendour into manifestation or creation” (09-10).

Shiva-Sutras highlight the entire system of non-dualistic Shaiva system of philosophy and yoga. The commentary by Jaideva Singh (2017) explains “The Saiva system, in general, is known as Siva Sasana or Sivagama. The non-dualistic Saiva system of Kashmir is known as Trika-Sasana or Trika Sastra or Rahasya-sampradaya” (xv).

The commentary of ***Spanda-Karikas: The Divine Creative Pulsation*** by Jai Deva Singh (2020) elaborates on the dynamic side of consciousness explained in the Shiva Sutras. The Shaivagama describes it as full of life with activity, pulsation and creativity. He elaborates “*Spandakarikas* are a sort of commentary on the Siva-Sutras. The word Karika means ‘a collection of verses on grammatical, philosophical or scientific subjects.’ The word *Spanda* literally means a ‘throb’. It connotes dynamism or the dynamic aspect of the Divine, the Divine creative pulsation” (xv). Doniger (1981) concludes her book *Shiva: The Erotic Ascetic* by observing:

In many myths, Siva is merely erotic or merely ascetic, as a momentary view of one phase or another. But in the great myths, transcending the limits of mundane causality, he participates in cycles of cosmic dimensions which melt into a single image as they become ever more frequent, making an almost subliminal impression in their brief symbolic appearances, creating an infinitely complex mosaic. The conflict is resolved not into a static icon but rather into the constant motion of the pendulum, whose animating force is the eternal paradox of the myths (318).

Scholars and pundits are exploring the mysteries of the bull-bannered Lord who is beyond human competence. Bisschop (2009) feels that “His many names (Rudra, Bhava, Pasupati, Maheshwara, etc.) reflect different aspects of this identity. The development of his mythology and cult is as complex as the historical formation of Hinduism itself, and numerous aspects of this development are still relatively unexplored” (741).

Popular Beliefs and Presence of Shiva in Different Religions

With a rich heritage of scriptures and epics, the deities of Sanatan Dharma are hidden in every aspect of our lives for guidance and spiritual fulfilment. Like other divine heroes/heroines, the legend of Shiva is also spread over many Puranas and epics in his different manifestations. Indonesia, Thailand, and countries with Hindu populations have Shiva by other names, for example, in Indonesia, Shiva is known as Batara Guru which is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Battaraka (noble lord). The island of Java once had Shaivism, and Buddhism which had many common principles and deities. Even the Indonesian literature belonging to the Medieval era compares Buddha with Siwa (Shiva) and Janardan (Vishnu) as similar. In the modern era, Bali Indonesia with a Hindu population considers Buddha the younger brother of the Hindu god Shiva. Japan’s Daikokuten, who is one of the gods in Japanese mythology is believed to have origin in Shiva of Hinduism. He is worshipped as a household deity of wealth and fortune. In the Buddhist Tantra also, Shiva’s

name is mentioned. Shiva is known as 'Upaya' and Shakti as 'Pragya.' The Japuji Sahib of the *Guru Granth Sahib* says, "The Guru is Shiva, the Guru is Vishnu and Brahma; the Guru is Parvati and Lakshmi." Guru Govind Singhji has named two avatars of Shiva: the Dattatreya Avatar and Parasnath Avatar in the *Dasam Granth* of Sikhism. The Zoroastrian wind god Vayu-Vata is also more or less like Shiva in having contradictory qualities.

The current study has juxtaposed the representation of Shiva legend by Amish Tripathi with the representation of Shiva by Pattanaik in the context of popular culture where Shiva is adored by the young and old. The fictional character of Shiva in the Trilogy by Amish Tripathi is based on the deity Shiva who is part of the triumvirate. Besides Shiva, many other characters are from Shiv Maha Purana but a fictional twist of their portrayal in a modern context makes the story readable without hurting the sentiments of Hindus and right-wing activists. Moreover, Lord Shiva's grandeur of Shiva remains intact as fictional Shiva achieves godhood after great struggle and victory over evil. Pattanaik's Shiva is also the same deity whose persona carries strange and incredible attributes particular to his non-conformist approach towards material life. Thus, the great Maha Shiv Purana is the centre from where the story and portrayal of Shiva emerge in the works of Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik. The current study aims to inspire readers and researchers to probe the original texts of great epics, scriptures and ancient works that will enhance understanding of relevant aspects of divinity and human life. Although mythological fiction and reinterpretations of texts are in vogue these days influence of Western culture and thoughts are sprinkled in these works. Researchers and intellectuals must not see Indian Culture from the Western lens as it leads to a superficial understanding of texts and works. Pride in our culture will come from a deeper look at the concepts in the context of practical life as the Sanatan Dharma is a code of conduct for every sphere of physical and human nature. The word 'Dharma' itself means the

right conduct so it is eternal (Sanatan) and it is above religion and faiths prevalent in the world.

The following chapter, '**Shiva in Popular Culture**' will analyse the legend of Shiva in the popular culture of our time. Every aspect of culture and its relevance in our lives will be discussed along with an analysis of the representation and presence of Shiva in fine arts, meditation, and visual and print media. The works of Pattanaik will be analysed as he has contributed towards popularising the legend of Shiva. TV serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* based on the works of Pattanaik claimed phenomenal success which is responsible for the spate of mythological TV serials, Web series and movies. His books on Shiva carry information from different sources in an easy-to-understand language that has elicited interest in mythology among the younger readers.

CHAPTER-III

SHIVA IN POPULAR CULTURE (Devdutt Pattanaik)

Whose Primal Utterance is the sacred Om:

that is uttered using three tones

whose rite is Sacrifice: whose fruit is Heaven:

You are the origin of those Vedas.

Kumarsambhavam (121)

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2010, Eighth edition), defines the word *Culture* as, "the customs and beliefs, art, way of life, and social organisation of a particular country or group" (370). Culture can be taken as an inclusive term that also carries similarities and differences among people of a community. Two anthropologists Alfred L Kroeber and Clyde Kluckjohn (1952), define culture in the article *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached

values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of a section, on the other as conditioning elements of further action (181).

Tradition and culture are part and parcel of any society so the word culture has been defined by many people from different domains which shows that it is a dynamic term that keeps on evolving with time and gradual changes in the lifestyle of people. The word *popular* means liked and enjoyed by a large number of people. A country's popular culture cannot be defined in a sentence as it is an umbrella term for a whole way of life. It is a dynamic signifier that includes certain beliefs, values, rituals, and traditions that are transferred from generation to generation. Culture is generally reflected in social practices and the thinking of people who understand and express its value through literature. As a comprehensive term Culture includes mythology, philosophy, religion, music, and fine arts. In literature, myth and culture intermingle with the passage of time and literature becomes one of the expressions of culture. Culture has been an essential issue for social evolution and interpretation of ancient works, different aspects of life and values. Subjects like Anthropology and Sociology have a special place for this aspect. An American anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits (1948) finds culture as the portion of human behaviour or the "Man-made part of the environment" (17). In the case of Indian culture, spiritual insight is more prominent, unlike in the West where the materialistic aspect of life rules over the spiritual one. The political and economic dimensions of culture also play a significant role as these have always been tools for the people in power. Matthew Arnold (1869) in his famous work, *Culture and Anarchy* places a lot of importance on religion for the well-being of man:

Culture, disinterestedly seeking in its aim at perfection to see things as they really are, shows us how worthy and divine a thing is the religious side in man, though it is not the whole of man. But while recognizing the grandeur of the religious side in man,

culture makes us also eschew an inadequate conception of man's totality. Therefore, to the worth and grandeur of the religious side in man, culture is rejoiced and willing to pay any tribute, except the tribute of man's totality (10).

He further states “And thus culture begets a dissatisfaction which is of the highest possible value in stemming the common tide of men's thoughts in a wealthy and industrial community, and which saves the future, as one may hope, from being vulgarized, even if it cannot save the present” (16). Following the cultural tradition of Matthew Arnold, F.R. Leavis points out that the high and low cultures are segregated based on intellectual refinement which is manifested in different forms of arts, literature, and philosophy. In this approach, the ‘authoritative voices’ of the stakeholders decide how this cultural knowledge and heritage can be enhanced and transferred to posterity. The ‘intelligent few’ give judgments for the ‘unintelligent many’ who need this obligation. Homi K Bhabha (1994) a well-known post-colonial and post-structural literary critic in his book *The Location of Culture* observes, “the production of meaning requires these two places be mobilized in the passage through a third space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot ‘in itself’ be conscious” (36). He marks the ‘Third space’ as a meeting point of two different cultures. Modern Indian culture has many influences especially Western culture which is in vogue among youngsters but along with this trend, a new trend of love for ancient mythology is also evolving. Ronald W. Smith (1977) a professor of Sociology at the University of Nevada writes in his book *Sociology-An Introduction* that “Culture exists because people are able to share creations, pass knowledge from one generation to the next, and thereby change the very conditions for existence” (19).

The nineteenth-century term 'culture' had two approaches which were opposite to each other. The first approach saw culture as a set of artistic practices and products and the other approach considered culture as an anthropological entity which alters human society by influence of nature. The first case matches with Victorian thinkers such as Matthew Arnold, whereas culture is an idealistic term in which people represent their better selves and revise/remake/re-think their life/society. Culture is a dynamic process, in which the cultural hegemony of a group can add value through its contribution to power, hierarchy, and influence. There are different ways and levels of manifestation of different cultures and the symbols in cultures generally represent their deepest values and collective consciousness. These are often seen through epics and characters who represent the values and traditions of a particular culture. Successful cultures are often seen to be dynamic, rather than static. The development of a culture requires that culture keeps on changing to adapt to new situations and influences. It should also accept the changes according to people's changing perceptions of the world. People create and perpetuate culture so it should change its values and its practices according to the time. It is exigent to notice that culture in India is spiritually oriented in contrast to the West where the materialistic aspect of life is focused on. Ken, Wilber (2000) aptly points out that:

The great and rare mystics of the past (from Buddha to Christ, from al-Hallaj to Lady Tsogyal, from Hui-neng to Hildegard) were, in fact, ahead of their time, and are still ahead of ours. In other words, they most definitely are *not* figures of the past. They are figures of the future" He further states that "In their spirituality, they did not tap into yesterday, they tapped into tomorrow. In their profound awareness, we do not see the setting sun, but the new dawn. They did not inherit the past; they inherited the future (261).

This applies to myths and mythology which guide, refine and enlighten people and are part of every culture. The word Myth has its roots in the Greek word “Mythos” which stands for story or word. Myths represent tales of our ancient past dealing with society’s ethical, political and philosophical concerns. On the other hand, Mythology is a set of situations, events and stories about a particular culture, institution, or person. With mythological stories, characters, and themes from different cultures and historical periods, new literature is reviving the ancient wisdom embedded in myths. New myths are also being created and existing ones are being reimagined/revisited. The Myths in society helped the psychological growth of civilization, culture, literature, and different art forms. That is why we can peep into any civilisation’s belief system, faith, and social setup through myths, scriptures, epics, and sacred books. In the Indian context, Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads were transferred to the next generation orally by Shruti and Smriti traditions before the invention of writing and printing. In popular literature, mythology is being used to address contemporary social reality to find solutions to current issues. Myths have been contextualized and subverted in contemporary literature and used as subplots. Cross-cultural commonalities are incorporated in mythological fiction to increase the readership/circulation of books. The retelling of mythology has turned into a contemporary trend in popular literature at the national and international levels and some of these imaginative renderings trigger the protest against the established narrative and produce a counter-discourse for critical thinkers. Shah (2021) indicates that “In addition to adding value to the work of art, employment of myths and legends enables a writer to situate the new work in the larger corpus of literature coming from a particular culture or place and also beyond” (143). Many Indian and foreign authors are updating myths to address contemporary social reality to acquaint readers with the present conditions prevalent in society. Amish Tripathi has done this in his *Shiva Trilogy* where his protagonist Shiva is a human being, unlike the deity of Hinduism, who is eventually

recognized by the masses for his extraordinary feats of bravery for the sake of the masses. His story represents the malicious designs of people in power whose greed leads to large-scale destruction. Most of the works of mythological fiction are based on the episodes of epics and their characters. Unlike this before independence, during the British Raj, the Gita was placed as the Hindu Bible by the Protestants and other spiritual texts of many other Gods like Shiva were neglected to show monotheism which was illogical and wrong. In one of her books on Hinduism Wendy Doniger says that ignoring other gods like Shiva cannot represent the faith in its true sense. The text of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* has details of Shiva and other gods. The legend of Shiva is popular among the masses, especially in the Indian cultural tradition of the incarnation of God to obliterate Evil for the protection of the people. Amish Tripathi's Shiva of the *Shiva Trilogy* also falls under this category when he eradicates the evil of Somras for the greater good of society. Along with this theme, Amish Tripathi also touches upon current issues that India/the world is facing in the present era for many reasons. Vikram Singh (2016) notes that "Amish Tripathi has added little 'masala' to certain elements to make the novels more appealing. The depiction of various events and places and landscapes in *Shiva Trilogy* aesthetically appeals to the senses of the readers by carrying them into a new world of imagination" (148). This addition of masala and thrill has encouraged youngsters to read his voluminous books who are otherwise fond of everything from western culture.

Popular Culture in India

The concept of popular culture or 'Pop culture' is about the beliefs, rituals and traditions prevalent in a society. It also includes cultural products like fine arts, music, literature, fashion, dance, film, cyber world, TV, radio etc. which are used and produced by the people of a society. In general, it has nothing negative about the prevalent practices and traditions

followed by a majority of people. The history of popular culture is centuries old but the investigation and research in this field go back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when working-class readership emerged and mass literature was produced. In the early 1800s, political democracy and popular education were supported which destroyed the upper-class domination of culture. The cultural demands of the newly awakened class encouraged business houses to profit from producing books using advanced technology for consumers. There was a shift in values also due to education and democracy which could be seen in middle-class versus elite cultural lifestyles over time. Popular culture has myriad forms, styles, genres, audiences, tones, and themes that concern particular geographical communities. Popular Culture Studies emphasises on the production of culture, its marketing and its consumption in society. John Fiske (2010) writes about the concept of commodification of popular culture in *Understanding Popular Culture*. On the same note he writes in the chapter titled, “Commodities and Culture”, “To be made into popular culture, a commodity must also bear the interests of the people.” (Fiske 19) Further he clarifies, “Popular culture has to be, above all else relevant to the immediate social situation of the people” (21). Media has made popular culture accessible to the masses and its consumption decides the TRP of the programme which is enhanced by many factors.

In the recent past Cultural studies have gained popularity and it is considered an academic field of critical theory and literary criticism. Introduced in Britain in 1964 cultural study research has many approaches, methods, and literary perspectives. Researchers of cultural studies focus on myths, social class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender prevailing in any culture/society/civilization. The social turmoil of the 1960s gave birth to the discipline of Cultural Studies which has media, films, art, anthropology, history politics, philosophy, economy and much more has become conceivable. The discipline of Cultural Studies generally focuses on the social hierarchy, gender issues, ethnicity, nationality, ideology and

mythology. In 1957 Richard Hoggart's *Use of Literacy* was published which brought popularity to Cultural Studies. In 1958 Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* followed suit. The Centre of Cultural Studies was established in England in 1968 which led to its place in the literary and cultural arena.

During the past decades, Popular culture, as a field of research, has made rapid progress as multicultural societies are emerging due to globalization. The multilingual and multi-ethnic societies of India and South Asia present a unique site of popular culture where myths are reflected in cinema, TV serials, music, dance, religion, theatre, fashion, calendars/posters, etc. Liberalisation, privatization, and globalization have given opportunities to Indian trade and policies to open its market to the outside world. India's increasing economic growth has empowered the rising middle class, as the consumer of cable and satellite television, videos, computers, and internet platforms thereby promoting popular culture. Varma, P. (2005) comments that "A new India has emerged in the last fifty years. It does not deny the past, nor is it immune to its influences. But it is more a product of the challenges of the present, and the opportunities of the future" (148). He further states "An assertive popular culture is beginning to acquire a critical mass in India. This critical mass keeps growing like some amoeba, imperceptibly but undeniably, until suddenly it can no longer be ignored" (159). In India, most of the decisions and public opinions are influenced by the information provided by the media which is infamous for fake news and sensationalised posts in this post-truth era. For shaping peoples' perspectives, the Indian media ought to be a genuine institution for information, education, and entertainment but the opposite is true these days. Examples of competitive sports and their results can be taken in this regard, which have changed the interests of people altogether and also brought the socio-political life of our society and the nation to a different level. With time popular culture has evolved and it is segmented into various forms like audiences, styles, genres, traits, and themes.

Despite scientific and technical progress myths are still in vogue and writers and artists are using them to find solutions for current issues. Myths and mythology play an important part in shaping our culture and literature as a social and cultural construct and provide a background that is full of experiences/memories. Baily (2017) emphasises that:

Mythologies, Mythological narratives, and mythological imagery pervade all societies, but perhaps not so much in India, where they seep through every aspect of the culture. Throughout India's long history, mythological narratives have intersected with other narratives in most literary genres, and even in scholastic philosophical texts and scientific literature, allusions are made to mythological characters (85).

He realizes that "Mythology in India is as important and widely disseminated now as it has been for the last two millennia" (86). The moral and philosophical content of the *Ramayana* and The *Mahabharata* have influenced people's lives more than any other book/scripture. Sanil (2020) establishes that:

Hindu mythology in India is an all-encompassing package, which not only provided an ethical code but also became a source of scholarly literature and entertainment. Hinduism is so deeply embedded in Indian society that it has often been confused as being synonymous with Indian culture. Therefore, it was no surprise that even when superheroes were modelled after Western heroes like Superman and Spiderman, the characteristics and powers of Indian superheroes continued to be influenced by Hindu mythology (8-9).

Myth=Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology (2006) written by Pattanaik observes myth that brings individuals and communities closer, and mythology adds mythic ideas and symbols to rituals and stories. Pattanaik says in his introduction to the book, "People outgrow

myth and mythology when myth and mythology fail to respond to their cultural needs” (Pattanaik xv).

Representation of Shiva in Popular Culture

The legend of Shiva is represented as a hermit/yogi, or a family man having three children, and a slayer of demons but unfortunately in the current era, he has been associated superficially with wine, drugs and an indifferent, carefree lifestyle. In Hindu mythology, Lord Shiva is the Lord of the universe who is the destroyer, protector, ardhnaarishwar, and Neelkanth. Gokhale (2012) asserts that the “Evolution of both a concept and an anthropomorphic figure is a movement as natural as the flow of the river of faith” (9). Although He is beyond definition and His aura can be observed in the three Lokas (worlds). He is perhaps the most complex deity and his paradoxical nature only adds to the idea of his powerful presence and supremacy among the trinity. Wendy Doniger (1969) finds that “Many of the characteristics which contribute to the apparently paradoxical nature of the puranic Shiva may be traced back to individual characteristics of gods of the Vedic pantheon” (1). His manifestations are approximately sixty-four, out of which some are more popular like **Rudra**. The literal meaning of Rudra is ‘the roarer’ one who frightens/howls. Agni and Rudra have a very close relationship, as identified in Vedic literature, where Rudra becomes Rudra-Shiva. **Sharbha**, the Dragon with eight legs, that is part bird, part serpent, and part lion caught hold of Vishnu’s Narasimha incarnation when it was contaminated by the demon’s blood and started attacking innocent people. Shiva in the form of Sharbha flayed Narsimha alive and allowed Vishnu’s spirit to escape. **Harihara** form of Shiva can be seen at Lingraja Temple in Bhubneshwar where both Tulsi and Bel leaves are offered. Shiva is Nivritti *Margi*

who has renounced the world and Vishnu is *Pravritti Margi* who actively participates in worldly pleasures. **Shiva, the Corpse** is said to be the humble form of Shiva who tried to subdue the anger of Goddess Kali when she was outraged by corruption in the cosmos. She ran amuck destroying everyone and everything that came in her path. Shiva blocked her path by pretending to be a corpse. Kali stepped on him but then tried to bring him back to life as Shiva is only a Shava/corpse without her/energy. **Shiva, the child** form of Shiva was to make the Goddess aware of her role as mother Gauri. As Goddess Chamunda she became the cosmic killer to purify the world but Shiva appeared before her as a small child and she realized her role as a cosmic mother. The form of **Punyakshi's Groom** is a very subtle one when Shiva promised to marry the virgin but the gods did not let Shiva reach her in time to marry her. She could kill demons if she remained a virgin. Shiva still waits for her at Suchindram, Tamil Nadu in the form of a Linga. The form of **Meenakshi's husband** is very mysterious as the princess of Madurai Meenakshi challenged the hermit who refused to accept the suzerainty of anyone but when she saw him, she turned into a coy maiden. The hermit, Sundereshwar was actually Lord Shiva who married her in the presence of gods. **Nataraja**, the lord of Dance whose rhythm captures the cosmic cycle of generation, organization, and destruction. The word, 'Kaal' has larger implications for time and space and the fierce form of Shiva is **Kaal Bhairava**. When Kaal Bhairava becomes still, he turns into Mahakaal, the ultimate/highest form/level of time. In the popular culture of India Shiva is a cool god without any restrictions/rules imposed by society. He pervades religious, cultural, and academic spaces as his persona has a charisma that fascinates people/devotees. Temples dedicated to Shiva are in ancient and modern architectural patterns with forever new settings for instance bust of Shiva at Coimbatore by Isha Foundation and Mahamritunjay temple in Assam are new kinds of pilgrimage centres. His iconic form is also the most common/popular among other manifestations of different gods of the Hindu pantheon. From

TV serials to printed books he is inevitably a part of meditation-related discussions, religious lectures, fine arts, calendar art, festivals, popular literature, and cinema in many languages. Cinematic and literary representations are more popular than other creative ventures. References to Shiva are found in Itihasas and great epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Shaivism is practised by millions of Hindu devotees across the globe for its grandeur and divinity. The wisdom and philosophical truth of Shaivism are interlinked with the Sanatan Dharam and the Hindu way of Life. It is believed that there never was a time when Shaivism did not exist for the creation and destruction of the universe. According to modern history six main schools of Shaivism are popular in Indian culture, Shaiva Siddhantam, Pashu Patism, Kashmiri Shaivism, Vira Shaivism, Siddha Sidhantam, and Shiva Advaitam. There is no human founder of Shaivism only the devotees, and saints have enriched the doctrines, ideals, and practices. The grandeur and glory of Lord Shiva are expressed in the hymns, treatises, and practical culture of Hinduism. He is the most popular deity in the Indian sub-continent and Asia where Hinduism and Buddhism are prevalent. His representation in cinema, TV, YouTube, books, calendar art and music is quite diverse and unique. Gokhale (2012) states that “Shiva is everywhere in India, in kitsch calendar art, in film songs, in folk motifs, in living prayer and ritual” (124). Along similar lines, Pattanaik (2016) in his book based on the first season of the popular TV show *Devlok with Devdutt Pattanaik* points out that “Shiva temples can be anywhere – under a tree, at a cremation ground, unlike temples to Krishna, Vishnu or Rama, which have Vaibhav, a form of Vishnu in them. No special treatment or adornment is required in a Shiva temple” (38). Further, he writes, “He is a different kind of God, doesn’t distinguish between devas and asuras. He loves them all. His devotees include Raavan, Rama, and Hanuman” (38). Vishnu, Nayanmars, Markandeya, Nabhaga, Raavan and Kannappa are some of the famous Shiva worshippers. His worship is also done in a unique manner in which plants like Dhatura, Bel, and Bhang are

used unlike the worship of Vishnu with Tulsi plants, flowers, and sweets. Rudraksha beads, Bhasma, and water mixed with milk and sugar are offered to the Linga/Shiva Statue. He dislikes Ketaki and Champa flowers so other flowers can be offered to Shiva. In his complete form, He is five-headed: Panchmukha, which displays five facets of his personality. Sadyjota (radiant), Vamdeva (handsome), Aghora (pleasant), TatpuruSha (the perfect man), and Ishaan (divine Being). His insignia is a bull, a Vrishbha, called Nandi which is a symbol of restrained power.

Shaivites are of different types, some are householders, some are yogis and some have renounced the world in search of Shiva. Both Naga Sadhus and Aghori Sadhus renounce the world as the devotees of Lord Shiva but they are different in their beliefs and practices. They are solely dedicated to achieving moksha (liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth) through various practices and meditation. Naga sadhus are warrior ascetics and they live out their lives in secrecy and have antinomian practices that are unknown to the common folk. They appear in public during the Kumbh Mela which is one of the largest peaceful gatherings on this earth. It happens every three years in rotation across four cities of India- Haridwar, Nasik, Ujjain, and Prayagraj (formerly known as Allahabad). Mahaparinirvani Akhara and Panchdashnam Juna Akhara are the two main Naga Akharas which are associated with the Kumbh Fair. Their Naga Avatar can be seen at the Kumbh fair where Naga Sadhus go in a procession dedicated to Lord Shiva. With their dreadlocks and ash-smearred bodies they appear very different from other followers of Lord Shiva. The ash stands for permanence so instead of wearing any clothes they cover themselves with ash and adorn rudraksha beads for decoration. Naga Sadhus as a group of worshipers of Lord Shiva believe in the philosophy of becoming one with Shiva by penance. These fierce-looking sadhus are gentle and detached from the material world of ordinary human beings. **Aghora Panth** is a sect under Hinduism

that follows Hath Yoga and Tantra as their path to attain God. The word Ghora in Sanskrit signifies 'something very frightening'.

Unlike the common perception of people, the Aghories are mostly kind and gentle to everyone. Many austerities, meditation, and painful practices are performed by them as part of Hath Yoga. The underlying philosophy of Aghora is in contrast to many other sects as they believe in the falsity of this world and God as the ultimate truth. On the other hand, Aghoris take the world as a manifestation of the God who has created it and takes everything as transitory. Their chief deity is Lord Shiva, though, many Vaishnavas also follow this peculiar path. Lord Shiva is attributed to be the one who imparted the knowledge of tantra which is central to Aghora. Just like Lord Shiva the Aghoris also include everything discarded or viewed with disdain and fear into their life and embrace the difficulties of this path with the ultimate goal of reducing suffering in the world by following the footsteps of Lord Shiva who even drank the halahala poison to save the cosmos. Thus, they live a life of non-conformity and embrace everything society discards or fears to show their solidarity with the deity. On the other hand, another kind of Shaivism exists in the southern part of India which is known as Tamil Shaivism. In the history of **Tamil Shaivism** sixty-three saints called Nayanmars eulogized Lord Shiva as the supreme god of the universe. They are the best example of popular culture in Southern India as their statues are placed in some Shiva temples. Srinivasan (1991) explains the elaborate structures of one of the temples:

In front of the complex the front wall of the north-south transept has three openings, the central one opposite the *antarala* and the lateral ones, each opposite the Siva, Ganapati and Durga shrines while inside, the transept with the provision of the openings one at either extreme of its rear west becomes continuous with the

circumambulation *pradakshinapatha* round the whole complex through the *sandhara* passage between the main outer and inner walls (176).

Lingayats and Vira Shaivas are also quite popular in Karnataka and surrounding regions for Shiva worship. Shiva has sixty-four manifestations having a repository of all the resources essential for the cycle of life like knowledge of spiritual wisdom, divinity in individuals, the cosmic manifestation of the divine and knowledge of the self that leads to the universal absolute.

Creation, preservation, destruction, oblivion, and grace are the five aspects which Shiva represents. He is the most democratic god who loves nature but has no attachments to the physical world. His mystery is unfathomable and to understand him is to understand the ultimate truth of Sanatan Dharma. He is considered the chief of all gods as he is worshipped by all the gods who seek his blessings. There is a parallel view of Westerns in the context of the cosmos where they see it as blank. For them, Shiva literally means “that which is not” or nothing. It is in the depth of vast nothingness that creation started which is observed by scientists that around ninety-nine per cent of the atom and the cosmos are, blank and can be called ‘nothingness.’

Shiva in Visual Art Forms

Lord Shiva’s worship is performed in his many visual forms and its history can be traced some five thousand years ago. Despite such a long period, complexities, and uncompromising contradictions in Shiva’s imagery and iconography there is an apparent common pattern of growth. This indicates not only his higher status over other gods of the Indian/Hindu religious hierarchy but also reveals the fact that his imagery and iconography evolved and tradition of worship continued throughout. His first image was found in Bhimbetka cave drawings and then in the Indus Valley seal image of the Lord of the animals. Many pre-historic finds have

pre-Vedic forms and the Vedic vision of Shiva. His iconic form/Linga has a variety like Mukh Linga, Baan Linga, Dhayan Linga, and Bhav Linga. It is believed that Shiva was worshipped in Africa, Mexico, the Pacific islands, Europe, the Middle East, the Far East, and South America. There are anthropomorphic and composite forms of Shiva besides his Ugra or destroyer forms in visual representations. The most popular visual form is his image with the consort and his family. The most amazing and mysterious form is the Natesh/Nataraja image which has cosmic connotations.

Cinema

In the Indian film industry, Hindi and regional Indian languages cinema have portrayed religious icons and themes in many avatars. Movies based on Lord Shiva's life are numerous for their devotional theme and treatment of the subject. Although some movies produced by Bollywood are famous/infamous for the unnecessary songs, dance sequences, and frivolous themes, social, religious and mythological themes are also aimed at in many Bollywood films. Recently some films on Lord Shiva have portrayed the legend of Shiva in a positive light with his charismatic persona. A few films that showcased and highlighted the mystical and supernatural powers of Shiva are *Baahubali* (2015), *Shivaay* (2016), *Kedarnath* (2018), *Satellite Shankar*' (2019), etc.

Baahubali (2015)

Prabhas plays the part of Shiva, a young guy who grows up to be a great devotee of Lord Shiva. He is shown to carry a huge Shivalinga out of respect for his mother who has to reach the same with great difficulty. There is another scene in the film where he brings the Shiva statue and a song praising Lord Shiva is played in the background.

Shivaay (2016)

'Shivaay', starring actor Ajay Devgan deals with human aspects of Shiva, the deity. The hero of the movie is named Shivaay whose profession is climbing. Ajay Devgan is the hero and

the director of the film which portrays Lord Shiva as fierce and benevolent in the film. Devgan who is a great devotee of Shiva has kept the song 'Bolo Har Har' as the title tune of the film.

Kedarnath (2018)

Director Abhishek Kapoor's 'Kedarnath' was set in the holy town of the same name, which is set in Uttarakhand's Rudraprayag area. The film 'Kedarnath,' (2018) commercialised the 2013 tragedy of the landslide and flood which caused havoc in Kedarnath. The song composed by Amit Trivedi popularised the film with its devotional lyrics. The story centres on the idea that when you help another person you express the presence of Shiva in your being.

Satellite Shankar (2019)

The name of Shiva seems to be lucky for everyone so some kind of relation with him is mentioned deliberately. Sooraj Pancholi's 'Satellite Shankar,' shows a technology related to Lord Shiva which can send his fellow jawans to their loved ones for a short period. When the movie was released online Filmmaker Irfan Kamal received huge success on the OTT platforms.

Ponniyin Selvan-2 (2022-2023)

In Ponniyin Selvan-1 Prince Arunmozhi Varman of the Chola dynasty in South India, during his conquest, was presumed to have drowned as his ship sank in the stormy sea. But in the direct sequel to PS-1, titled Ponniyin Selvan-2 Arunmozhi Varman makes his return to eradicate his rival dynasty, the Pandyas, once and for all. Vandiyathevan rises from the ashes to destroy his rival for good. The legend of the most powerful emperor of all time to have ruled Southern India is glorified. The role of Aghori Sadhus is shown at the beginning of PS-2. Madhurantakan succeeds to the throne, supported by Shivan Adiyars (Aghori Sadhus) who are generally known for their neutral stance in political matters.

A recent film named 'Brahmastra' has a character by the name of Shiva. Akshay Kumar plays the role of Lord Shiva in the sequel to 'OMG: Oh My God.'

TV Serials

Om Namah Shivay (1997-1999)

The TV serial *Om Namah Shivay* was aired on DD National channel in 1997. Based on the life of Lord Shiva it centred around Hindu theology. Its title is taken from the very popular mantra associated with Shiva. The nine years of research for the serial was done from various Puranas like the *Shiv Maha Purana*, *the Vayu Purana*, *the Linga Purana*, *the Skanda Purana*, *the Tantra Choodamani*, *the Valmiki Ramaya*, *the Swetashwar Upanishad*, *the Vaman Purana*, *the Varah Purana*, *the Koorma Purana*, *the Rudra Purana*, *the Rudra Yamal the Tantra*, *the Padma Purana*, *the Devi Bhagwat Purana*, etc.

Devon Ke Dev Mahadev (2011-2014)

The TV serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* (2011) often abbreviated as DKDM, is based on the legend of Shiva. Produced by Anirudh Pathak, the show on Shiva, *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* attained a cult status reminiscent of Chopra's *Mahabharata* or Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayana* in the eighties. DKDM was aired from Monday to Friday night. LifeOK concluded this series in December 2014 after 820 episodes. The journey of Shiva from an ascetic to a householder is shown with many stories associated with his life. His various forms like Virbhadra, Adiyogi, Aghori, Vaidyanath, Pashupatinath, Bhairav, Nat Bhairav, Martand, etc. are portrayed in a very realistic manner. All the prominent Maha jyotirlingas are also given due space and importance. The Lord is shown protecting people from various demons and Asuras like Tarakasur, Bhasmasur, Apsmar, and Vritrasur. The show explored various lesser-known aspects of Shiva in mythology.

Baal Shiva (2022)

Baal Shiva is an Indian Mythological television show which is intriguing because of the reason of authenticity of its story. Shiva is known as Anadi, the one who has no beginning and end so there is no information about his childhood and parents. Even though fictional and imaginary content serial is quite popular among viewers, it depicts the untold mythical childhood story of Lord Shiva and explores the Katha/story of Maha Sati Anusuya's eternal bond with child Shiva. Anusuya, the wife of Rishi Atri is the vice-chancellor of a reputed Gurukul where she commands respect and causes envy (especially to colleagues like Dandapani) to others. With her mystical powers, she becomes successful in ending a long-standing famine through her devotion/worship to Lord Shiva.

Har Har Mahadev (2016)

After the huge success of the Hindi TV serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* (2011-2014), Many directors tried their hand on the same subject. This television series in Kannada-language about the life of Lord Shiva and Parvati was aired on the channel Star Suvarna. As a remake of *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev*, it gained massive popularity. Now it is also available in regional languages.

Om Namah Shivay (2018)

Star Jalsha channel aired a Bengali language series on Lord Shiva which became very popular like other TV serials on divine subjects.

Video Games

Lord Shiva from Hindu mythology is used in the video game *Smite*, which introduces Shiva, a three-eyed god in the ninth season as the destroyer. Other Indian gods and asuras are also in the battle of gods like Ganesha, Agni, Kali, Kumbhakarna, Rama, Ravana, Vamana, and Bakasura.

Shiva in Fine Art Forms

Shiva is the Supreme being who is the Lord of divine energy, meditation, yoga, arts, time, destruction, etc. He is the Guru of fine arts like dance, music, and theatre. His fearsome and benevolent depictions are represented in different forms of fine arts. His iconographical attributes include his matted hair, the moon and river Ganga on his head, his third eye, the trident, and the Damru. Lord Shiva's iconic form of the Lingam is worshipped inside and outside the temple. Popular Bollywood songs in praise of Shiva, his marriage to Parvati, and his peculiar persona are part of local Indian culture. Many stories and legends surround Shiva's life as a recluse/yogi and as a householder with a family as well. Indian spiritual tradition has Shiva in Hindu culture's collective imagination where he dances, sings, and plays musical instruments. Coomarswamy (2012) explains Shiva's Dance in the Nataraja pose by stating:

The Essential Significance of Shiva's Dance is threefold: First, it is the image of his Rhythmic Play as the Source of all Movements within the Cosmos, which is represented by the arch: Secondly, the Purpose of his Dance is to Release the Countless souls of men from the Snare of Illusion: Thirdly the Place of the Dance, Chidambaram, the centre of the Universe, is within the heart (93).

The Nataraja form of Shiva is popular among all types of Shaivism across the country. The greatest devotee of the Lord, Raavan, asked for a boon to be the best devotee of Lord Shiva and tried to lift Kailasha mountain but he could not do so. When he was punished for his foolishness out of repentance and guilt, he wrote Shiv Tandav Stotram which is very popular in the bhakti tradition of India.

Sangeeteshwar

He is the source of a primal sound called Brahmnaad which vibrates the universe into existence. He is the Pranav-Omkar, the Lord of the sacred 'Aum'. He plays Rudra Veena and

carries a Damru which he uses while dancing. In popular culture bhajans and hymns to eulogize Lord Shiva are available in almost all languages and dialects. There is a variety even in bhajans and songs as some are part of local culture and some are Bollywood songs which are for flaunting/publicizing the religiosity in public space. Now a new trend has emerged which is in the form of rap or R&B music in Shiva songs. Fusion of Western and Indian tunes is also popular among young devotees of Shiva.

Dance

Shiva is the Lord of the dance form popular in various manifestations/types. His Nataraja pose is famous the world over for its cosmic reverberations. Fritjof Capra (1976) in his book *Tao of Physics* writes about the dance of Shiva:

The metaphor of the cosmic dance has found its most profound and beautiful expression in Hinduism in the image of the dancing god Shiva. Among his many incarnations, Shiva, one of the oldest and most popular Indian gods appears as the King of Dancers. According to Hindu belief, all life is part of a great rhythmic process of creation and destruction, of death and rebirth, and Shiva's dance symbolizes this eternal life-death rhythm which goes on in endless cycles (269).

Anand Coomarswami's essay '*The Dance of Shiva*' also glorifies the spiritual dimensions of the dance performed by the moon-crested Lord. The divinity and spiritual connotations of the Tandava are beyond the understanding of ordinary mortals. There are many types of Tandav dance which are performed specifically for a particular reason.

Festivals

Mahashivratri and Kartik Purnima are the biggest Shiva festivals. In the month of Magh (Feb-March) when winter paves the way for spring the greatest of these nights comes and is celebrated as **Mahashivratri**. Devotees observe fast and celebrate Shiv-Parvati marriage across the Indian sub-continent, Sri Lanka and Nepal. According to Sadhguru on Shiv Ratri,

there is a natural upsurge in the human system so by staying awake and alert one can take steps towards fulfilment on this night of immense possibilities. **Kartik Poornima** occurs in the autumn with the full moon in the month of Kartik (Oct-Nov). Kartik Purnima is celebrated all over India by Shiva devotees in different ways. Dev Deepawali is an auspicious popular Indian festival that is celebrated to commemorate Lord Shiva's triumph over the demon Tripurasura so this festival is often referred to as Tripurotsav or Tripurari Purnima. It is believed that the gods and goddesses descend to take a dip in the river Ganga and light up the city with millions of lamps. This is why Dev Diwali is also known as the "Festival of Lights." The celebrations begin on Ekadashi of Kartik Shukla Paksha and end on the fifth day, which is the Kartik Purnima date (full moon night). Organised every year in the holy city of Varanasi on the Ghats of river Ganges in Uttar Pradesh, it attracts Indian and foreign tourists.

Vrat/Upvas (Fasting)

Hindu men and women observe fast to please Lord Shiva on many occasions like Shravan maas/month, Mahashivratri, and Haritalika Teej. Mahananda vrata and Solah Somwar Vrat (16 fasts in continuation on Monday) are also part of the local culture of India and neighbouring countries with Hindu populations.

Popular Types of Shaivism in India

Kashmiri Shaivism

This school is famous in Nepal and the northern part of India. Based on Shaiva Agamas and the Pratyabhijna Trika or Spanda system it accepts thirty-six tattvas or principles of cosmic manifestation. Among various types of Shaivism prevalent in India Kashmir Shaivism is an ancient Eastern tradition that promotes psycho-spiritual wisdom and scientific knowledge.

Some areas of contemporary science where parallels with Kashmir Shaivism are most likely to be found include physics, astrophysics, cosmology, the neurosciences, and psychology. The wisdom and knowledge regarding the universe and human beings proclaim Shiva as the only reality. Sharma (2016) states “Shiva is the transcendental eternal background of this universe” (389). Under Kashmir Shaivism, there are Shakta schools also who worship Shakti. They believe that Shiva is a Shava (corpse) without Shakti which makes him determinate and endowed with knowledge, will, and action. Kashmir Shaivism is based on Agamic and Tantric (scriptural) symbolic traditions. Some earlier works are more religious like the *Siva Sutras* (Vasugupta) and *Spanda Karikas* (Kallata). The later works elaborated and extended the earlier into philosophical treatises, such as *Sivadrsti* (Somananda) and *Tantraloka* (Abhinavagupta). Vigyan Bhairav Tantra is a treatise on attaining Shiva through one hundred and twelve meditation techniques.

Tamil Shaivism

Tamil Shaivism recognizes the authority of Vedas like other sects of Hinduism. The most revered and popular work/scripture on Lord Shiva is the *Peria Puranam* by Sekkizhar. The sixty-three Shiva devotees known as Nayanmars are glorified in this work. Vanmikanathan and Mahalingam (2015) conclude the translation of the *Peria Puranam* of Sekkizhar by glorifying the Nayanmars: “All the sixty-three servitors were mystics of the highest order and were men who conducted their lives according to the *Thirukkural* and the Civa-gnana-bodham which are Tamil Nadu’s secular and spiritual gifts to the world’s literature” (578). Shaiva Siddhanta is the Tamil school of Shaiva faith and philosophy which is popularly accepted as one of the Indian systematic philosophical schools. The devotional literature associated with it is called *Panniru Tirumurais*. The philosophical treatises are fourteen in number and are commonly known as Siddhanta Sastra or Meikanta Sastras. These devotional and meta-physical scriptures study and explain how to realize/attain Shiva.

Vira Shaivism/Lingayatism

Vira Shaivism emerged in the Karnataka region to curtail the influence of Jainism and Sri Vaishnavism in the South of India. 'Vira Shaiva' means militant or heroic Shaivism or faith in Shiva'. The 'Vira Shaiva' is also known as Lingayatas (those who wear the Linga), the symbol of Shiva. Orthodox Lingayatas wear the symbol of Shiva, in the form of the Linga on their necks symbolizing Shiva's personal and close presence. Ramanujan (1973) in his book *Speaking of Shiva* points out that, "Bavasanna was the leader of the medieval religious movement, Vira Shaivism, of which the Kannada Vacanas are the most important texts" (19). In the Vacanas, Shiva is the supreme god and many thousand Vacanas are attributed to each major saint. This social renaissance movement was propounded by Basava who aimed at equality in society by discarding the caste system based on the varna system. Lingayatism as a sub-religion stands for equality and the formlessness of God which emerged in Karnataka as a social movement in the 12th century. Guru Basava who founded this movement opposed statute worship, child marriage, alcoholism, and the caste system. According to Basaveshwara Lord Shiva considers all people equal so any kind of discrimination is not accepted. Followers wear a Lingam image on their bodies symbolizing Shiva which justifies the name Lingayats. The monotheistic way of worship rejects rituals and statues of the deity. Other than Hindu religious tradition mainly prevalent in Karnataka Jainism and Shaivism also had their sway in these regions. The Vira Shaiva philosophy enabled Lingayats to win over the Jains for Shiva worship. The terms Lingayatism and Vira Shaivism have been used synonymously, but Vira Shaivism predates Lingayatism. It is observed that the Lingayats were anti-Brahmin as some pieces of evidence are against the Brahmins in early Virashaiva literature. Gokhale (2012) affirms this by saying, "The Vachanas of Virsaiva saints performed a similar function of personalizing Shiva as a deity and bringing an element of social reform to an over-rigid Brahminical hierarchy." (123). During the medieval era, the

high castes exercised authority over the low castes, and many other ill practices led to reform movements, one of which was Lingayatism. A Lingayat is a person who believes that all those who wear Ishtalinga are compeers of his religion without making caste and class distinctions amongst them. Vira Shaivism was often confused with Lingayatism because of misconceptions that were created over time. While Virashaivas claim that the two communities are the same, orthodox Lingayats claim that they are different. Therefore, a Lingayat rejects the Vedas and all Hindu texts, and because of this Lingayats have often demanded a separate religious status but they are considered Hindus to date.

Nath Panth is also a Shaivism-based sub-tradition which highlights Yogic traditions, Buddhism, and Shaivism. Matsyendranath and Gorakshanath (CE 9th or 10th) were two great gurus who significantly contributed towards the philosophy of this sect. Traces of Advaita Vedanta philosophy enrich this tradition of Nath Panth.

Shiva in iconic form

Lord Shiva is worshipped in His iconic form at many temples and sacred places. Svayambhu-Lingams are the ones that have formed naturally or self-created like the ice Linga in the Amarnath cave in the northern state of Jammu. There are many such Lingams but the one in Jammu is the most popular one due to the story behind it. Mata Parvati did penance in this very cave and eventually, Lord Shiva accepted her conditions and gave her the desired boon.

Self-realization has always been an important aim of human beings in Indian culture as sages of yore taught the value of attaining salvation through penance. Many kinds of temples and powerful devices were invented to materialise spiritual achievements. There are five temples representing five elements in South India with iconic forms or the Linga. The element of water is represented by *Thiruvanaikaval*, space by *Chidambaram*; air by *Kalahashasti*; Earth by *Kanchipuram*, and Fire by *Thiruvannamalai*. These temples were created as places for meditation and worship. Twelve Jyotirlingas and many such powerful sites were built in this

direction. The Mahakaal temple in Ujjain is one of the very powerful Jyotirlingas in India. It is an incredibly consecrated space with the powerful manifestation of Shiva. Following is the twelve Jyotirlingas situated in India:

1. Somnath Temple, Gujarat

One of the most important Jyotirlinga shrines, the Somnath temple is situated in Gujarat at Prabhas Patan. The word Somnath means 'Lord of the Soma' which means Lord Shiva. The history of Somnath Temple is kind of interesting as according to legend the temple was created by the Moon God himself. The sacred place of worship has braved numerous attacks (destroyed 16 times and rebuilt) yet it still stands strong in all its spiritual splendour. The worship of *Somnath* dispels the ailments of consumption and leprosy. By bathing in the Chandrakund a person can get rid of all his diseases.

2. Kashi Vishwanath, Uttar Pradesh

One of the most famous temples in India is the Kashi Vishwanath Temple. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the Jyotirlinga shrine is located in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh with the temple standing on the banks of the holy River Ganga. It is the holiest of Shiva temples housing the Vishvanatha form of Shiva, Vishvanatha means the Ruler of The Universe. On the occasion of the Maha Shivaratri festival, the ghats are packed with Shiva devotees worldwide. As per Hindu mythology, Lord Shiva married Goddess Parvati on Maha Shiv Ratri, a day celebrated with joy and fervour. The worship and adoration of *Vishwanath* yields worldly pleasures and salvation. He is always worshipped by Vishnu and all other gods.

3. Mahakaaleshwar, Madhya Pradesh

Shri Mahakaaleshwar Jyotirlinga is situated in the ancient city of Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh. The idol of Mahakaaleshwar is known to be Dakshina Murty, which means that it is facing

the south. One of the twelve Jyotirlingas in India, the lingam at the Mahakaal is believed to be Swayambhu (born of itself), deriving currents of power shakti from within itself. On the occasion of Maha Shiv Ratri, the Lord Shiva devotees worship the whole night along with a huge fair organized in the temple. It is believed, that Shiva, the deity of time has its blessing on the city of Ujjain. By seeing and worshipping the phallic image of Mahakaal the devotee fulfills all his desires and attains salvation.

4. Mallikarjuna, Andhra Pradesh

Sri Mallikarjuna Jyotirlinga Temple is located at Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh. Mallikarjun Temple is situated on Shri Shaila Mountain by the banks of the Patal Ganga, Krishna River. It is also known as the Kailash of the South. The presiding deities of Mallikarjuna Temple are Mallikarjuna (Shiva) and Bhramaramba (Devi). Every year there is a fair organized on account of Mahashivratri.

Lord Shiva who goes by the name Mallikarjuna is the deity of worship while Maha Shivaratri is the most important festival celebrated at Srisailam Mallikarjuna Swamy temple. Skand, the second son of Shiva and Parvati shifted to the south so they decided to stay in Shrishailam.

5. Omkareshwar, Madhya Pradesh

Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga, one of the 12 worshipped Jyotirlinga shrines is situated at Mandhata an island in the Narmada River in Madhya Pradesh. The name “Omkareshwar” is based on the shape of the island, which appears to be Om. There are two main Lord Shiva temples – Omkareshwar which means “Lord of Omkara or the Lord of the Om Sound” and the other is, “Immortal Lord” or “Lord of the Immortals or Devas”.

6. Kedarnath, Uttarakhand

This Jyotirlinga temple is considered to be the most difficult one to visit by Lord Mahadev's devotees. It is located at the height of 3,583 m from Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, Kedarnath Temple with extreme weather conditions, reaching the Jyotirlinga remains challenging. It is accessible only for six months a year. It is one of the 275 Paadal Petra Sthalams and was built by the Pandavas and revived by Adi Sankaracharya. *Kedarnath* bestows whatever the devotee demands.

7. Bhimashankar, Maharashtra

The state of Maharashtra claims that Bhimashankar Jyotirlinga is located in Pune in the Bhimashankar hills in Khed Taluka. The Nagara style of architecture used in building this temple dates back to the 18th century. According to the legend, it is believed that the *Kedarnath* bestows whatever the devotee demands. *Bhimashankar* defends devotees in all possible ways and fulfills all their desires. Hereafter ancient shrine was erected over a Swayambhu Linga or a Self-Emanated Shiva Linga.

The Assam government also claims to have the actual Bhimashankar Jyotirlinga situated at Pamohi in Guwahati in Kamrup Pradesh. The absence of a concrete structure of the temple in the location makes it very unique. The Shiva Linga is near waterfalls and a pandit initiates the puja rituals. There is an overhead canopy with bells hanging all around. Many attempts to construct a permanent temple have proved futile as a wild elephant living in the forests nearby appears and destroys it.

8. Baidyanath, Jharkhand

This Jyotirlinga is situated in Deoghar, Jharkhand in the Santhal Parganas. It has a story associated with it which states that once Raavan was carrying the Shiv lingam from Kailash to his kingdom Sri Lanka he stopped for a while and handed it to Baiju, his cowherd who

kept it on the ground. Vishnu in the form of Baiju positioned the lingam on the ground when Ravana attempted to lift the lingam, he was unsuccessful. Since then, it has been worshipped as Baba Baidyanath.

9. Ramanathaswamy, Tamil Nadu

It is located on Rameshwaram island in Tamil Nadu. Tamil saint poets called Nayanmars sang songs in praise of Lord Shiva, especially Appar, Sundrar and Sambandhar eulogized Shiva and dedicated their songs to the Lord. Lord Shiva was glorified at Paadal Petra Sthalams and this is one of them. The seventh avatar of Vishnu, Shri Ram performed puja before embarking on the journey to bring back Sita, his consort from Sri Lanka.

10. Nageshvara Gujarat

In Gujarat, the Nageshvara Jyotirlinga temple is a sacred place of worship dedicated to Lord Shiva. The man who sees and worships *Nageshvara* is the chastiser of the wicked and thanks to His worship, heaps of deadly sins perish immediately.

11. Trimbakeshwar, Maharashtra

The jyotirlinga shrine, Trimbakeshwar in Maharashtra located in the city of Nashik at the foothills of Brahmagiri Mountain. According to Shiva Purana, on request of the Godavari and Gautam Rishi, Lord Shiva decided to reside as Trimbakeshwar. This unique jyotirlinga Linga has three faces symbolizing Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Shiva. It Jyotirlinga is covered by a jewelled crown placed over the golden mask of the three gods.

12. Grishneshwar, Maharashtra

It is located in Aurangabad, Maharashtra Grishneshwar Jyotirlinga and is also known as Ghrishneshwar Jyotirlinga or Dhushmeshwar temple. It is said to be the last of the twelve

Mahajyotirlingas (linga of light). The literal meaning of Ghrishneshwar is the ‘Lord of compassion’. The Grishneshwar Jyotirlinga temple is comparatively smaller than the other Jyotirlinga temple of Lord Shiva in India. A devotee becomes a liberated soul who sees and worships *Ghushmshwara* with devotion.

Kedarnath bestows whatever the devotee demands. *Bhimashankar* defends devotees in all possible ways and fulfills all their desires. The worship and adoration of *Vishwanath* yield worldly pleasures and salvation. He is always worshipped by Vishnu and all other gods. The ablution of *Rameshwara* installed by Lord Rama confers all worldly and godly pleasures along with salvation so the devotee becomes a liberated soul.

Popular Pilgrimage Sites

Besides the Mahajyotirlingas as mentioned earlier, hundreds of Jyotirlingas in India and abroad are worshipped with great devotion. Most of the pilgrimage sites are very ancient and very difficult to reach. Since time immemorial religious devotion has inspired people to travel for pilgrimage. These places of architectural, artistic, spiritual, and cultural value have historical heritage and for devotees, performing a pilgrimage is like a boon that can absolve their sins and enlighten them for the rest of their lives. Especially Hindus across the world are always eager to go to holy places and innumerable pilgrim places related to Hinduism are being visited by people in great numbers. The acts of performing pooja and other rituals during pilgrimages are considered sacred and are considered humbling experiences as they are believed to provide worldly pleasures and salvation. Sins of past lives and current lives can be washed by visiting particular pilgrimage places. Unlike past, pilgrimage has become a show-off kind of activity as the depth of devotion is missing in many pilgrims who should wholeheartedly dedicate their time to the purpose of the pilgrimage. Easy accessibility through aeroplanes and helicopters has provided opportunities to the elderly who could not

go otherwise. Religious tourism is a flourishing industry nowadays with people who want to visit these places for pleasure rather than spiritual purposes. Traditional pilgrim sites have become tourist destinations with tourists lacking religious motivation. They are more interested in the place's cultural and scenic beauty than the spiritual significance. Pilgrimage sites associated with Shiva are an important part of the Hindu pilgrimage sites. It is believed that Shiva is not for the weak-minded persons so the places of Shiva pilgrimage are known for the hardships faced by the pilgrims. Among ancient Shiva pilgrim sites, are the twelve Jyotirlingas, Kailash Mansarovar, Amarnath, Shiv Khodi, and many more. The ancient **Bhojeshwar** Temple at Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh is an incomplete Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. It is said that in the eleventh century, during the reign of the Paramara king Bhoja temple construction started but it was not completed due to unknown reasons. The archaeologists guess that the temple construction techniques of 11th-century India were used to build the structure which remained unfinished. Placed in its sanctum the 7.5-foot-high lingam is called the highest lingam in that region.

Along the banks of the holy River Bagmati, the main temple complex of the **Pashupatinath** temple is situated. Only Hindu devotees are allowed to go inside and non-Hindu devotees can observe it from outside. During Shiv Ratri and Teej or other holy occasions, devotees come to the temple in large numbers. Devotees from Nepal and India, including sadhus and ascetics, throng the temple to have a glimpse of the sacred Shiva lingam. Women wearing red, yellow or green bead necklaces pray for the longevity and well-being of their husbands.

In the Kammasandra village of the Kolar district, in Karnataka **Kotilingeshwar** temple is located. The 33-meter-tall main Shiv lingam of the temple has a Nandi of around 11 meters. With one crore (10 million) Shiv Lingams in the temple complex, Lord Kotiligeshwara is the main deity of the temple. The divine marriage of Lord Shiva and His consort is celebrated on Shiva-Ratri which attracts a large number of devotees. Among new pilgrim sites, a huge

Shiva temple in the shape of a Shiv Lingam has been built in Assam. This **Maha Mrityunjay temple** is especially famous for its architectural beauty. It is the world's largest Shiv Linga at a height of 126 feet. In another new Shiva pilgrimage, the largest bust of **Shiva as Adiyogi** is installed at Coimbatore by the Isha Foundation. Adiyogi Shiva statue (112 feet long) designed by Sadhguru and inaugurated on Maha Shiv Ratri by PM Modi in 2017 is the new attraction for Shiva Devotees. In 1992 near Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India the Isha Foundation started its non-profit activities of a spiritual nature. The statue is recognized as the 'Largest Bust Sculpture' by Guinness World Records. At hundred and twelve feet in height, it stands for the 112 possibilities to attain liberation that is explained by Lord Bhairav to the goddess in the scriptures. A Linga called Yogeshwar Linga was consecrated and placed in front of the statue. From ancient to modern, Shiva pilgrimage sites are very popular among devotees for their quaint charm and magnetic power. It is said that weak hearted cannot reach Shiva as the Kailash Mansarovar yatra, Amarnath yatra, Shiv Khodi yatra, Badrinath, and Kedarnath yatras are very difficult for the devotees. New technologies have facilitated tourists who can afford them financially. Although helicopters and other facilities are arranged for the pilgrims still everything depends on the weather and the nod of the Lord. Maha Mrityunjay Temple in Nagaon, Assam is a special Hindu temple built in the shape of a huge Shiv-Linga. Dedicated to Mahadev, it is the world's largest Shiv-Linga, at a height of 126 feet. Its construction started in 2003 when Acharya Bhrigu Giri Maharaj used to meditate, and Guru Shukracharya performed the Mahamritunjay Mantra. To perform Pran-Pratishtha Yagna at the temple 250 priests were invited from Tamil Nādu. With 108 Yagna Kundas, the temple is situated on Mahapurush Srimanta Damodar Path, 120 km from Guwahati. Nathdwara in Rajasthan is also very popular among Shiva devotees for pilgrimage. The growing Shivlinga of Khajuraho Temple is very popular among locals. The presence of Laal Bhairav (protector of Shiva) in the temple premise is a unique feature of the

Matangeshwar temple complex. It is believed that the length of this Shiv Lingam present in the **Matangeshwar** Temple increases by one inch every year on the day of Sharad Purnima. The length of the Shiv Lingam is measured by the employees of the tourism department and they declare it to be taller than before. The speciality of the Matangeshwar Temple is that as much as this Shiv Lingam grows upwards, it also grows downwards. A 151-foot-long Shiv Lingam installed at Arjundhara of Jhapa in **Nepal** is currently believed to be the tallest in the world. The Shiv Lingam is known as **Moksheswar** Shiv Lingam. Although there is no official confirmation regarding the height of this Shiv Lingam many temples and sacred places are claiming that it houses the largest Shiv Lingam in the world. A temple of Lord Shiva **Bhuteshwarnath** or Bhooteshwarnath Mahadeva also known as Bhakurra Mahadev is situated near Maroda Village of Gariaband district. It is said that this Shiv Lingam keeps on increasing in size so it is measured by the officials of government. Water from the River Mahanadi is brought by the devotees in the holy month of Shravan. In Chhattisgarh like 'Dwadas Jyotirling', it is recognized as 'Ardhnarishwara Shiv Lingam'. The ancient **Kalinjar** pilgrimage site has a Shiva temple which was built by Parmardideva. It is believed that after the churning of the ocean, Lord Shiva drank the poison which made his neck blue. Shiva's arrival at Kalinjar resulted in the defeat of Kaal or the Time. Kalinjar is mentioned in ancient Hindu mythological texts in the context of Samudra Manthan when jewels, nectar and poison came out of the ocean. The Shiv Lingam at the temple has a constant dripping of water from a natural source. Besides Shiva, the temple has other statues of gods like Ganesha, Hanuman, and Kaal Bhairava.

Every state of India and Nepal has some famous or lesser-known Shiva pilgrimage site/temple like **Assam**'s Kamakhya temple which is the most powerful Shaktipeethas in the world. Shiva-Shakti folklore is prevalent in **Northeast India** among the followers of Shaivism. Bhimashankar Jyotirlinga at Assam, Shiva carvings on Unakoti hills in **Tripura**,

Siddheswar Temple at Bishanpur in **Manipur**, the divine Shiv Lingam in **Arunachal Pradesh**, the renowned Shiva temple located in the village of Singrijan within Dimapur, **Nagaland**, The Shiv Linga in a cave at Mawsynram in **Meghalaya**, Kirateshwar Mahadev in **Sikkim**, the form of a Shivlinga are some well-known pilgrimage sites in Northeast part of India.

The **Kawad Yatra** is an important and very popular form of devotion when devotees carry holy water to offer to Lord Shiva. This annual yatra is observed by thousands of devotees across the country by ardent Shiva lovers who are called 'Kanwariyas'. They fetch water from the holy river Ganga at different places in India to their hometown and offer it to the Shiv Lingam at the temples. While some of the devotees carry on this yatra to ask Shiva to grant their wish, the other devotees carry it out only as a form of expressing their deep devotion to the Lord and embrace such tough tasks to cleanse their souls to worship their Lord with even more sincerity and devotion.

The Tantrik/Lateral side/Shakta tradition of Shaivism

Lord Shiva the supreme god of the Hindus sweeps out all other gods in terms of popularity and acceptance. Ancient practices associated with Shiva vary from one place to another but worship of the Linga is very common. Similarly, the Tantrik side of Shaivism is also very popular in local culture as it arouses the interest of people regarding exotic and lesser-known aspects of Shaivism. Flood (1996) observes that:

The tantric texts are regarded as revelation, superior to the Veda, by the traditions which revere them: the Saiva Tantras are thought to have been revealed by Siva, the Vaisnava Tantras by Visnu and the Sakta Tantras by the Goddess, and transmitted to the human world via a series of intermediate sages. While being rejected by Vedic orthodoxy, the followers of the Tantras, the Tantrikas, included the

orthodox system within their own as a lower level of attainment and understanding (158-159).

The Aghoris, Nath panthis, and other cults of Shiva are very popular in some parts of India and abroad. It is also said that if any person indulges in wrong activities with tantrik kriya he/she has a painful end due to the law of karma, if for any reason tantrik kriya is not successful the tantrik himself/herself faces consequences that are much too harsh than they expected on the person on whom they did tantrik kriya to destroy his/her life. It is also said that their children also face problems in their lives due to their sins. It is very easy for tantriks to control the mind of any person but it is also true that if a person is highly focused, motivated, and a believer in God these tantriks cannot cause any harm to him/her. It is often observed that tantriks take money from their clients to destroy the life of the person their client wants, in this way, jealousy can result in big damage if that person approaches a Tantrik. In these ways tantriks misuse their powers and give tantrik kriya a bad image, everything related to this was invented for a good cause for the prosperity of people, and for solving problems of people easily and swiftly but these are mostly misused these days. These powers must not be misused as they are for good of the mankind but many people possessing these powers misuse them for their enmity, for money, and their satisfaction. People practising tantra for the wrong reasons should understand that they are bringing a bad name and image to this sacred knowledge and make the image of this knowledge clean and use it for the good of people. It is assumed that the Aghories have extraordinary powers which they use for the benefit of their devotees and followers. They have longevity and black magic which are said to contain supernatural powers. Some are said to surpass normal life expectancy. Colaabavala (1976) reveals that:

Tantra has influenced the mind of man, for good or evil, since pre-Vedic times. The Sakti force of *Prakriti* and *Purusha*, male and female in Hindu Tantra; and *Prajna* and *Upaya*, wisdom and means in Buddhist Tantra, are elements of the Ultimate. Yet its deeper knowledge is not easily available to the public. Even masters of Tantra keep their science a closely guarded secret (108).

Popular Literature as Part of Popular Culture

Although no fixed definition can be given to the genre of popular literature, what is popular today might become a classic after a hundred years or so. Shakespeare's plays were popular literature in his time but now they are part of classical literature. *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell used to be the bestselling book after the Bible in the good old days. This book was a reply to the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in which atrocities on blacks were highlighted so popularity was sky-high but now the movie based on this book is more known than the book itself. *Harry Potter* books as popular literature have broken all the previous records of circulation and readership. Paulo Coelho has also scripted his success story with his books that became part of popular literature across the globe. His book, *The Alchemist* is still a best-seller after more than a decade. At the national level mythological fiction based on epics and mythical stories has gained ground in the field of popular literature which was earlier flooded with campus literature. Campus literature escaped scholarly attention but mythological fiction has attracted the attention of critics. The Vedas, Puranas, and Upanishads have continuously influenced literary works. Print media and visual media are also showing unprecedented interest in Indian mythology. TV serials based on mythological characters and stories have enhanced TRPs following the demand of the general audience. The subversion in the mythological stories shown in visual media is not much, but in print media, it is quite common to fictionalize myth-related episodes. Drastic transformations in the publishing industry and book market in India are due to cultural, economic, and

demographic changes. Globalization has caused a particular kind of cultural identity crisis among English speaking elite class in the country/India which regularly consumes Western bestsellers and fantasy fiction. This class of people needed an Indian counterpart to these Western bestsellers so the proliferation of mythological novels has filled this vacuum. Although these popular writings are not much appreciated by the academic literary circles their presence is being felt by the readers and critics as well. Mandal (2016) observes:

In contemporary Indian literature, mythical stories have started showing a vigorous presence. Writers like Amish Tripathi and Ashwin Sanghi have attempted to rework mythical pasts and convert them into new narrative modules. The novels often rework the mythical past of India and intertwine them either with history or with a contemporary socio-political scenario to put forward a new genre of fantastic fiction (50-51).

The emergence of popular literature has marked a new beginning in Indian writing in English as writers and consumers are comfortable with the changes in the scenario. Bestsellers in India a few years back used to consist of foreign authors but today we browse websites like www.indianbestsellers.com or www.goodreads.com where Indian names are quite common. These retellings use mostly pedestrian language that keeps young people interested in this genre. The familiarity of Indian mythological themes with easy-to-understand language has attracted young college-going readers. There is a resurgence of a new genre of mythological fiction which represents and retells the myths with modern context. In this context, Sabita Mishra (2019) argues that “Modern thinking individuals, intellectuals and writers have challenged ideologies established by myths, and thrown new light on the reading of epics and mythical characters that propagate such myths” (165). The genre of mythological fiction has become popular among the masses and a new genre is added to Indian Writing in English.

This resurgence of mythological elements in popular literature and its huge popularity calls for an in-depth critical inquiry as to why in the present era of rapid technological advancement myths are being used and appreciated by writers and critics. Such questions should be answered by finding the appropriate reasons. Varghese (2015) in her paper on *'Selfies of the Soul: Spiritual Regeneration in New Age Fiction'* finds that, "What all these new age novels have in common is that the authors weave spiritual and metaphysical themes into strong storylines that keep readers wanting to get lost in an enthralling story that captivates their emotions and nourishes their spirits" (9631).

Technological advancements in cinema, publishing, telecommunications, and Internet platforms allow folktales, rumours, and newly interpreted myths to spread faster and reach a larger number of people than ever before. Social platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, etc. have altered the culture of modern society to a large extent by encouraging people to aim for international standards. Moral and social values are changing as new fads are being followed by the 5G generation but despite all these trends, a new interest in mythology and fictional accounts of mythological stories is getting popular among the masses. They are unifying the current sensibilities of the new generation with India's mythological and historic past. Modern interpretations of legends are theme-specific and weave fictional elements into the narratives to make them more convincing. Popular culture of a society includes cinema, fine arts, TV serials, fiction, comics, graphic novels, ancient/mythological literature, and games that have frequent appearances of mythological motifs. Contemporary representations and reinterpretations of mythological episodes reflect the current sensibilities of modern culture. Writers explore and investigate problems and solutions through mythological characters and events that society is facing in the present era. In Indian culture, there are four concepts of God. This tetra partite division of the gods has Nirakaar/Nirgun (without form), Sagun/Sakaar (with shape and form), Avatar (incarnation),

and the last one when a human being attains the status of god due to his karma. This last category is made prominent by Amish Tripathi who has presented Shiva as a human being who turns out to be a god by sheer goodness and compassion for fellow human beings and Nature in his *Shiva Trilogy*. Modern legends offer examples and prove that eventually good will defeat evil in due course of time. Some newly created myths and legends manifest a natural reluctance for change in social norms and technical advancements that take them out of their comfort zones. Myth surfaces in these legends of yore and gives direction to the narrative for a new discourse on current problems.

Myths remind us of pre-historic cave paintings, stone carvings, tombs, and monuments that represent the culture of a specific period. The mushrooming of mythological fiction can be attributed to the changing socio-economic dynamics of the nation. The spread of literacy and the popularity of English emerging as the new language of prestige for the middle class has increased the readership of such books. This new middle class of young urban Indians in metropolitan cities prefers the English language so homegrown mythological fiction has something to offer to everyone. Many employees hailing from smaller cities working in MNCs in the metros stay far away from their families, therefore this bunch of youngsters has time and interest in reading the best sellers. In recent times the rise in education in India with an emphasis on the functional knowledge of English has resulted in a mass of homegrown consumers and has transformed the literary landscape in India. In India English is being Indianized according to the need and convenience of the users. Sanskrit non-translatable words and expressions can be found in these mythological retellings as Indianized English can give meaning to these concepts, words and expressions to some extent. We witness speedy growth in the genre, especially with the success of translations of books into Indian languages. The circulation of these books is increasing at break-neck speed to meet the demands of customers and publishers.

The retelling of mythology has turned into a contemporary trend in popular literature at the national and international levels. Apart from films, theatre, and TV shows, mythological characters have been revisited and reinterpreted by writers also. The current trend of mythological fiction can be cited as an example of the popularity of mythical characters and stories. Many Indian and foreign authors are updating myths to contextualise and interpret contemporary issues in a new light. Amish Tripathi has done this in his *Shiva Trilogy* where his protagonist Shiva is a human being, unlike the deity of Hinduism, who is eventually recognized by the masses for his extraordinary feats of bravery for the sake of common people. Lord Ram, Sita, Hanuman, and Krishna continue to be popular but one God who is the favourite of all when it comes to popularity, can easily be chosen is Lord Shiva. Be it comic books, graphic novels, fiction, or non-fiction, Shiva is all-pervading much like his essential nature. Not only Indian authors like Amish Tripathi, Pattanaik, and Namita Gokhale have written on Shiva but foreign authors like David Frawley, Andy Mc Dermott, and James Lovegrove have also written books on Shiva. From posters, calendars, and art to the current trend of mythological narratives, the viewers and readers can feel the presence of Shiva. He is the coolest God among the galaxy of thirty-three crore gods of Hindu divinity. His presence can be seen worldwide in different countries as most of the excavation sites have Shiv Linga in different shapes and sizes. The charisma of Shiva makes him a human while still having the aura of a supreme God. The legend of Shiva in the popular culture of India can be seen in the TV serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev*. The TRP of it made directors of other serials red with envy. This serial is based on the works of Pattanaik who has Bollywoodised *Shiv Maha Purana*. He is known for his interpretations of epical and mythological literature of India and the world. He has popularised mythology by producing books on Indian themes, especially Hindu deities, and mythology. His interpretations are his own but the influence of foreign authors like Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, Sheldon Pollock, and Stella Kramrisch is also

visible here and there. Commercialization of Mythology and the impact of commercialization in mythological fiction have inspired innovative marketing strategies. Commercialization or commodification of mythology may be discussed within the purview of Marxist theories. Amish Tripathi's retelling of the myth and his methods of publicity to popularise his *Shiva Trilogy* have commodified the mythological genre and the author as well. Commercialization of products, goods and services is common in every society but recently the ideas of writers and critics have also been marketed. Popular literature is written for consumption by a large number of readers and viewers so literature is also for sale, unlike past when it was written for artistic pleasure only. It is saleable following the market trends of the society/world. When Sir Walter Scott declared that he wrote for money he was severely criticised for confessing it but in the present times, it is no longer considered shameless and derogatory. Industrialization has influenced many aspects of the market and promoted the commercialization of everything like ideas, relationships and events. Hence, popular culture and literature are naturally very much saleable in our time. Theodor Adorno talks about the notion of the culture industry which is motivated by profit-making. Adorno and Horkheimer (2020) in the essay "*The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*" assert that the formation of a cultural industry that is commercially motivated results in a culture of consumption and the negation of the intellectual abilities and independent thought among the masses. As stated by them, economic success is required in the field of culture as well. Regarding the commercialization of art, they observe, "What is new is not that it is a commodity, but today it deliberately admits it is one; that art renounces its own autonomy and proudly takes its place among consumption goods constitutes the charm of novelty" (43). The cultural, social and ideological perspectives must be focused while critiquing art, literature and objects as they are the products of specific time and conditions. "Literature may be an artefact, a product of social consciousness, a world vision; but it is also an industry"

(Eagleton 55). Terry Eagleton's Marxist ideology indicates the commercialization of literature and its effects on literary criticism. As a cultural construct literature serves its purpose of reflecting the cultural, social and commercial perspectives. He writes, "A writer...is a worker not in so far as he produces ideas, but in so far as he is working for a wage" (Eagleton 56).

The epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, Tamil Sangam literature, and Pali literature influenced writers of popular literature. The British Raj's introduction of English in educational and administrative institutions paved the way for literature written in English. Sanskrit, Hindi and regional languages took a back seat and Indian Writing in English came into existence. After their success, many other authors popularised Indian writing in English for example Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, and Amitav Ghosh to name a few.

Amish Tripathi

Amish has immortalized the genre of fiction by using mythology imaginatively and interestingly. He presents the mythological character of Shiva in the unconventional role of an ordinary tribal chief. His hero, Shiva enjoys marijuana, falls in love, dances, and fights to destroy evil for the sake of his dharma. His obligations toward family and others are fulfilled with utmost dedication and sincerity which makes him Mahadev. Amish Tripathi's Shiva is a role model who advocates the blending of both worldly involvement and detachment for harmony in society. He opines that Indian myths keep evolving and always run identically with the changing paradigms of development. Amish Tripathi has simplified and fictionalised the myth of Shiva by narrating the story with logical explanations. He bridges the gap between the ancient and the modern perspective and also arouses interest in mythology among young and old readers. Singh, Vikram (2017) claims that:

The new breed of writers like Amish, Ashok Banker, and Ashwin Sanghi are experimenting with the mythology genre by blending it with other modes of writing. These writers have contributed a lot in popularising and invigorating Indian culture and history amongst young Indian readers who had forgotten their rich ancient culture and craving for the Western one (172-173).

Amish Tripathi's books have inculcated a kind of self-confidence and pride in their heritage among them. His views on discrimination, parenthood, the environment, and cultural imperialism are revolutionary. The literary pop star of our time has created a new Shiva which is different from the mythological one in many ways. The superhuman character of Shiva is humane to the deprived class and cruel to the defaulters of the environment. He has clear-cut guidelines in his mind to save humanity from the ill effects of the nectarine drink called Somras. The environmental consciousness raised in the trilogy is one of the issues dealt with by Tripathi in his attempt to contemporize mythology for the betterment of the world. Glotfelty (1996) describes the greater span/area of the world in an ecocritical context by saying that, "Literary theory, in general, examines the relations between writers, texts and the world. In most literary theory "the world" is synonymous with society- the social sphere. Ecocriticism expands the notion of "the world" to include the entire ecosphere" (xix). Along the same lines, Amish Tripathi's hero is not partial to any of the regions of Sapt Sindhu, he works for the environmental pollution caused by the most influential and powerful kingdom of Sapt Sindhu and eventually succeeds in his venture despite his loss.

Although Shiva created by Tripathi is different in many ways from the legendary Shiva or Shiva of Hindu religion and culture, he keeps the essence of the mythological Shiva intact. The story of Shiva created and developed by Amish Tripathi strengthens our faith in Shiva for his heroic deeds. The very first book *The Immortals of Meluha* introduces the protagonist: "Shiva! The Mahadev. The God of Gods. Destroyer of Evil. Passionate lover. Fierce warrior.

Consummate dancer. Charismatic leader. All-powerful, yet incorruptible. A quick wit, accompanied by an equally quick and fearsome temper.” (The Immortals, xvii). He further comments:

Over the centuries, no foreigner who came to our land - conqueror, merchant, scholar, ruler, or traveller believed that such a great man could possibly have existed. They assumed that he must have been a mythical God, whose existence was possible only in the realms of human imagination. Unfortunately, this belief became our received wisdom (The Immortals, xvii).

Some critics criticize Amish Tripathi’s use of simple language and few expressions in grammatically incorrect English in the *Shiva Trilogy* but this can be cited as one of the reasons for his popularity. He has dealt with the issue of marginalization based on the past life karma of the Vikarma people and the Naga population who suffered expulsion from society without any logical reason. Faulty parenting by King Daksha leads to the abandoning of his daughter and grandson but Shiva punishes Daksha for his misdeeds and makes him realize that he is disliked by his children for his wrong decisions. The problem of good and evil also runs parallel in the narrative which leaves an eternal lesson of lasting goodness. The theory of past life Karma is also refuted by the author by introducing the concept of Vikarma and Nagas. The assimilation of these two in the society proves the status of Shiva as the prophetic saviour who is on the side of the righteous. The disability theory also can be applied to the text for the banishment of Nagas who suffer due to extra growths on their bodies. The cultural imperialism of King Daksha is also highlighted for its contemporary relevance in the present time when American imperialism can be traced in every aspect of life. Post-diaspora elements are also very much present as Gunas don’t feel nostalgic about their homeland and admire their new country Meluha. Post-feminism is very beautifully incorporated by Tripathi as all the women characters are empowered and self-sufficient. They

hold responsible posts which are generally taken by men in society and successfully handle their duties.

The Ad Agency 'Think Why Not' and Amish Tripathi used special publicity strategies which have been responsible for the huge success of the author and revolutionized the Indian Publishing Industry. The popular culture industry as a profit-motivated industry produces TV serials, fiction books, graphic novels, video games, and comic books. After the success of the *Trilogy*, many writers and directors have tried their hands at the myth of Shiva and other gods. Mythological representation of Shiva as a superhuman character promotes bonding among people belonging to different generations. Myth and mythology take us back to our cultural roots to identify our own cultural identity. Credit for the immense popularity of the *Shiva Trilogy* can be given to the popularity of Lord Shiva as a family man, nature lover, and meditation/yoga enthusiast. As a social rebel, Lord Shiva detests material and unnecessary norms of society and allows outcasts and socially unacceptable beings to accompany him. Calendars, trendy T-shirts and paintings about Shiva are available at all pilgrimage sites which shows his presence in the Indian subconscious. This extraordinary popularity inspired Amish Tripathi to humanise Shiva in the *Shiva Trilogy* to raise contemporary issues and their solutions. Shiva is also appealing to one and all for his marijuana-smoking and bhang-consuming charismatic persona. Tripathi's retelling of the Shiva myth has broken previous records of commercial success and readership by becoming a best seller.

Devdutt Pattanaik

Pattanaik has given a shade of modernity to mythology in his fictional and non-fictional works. Khatana (2017) describes Pattanaik as "A contemporary mythologist who has recreated famous mythological characters such as Ram, Sita, and Jaya among others from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in his works" (33). He was born on 11 December 1970 and

brought up in Mumbai. He graduated in medicine (M.B.B.S.) from Grant Medical College, Mumbai and completed a course in Comparative Mythology from Mumbai University. He has done two TV shows on CNBC-TV18 and CNBC Awaaz, going by the name *Business Sutra* and '*Shastrarth*' respectively. Business lessons from epics like the Ramayana and the *Mahabharata* are explained. He writes columns for Mid-Day, The Times of India, Swarajya, Daily O, and Scroll.

As a medical professional, he worked for fifteen years in the medical domain but gradually he found his passion for mythology more interesting. Eventually, he decided to explore mythology and pursue his career in writing books on different aspects. Now the number of books written by him on mythology exceeds 90 and 1000 plus columns. Among his best-sellers are *My Gita*, *Sita*, *Jaya*, *Shyam*, *Business Sutras*, *7 Secret Series*, etc. He has also written books like *Indian Culture, Art, and Heritage* for civil service aspirants. His book *Culture: 50 Insights from Mythology* contextualizes mythology and suggests that myths are not static but dynamic, and keep changing with time. He is popular for his TED talks and his shows on TV like *Business Sutras* on CNBC-TV18, *Devlok with Devdutt Pattanaik* on Epic channel, and *Daan Sthapana* on SonyLIV. He hosted the Devdutt Pattanaik Show on Radio Mirchi as well. He gives consultations to organizations on culture, diversity, and leadership as he uses mythology as a rich source of guidance and helps in understanding our present, past, and future. He connects business concepts with Indian mythology and suggests solutions and strategies to cope with crises. Western management theories are also inspired by Indian business concepts which are influenced by mythology. In his book *Business Sutra: An Indian Approach to Management*, he related mythology with management skills which can lead to conflict resolution. He is also consulted on various TV channels and by filmmakers on storytelling. He explains Hindu mythology, the Holy Trinity, and issues of creation and

destruction in light of present-day issues. He gives examples of new myths created by many writers of Indian writing in English in their novels.

At a personal level, Pattanaik realized that he was gay when he was in tenth standard but shared it with his parents when he was thirty years old. He accepted this in an interview on TV. He has been very frank about the LGBTQA+ revolution in India. He has celebrated the queer within the Indian mythos for instance his book *Shikhandi and Other Tales, They Don't Tell You* analyses queerness and sexual minorities in Indian mythology. Lakshmi (2020) in her paper on *Transgressive Desires in Indian Mythology: A Reading of Shikhandi and Other Tales, They Don't Tell You* states that “The author (Pattanaik) exposes the queer presence in Indian Folklores which describe the gays, lesbians, and hijras of the society which accepts queer behaviour, be it cross-dressing or homosexual intimacies, as perfectly natural” (603).

Pattanaik's interpretations of mythology seek answers related to physical nature, human nature, and divinity in aspects of culture and traditions. He retells myths and stories from mythology to logically describe the reasons for culture, rituals, and symbols. Tripathi and Jani (2020) state “He adds to the understanding of the text by giving relevant, diagrams, illustration and commentary. He unravels ancient Hindu myths which frame the Hindu culture and customs” (263). Interpretation of myths has been a challenging task for scholars around the world and attempts have been made even by Western scholars to provide a valid justification for mythological narratives. Shah (2021) declares that “Devdutt Pattanaik has a flair for clubbing traditional ideas with the modern world, is another writer who makes a peculiar use of myth in his writings. He draws inspiration for ideas related to business and commerce from many Indian epics” (141). Indian scholars have also attempted to interpret the myth to suit the modern world of logic. However, the fragmented logical explanations do not possess the potential to withstand the claim that myths are ‘mithya’ (false stories). For

example, Ashok Kumar Banker's retelling of the *Ramayana* does not create a clear world of logic and keeps the mysterious events intact.

Indian deities are either revered/idolized or feared by devotees so Pattanaik justifies and explains the traditions and taboo practices in Asian nations. By reinterpreting myths in his own unique way from the classics and folklore, he explores the mysterious nature of mythology. Although his interpretations are his own the influence of foreign authors like Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, Sheldon Pollock, and Stella Kramrisch are also sprinkled here and there. His three books on Shiva are read by all age groups as they carry simple language and easy-to-understand mysterious anecdotes. Although a medical doctor by qualification he has gained popularity of being a Mythologist. He is being consulted by the corporates as he preaches Management Sutras derived from the ancient wisdom of India through mythology. His first three books on Shiva, *Shiva-An Introduction*, *From Shiva to Shankara*, and *7 Secrets of Shiva* are in printed form but the last one *The Ultimate Tapasvin* is an e-book. More than books the serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* has achieved tremendous success which is based on these books. Despite the personal treatment of age-old mythology, he has acquired a name and fame with money in abundance. Most of his interpretations are very simple and appeal to a class of people who have no time and intention to read the original works. He has contemporized mythology to suit people's problems and current issues and offers solutions to them as well. His books on Shiva carry basic information on Shiva which is easily available in the *Shiv Maha Puranas* and other Puranas. DKDM based on his works ran for seven years and made Shiva a household name in a society that is always searching for meaning in contemporary life. Although Pattanaik has skilfully handled questions regarding mythology but through this, he has annoyed the right wing for not adhering to the conventional meaning. Pujari and Jani (2022) comment that:

Devdutt's non-fictional technique of retelling myths stays true to the essence of the text without overpowering the readers with elaborated fictional dialogues, characters or even storylines. The additional notes that Devdutt has added to the chapters of the books, give us a perspective of how the story influenced as well as got influenced by the people of various times (2098).

His writing is reader-friendly so Pattanaik is a prolific writer who is proficient in getting his books published and publicized. He focuses on the field of mythology and derives meanings from his own understanding of the texts as a normal person. His management lessons from mythology received a good response from the viewers as a result consultations were sought by corporate houses. He has also written books for children which are minting money with interesting tales of mythological figures. Pattanaik has used the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* as guidance books which can provide lessons on virtuosity, endurance, warfare, weaponry, governance and management. He has established the narratives of the past by recreating an easier interpretation which is close to the heart of the readers who cannot jostle with Sanskrit texts for meaning. Pattanaik (1997) in his first book on Shiva, *Shiva: An Introduction* points out that:

The mythology of Shiva has come a long way: from the blazing visions of seers, it has been transported by versatile bards over hills, across plains, along beaches, through the river, valleys, into villages, towns, and temples, all the while evolving, transforming, reverberating with the attitudes of the people, manifesting itself through song, dance, picture, icon, mime, music, even comic books and TV serials (vii).

Devi and Singla (2022) analyse Pattanaik's interpretation by observing "Number three epitomizes a great worth in Indian scriptures and directly related to Shiva.....A great writer

of myths- Devdutt Pattanaik pronounces this trio as three subjective worlds- Microcosm (the private world) Mesocosm (the social world) and Macrocosm (the rest of the world)” (58). He has popularised Lord Shiva among the masses through the TV serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* which is based on his works which are inspired by *Shiv Maha Purana* and other scriptures.

The third book on Lord Shiva, *Shiva to Shankara: Giving Form to the Formless* (2017) elaborates on the iconic form of Shiva’s Linga and its layered meaning. The gradual change in Shiva’s persona, his acceptance of new responsibility for the sake of the welfare of the universe and his submission to the goddess are interpreted by Pattanaik in his own peculiar style. He ends the last chapter by acknowledging that God resides within our higher self and the goddess is like nature around us. Both are essential to peace and harmony in the universe. He is humble enough to acknowledge the insignificance of his own self and other humans in comparison with the gods. Myths are culture-specific and can be contextualised according to the state of affairs and are shaped during a particular period and situation.

According to Pattanaik Hinduism is a religion in which mythology is a rich source of guidance and helps people in understanding their past, present, and future. He answers several queries associated with Hindu Mythology in his famed EPIC channel show ‘*Devlok with Devdutt Pattanaik*’ which supported the episodes of this TV. He explains the teachings of Hindu mythology with a critical take on the history, culture and traditions of the world which has problems regarding many issues. Nayar (2019) gives an example of the contemporaneity of myth by modern writers like Pattanaik “This is particularly true in the case of Devdutt Pattanaik whose book titles advertised on the website are “The Talent Sutra”, “The Leadership Sutra”, and “The Success Sutra”. The titles themselves indicate the appropriation of older texts and argumentative, philosophical and political systems (Sutras in Sanskrit are collections of Aphorisms or rules)” (97). Nayar again cites the tagline on his website “I help leverage the power of myth in business, management, and life” (97). *Myth* =

Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology by him explores primarily Hindu mythology associated with the Trinity of Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma. It discusses the truth about Nature, culture, life and Culture etc. The author is non-judgmental and he implies clearly that these ‘truths’ are neither superior nor inferior to other truths, including scientific ones. Pattanaik has brought abstract concepts/philosophies to the public platform by simplifying them in the language understood by common people. He has appropriated mythology for his own interest and passion thereby proving it to be a natural/essential part of life. People in general identify their lives and problems in mythological allusions to find remedies/solutions. The spiritual direction and moral upliftment come naturally with mythology as stories and their analysis makes one introspect and internalize the gist. His interesting and enjoyable way makes people, mythology enthusiasts acquire ancient wisdom through epics and scriptures. For him, Myth is a cultural construct that binds individuals and communities to understand religious/secular truths. Wordsworth’s theory of poetic diction which advocates simple language, can be applied to Pattanaik’s work when he uses very simple language to explain the abstract and complex terms of Sanskrit texts.

Shiva of Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik

Amish Tripathi has set a benchmark in the field of mythological fiction with his extremely successful *Shiva Trilogy*. Singh, Vikram (2016) admires him by judging his work “Epic fantasy can be considered as the predominant factor behind the resurgence of this age-old practice in the literature. Amish Tripathi has taken a lead in Indian fictional writing by deconstructing the age-old myth of Shiva and providing it a new perspective in *Shiva Trilogy*” (148). His fictional account of Shiva’s journey is filled with mystery, adventure, and fantasy for the readers of the current era. Many characters are from the *Shiv Maha Purana* but they are given a different makeover for making the story relevant to the present

time. Tripathi's Shiva is a tribal chief whose karma recast him as the Mahadev, the god of gods. Lata Mishra (2013) finds that "Amish recreates the myth of Shiva, Ganesh, Sati and Kali through his study of all spheres of Indian life and literature. He makes Shiva myth appealing and intelligible to the modern mind" (20). Unlike Namita Gokhale and Pattanaik, Amish Tripathi's epic fantasy portrays Shiva as a curious, brave and virtuous person who turns out to be the saviour of the Meluhans. He follows certain principles to show the right path to wisdom and peace through his own examples. Pattanaik's Shiva is straight from the scriptures but the author has given his own very personal interpretation of situations and characters with a tinge of foreign critic's influence. He emphasises mythology's role in giving directions to understand different cultures and their spiritual significance. Pattanaik's Shiva is not different from the mysterious deity of Hindus which is the 'destroyer' in the Trinity. He tries to demystify Shiva as the God with the peculiar appearance of a nature lover who is an ascetic as well. Tiwari and Khan (2021) validate Tripathi's stand on the good "For Amish Tripathi, great men are not born but chosen by the system for its general good. In the attempt to create a compelling narrative; he creates his own glorious traditions of ancient India" (3606). He is not a follower of the social set-up so he stays on the top of a snow-clad mountain away from the civilization/culture. He represents kindness and generosity and, seeks the source of joy within himself but his anger makes him wrathful also. Divinity according to Pattanaik cannot be sought in the world outside but in the world within. The gods of the trinity are but metaphorical manifestations of an individual's journey from the illusory nature of the universe to the actual understanding of it. His attempts at representing Shiva are not as well received as Amish Tripathi's by the readers and rather than honouring Dharma and its magnificence a focus on commercialising seems implicit. He has associated Shiva-related symbols with sex and violence to attract the attention of the readers. He is being

consulted by the corporates as he preaches Management Sutras derived from the ancient wisdom of India through mythology.

Despite his interpretations of ancient mythology, he has gained name and fame along with money in abundance. His books are recognized for highlighting the rare lessons hidden in the scriptures which contain guidance on geography, politics, morality, management and much more. His sketches, relevant, diagrams, illustrations, and photographs clearly and interestingly explain concepts and texts. His book *7 Secrets of Shiva* (2011) has pictures of calendar art, temples, and symbols on the left side page and printed matter on the right-hand side. In the introduction of this book, he shares his thoughts about Western thinkers regarding form and thought, “The divide between Western academicians and Hindu devotees exists in their relative attention to form and thought. Form is tangible and objective, thought is intangible and subjective. Western scholars have been spellbound by the sexual form but pay scant regard to the metaphysical thought” (x). He further observes that “They prefer the literal to the symbolic. Hindu devotees, in contrast, are so focused on the metaphysical thought that they ignore, or simply deny, the sexual form” (x).

It is a general perception that he also has the same cultural agenda as Amish Tripathi who is glorifying India’s culture by fictionalising mythology. His Shiva can be juxtaposed against Tripathi’s Shiva who is superhuman in his deeds and with the virtue of his karmas rises to the status of a God. Pattanaik’s working style is different as he deals with aspects of myth for commercialising with his interpretations which are sometimes not digestible to the right wing. Although Pattanaik has skillfully handled questions regarding mythology through this, he has annoyed Sanskrit scholars. His writing is reader-friendly so he is prolific in getting his books published and publicized. Moreover, he always appears liberal, mature, and incorporative in his approach which is in the tradition of Indian cultural identity and this

naturally suits the modern globalized milieu. Hence it is quite evident that both writers have essentially derived their cultural contours from the deep-rooted ancient Indian culture. It is also pertinent to mention here that various elements enrich their cultural makeup through Hindu philosophy, the Upanishads, and the Puranas constitute a fundamental part of their writings. Pattanaik is more inclined to preserve the customary practices while Amish Tripathi always hails refined and fresh applications since cultural identity is a social product and it should be variable.

While Amish Tripathi generally appeals to younger people who are curious about their heritage and epics Pattanaik is consulted by people when they need the information to argue/discuss Hinduism. His method of writing is simple and reader-friendly which can explain difficult terms and philosophy in an easy-to-understand style and language. People who are interested in their roots, heritage and epics are the readers of his books. Hopefully, these readers will be inspired to read the original works as well to quench their thirst for knowledge. He is a favourite of dancers, painters, writers, hippies, Hindu women, and men.

In the following chapter, **Shiva in Popular Literature** the researcher will discuss books on the legend of Shiva written by authors of Indian and foreign origin and evaluate the role of Shiva in the *Shiva Trilogy* written by renowned author Amish Tripathi. Pattanaik's Shiva narrated in his three books on the legend of Shiva shall also be juxtaposed with the Shiva of Tripathi. The chapter will also unearth how mythology can be used to find solutions for the current problems of society.

CHAPTER-4

SHIVA IN POPULAR LITERATURE (Amish Tripathi)

“The Lord of Tillai’s court a mystic dance performs; what’s that, my dear?”

Tiruvacagam, XII,14 (83).

Shiva is called ‘Anaadi’ and ‘Anant’ (one who is without a beginning and an end) so the roots of literature containing information on the legend of Shiva are quite challenging and next to impossible. Moreover, the legend of Shiva in Hinduism is as difficult to explain as finding the origin of Sanatan Dharam itself. Generally, scholars start with the Indus Valley seal showing a horned figure sitting in a yogic posture, surrounded by animals. This proto-Shiva or Pashupati is assumed as the Shiva of Hinduism. Rudra in the *Vedas* has also been considered the predecessor of Shiva. The great lord of *Shweteshwara Upanishad* is Rudra who is mentioned as Shiva also. According to Bisschop (2009), “It is also one of the first texts that frequently uses the name Shiva” (742). Ancient literature of India and South Asian nations has the presence of Shiva by various names. In the epic, *Ramayana* Shiva appears as a granter of boons. Anyone who is in trouble or confused goes to Shiva for protection and

guidance. The Baalkaand has the stories of the Shiv-Uma marriage and the birth of Skanda, the descent of Ganga, and the Bow of Shiva used for Sita Swayamvar. The Uttarkaand contains the story of Raavan's effort to lift the Kailash Mountain and his scream after Shiva presses his toe to punish Raavan. In the *Mahabharata* Shiva's role is more complex on account of granting boons to a variety of devotees. He gives Arjun a magical Pashupat weapon to defend himself in a time of crisis and victory in the *Mahabharata* war. Sage Upmanyu has the vision of Shiva which he shares with Lord Krishna. After a long meditation on Shiva, Krishna receives a son, Samba as a boon. Jayadrath kills Abhimanyu with the help of a boon received from Shiva. In Sauptik Parva, Ashvthaman possessed by Shiva slaughters five sons of Pandavas. Bisschop (2009) observes that "The Story of Rudra's destruction of the sacrifice is one of the most central to Shiva's mythology and is told on several occasions in the *Mahabharata*" (745). Shiva appears many times over in the *Mahabharata* as the dispenser of boons to the ascetics and other devotees performing penance for acquiring boons. Draupadi in her former birth receives the same boon five times and consequently, marries five Pandavas. Besides these works, Puranas have Shiva as the major deity with many details. The *Shiv Maha Purana* and the *Linga Purana* are the most prominent Puranas on Shiva's life, worship, and philosophy. Skanda Purana's theme is the birth of Shiva's son and a perspective of the cosmos in which Shiva is the supreme Lord who grants boons and liberation to his devotees. Other Puranas like the *Vayu Purana*, the *Matsya Purana*, the *Kurma Purana*, and the *Saura Purana* also contain important information on the legend of Shiva. Other than ancient literature/scriptures, literature of English, Hindi, and regional languages of India, Shri Lanka, Nepal, and other neighbouring countries are filled with mythological episodes and characters. Retellings are common and gods are frequently used as superheroes who can solve all the problems of humans and animal kingdoms. Basu (2020) states that "The larger-than-life representation of characters with a divine prospect has been

the signature move of Indian epics, legends, Vedas and Upanishads. While some of them are born out of a union between a God and a human, others were avatars or versions of Gods” (97). Balaji, A. (2016) states that “Religious beliefs are constantly questioned and altered as religion itself is nothing but an attempt to understand God and divinity. But all beliefs can’t simply be dismissed as superstitions as some beliefs are the very foundations of the said religions. Thus, rewriting mythologies has to be defined, be classified and be safeguarded” (54). He declares that “An author can revisit, resurrect and reconstruct the mythology and how to bring necessary additions to the ancient story and continue it or create altogether a new story” (58). Recently the trend of re-visiting mythology in literature has become a profitable venture so many writers are prolific in this area. Mythological fiction has become one of the popular genres among writers of popular literature across the globe.

What is Popular Literature

Popular Literature is a very significant part of literature which again comes under the umbrella of popular culture. Literature can be defined as the reflection of society but sometimes, it is more than the mirror of contemporary society. The term literature suggests a comprehensive body of texts of a language having a manifestation of culture, new trends, and allusions to past works. Oral literature and written literature are both documented digitally for convenience and storage/preservation. Cunningham (2023) defines **Popular literature**, as:

“Any written work that is read or is intended to be read, by a mass audience. In its broadest sense, popular literature may include best-selling nonfiction books, widely circulated periodicals, and certain kinds of digital texts. However, the term is typically used to refer to works of fiction that are distinguished from what is often called high literature, artistic literature, or simply literature.”

Ancient traditions of literature were oral which were reproduced in written form after the invention of the printing press. The ancient literature of Greeks, Romans as well and Indians was written in poetic form, and prose was considered substandard. The ancient drama of both India and Greece had the language of poetry. It was only in Elizabethan England that authors turned to blank verse and gradually prose came into fashion with the genre of fiction.

The concept of popular literature is an ancient one for the wide publicity/popularity of certain works in different time zones. Literature read by young and old people from other countries can be considered popular literature. Generally, it does not have sublimity or subtlety like high-quality literature so its popularity span remains uncertain. It can be a potpourri of various episodes, characters, events, situations, and stories from various periods in history or contemporary life. Popular literature boomed due to technical advancements in printing, new genres, increased literacy and easy availability of books. Literature of the masses reached them with the cheap production of printed material on account of the Industrial Revolution and new printing techniques. The melting of geographical boundaries, the advent of multinationals, and globalization have greatly affected literature, visual media, and local cultural traditions. Popular literature which is also regarded as mass literature differs from classical literature which is said to be meant for people belonging to the elite class of society. It was also distinguished based on the target reader of the work with romance, science fiction, detective stories, graphic novels, comics, and cartoon strips as common genres. The word “popular” in Popular literature in English is the corpus of works that have pirated versions, perpetual demand and supply, high sales and economic success. The word “Popular” is synonymous with “successful” not as an antonym for “serious”. From the well-known writers of classics to the writers of campus literature, have gained popularity in their lifetime. Shakespeare was very famous and loved by the gentry who was the audience of his plays. He was a popular writer and his plays were part of popular literature in his time but now we call

them classics. So, it is very difficult to draw a fine line between literary writers and popular writers as many classical writers were popular writers in their lifetime. Some works of popular literature are generally short-lived but some popular works find their place in classical literature. Good quality popular works are read by readers of all age groups but they do not essentially come under the category of popular literature. The works of Shakespeare were very popular when they were published and till now their popularity is intact. The short-lived popular works' popularity peaks during a period but these are sidelined after some time. *The Bible*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Harry Potter Series*, *Paulo Coelho*, *Dan Brown*, and *Percy Jackson Series* are examples of Western popular literature. In India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are all-time favourites of people of different regions and faiths. Shah (2021) declares that "The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are two major Indian epics, in the Indian socio-literary arena that have spawned innumerable retellings and re-imaginings" (138). Besides these post-colonial writers like RK Narayan, Raja Rao, and Mulk Raj Anand gained huge popularity. Campus literature writers like Chetan Bhagat, Ravinder Singh, Durjoy Dutta, and Nikita Singh are also quite popular among young readers. The criteria for analysing popular literature, its perspective related to contemporary society, existing aesthetics and poetics should be the focus of critics. It is a potpourri of various characters, stories, and episodes from the contemporary, mythological, and historical periods in different genres like fantasy, thriller, detective, science fiction, and commercial fiction. The term contemporary is used in the context of the second decade of 21st-century Indian mythological fiction in English. The success of mythological fiction in recent times has provoked researchers, scholars, and critics to explore and study this genre. Lata Marina Varghese (2015) observes in this regard that "Historical accuracy is often dismissed or re-worked in the research for something that is felt should be present for all of us, but is now missing. Legends become history, and fiction reality, dissolving the real and the imaginary. Identity is

continually negotiated, often mythologized and sometimes re-invented” (9632). As a source of interest for the masses mythological literature has always been popular among different civilizations of the world for various reasons. Ancient countries like Egypt, India, Greece, and China had literary traditions long before the Roman literary tradition.

Indian literary tradition began long ago with the origin of *Vedas* which have been regarded as the works of divine nature in Indian culture. The four *Vedas* namely *Rigved*, *Yajurved*, *Samved*, and *Atharvaveda* are written in verse form with almost uniform stanza patterns. These melodious works have been an inseparable part of Indian culture and rituals. They are also considered ‘Apourusheyas’, (not created by humans or having divine origin) and come under the category of ‘Shruti’ (heard). The Indian texts of ancient origin can be classified into three categories namely ‘Shruti’, ‘Smriti’, and ‘Samhita’. ‘Shruti’ means, heard or to be heard, ‘Smriti’ means remembered or to be remembered, and ‘Samhita’ means the code of conduct or the law book to be followed. Shruti *Upanishads* are Sanskrit texts containing central philosophical concepts and ideas of Sanatan Dharam. The Smriti texts include the *Puranas* that deal with the mythological stories of Shiva and Vishnu amongst other gods and goddesses. Indian literary tradition also comprises other texts like *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas*, *Agamas*, etc besides *Samhitas*, *Shruti*, and *Smriti* texts. India also has Buddhist literature and Jain literature which are extremely popular and contain philosophical and spiritual knowledge. Buddhist literature comprises *Jataka Tales*, *Tripitakas*, *Buddhavacana*, *Sutras*, *Vinayas*, *Mahavastu*, *Shastras*, or *Abhidharma*, etc. The tradition of Jain canonical texts is called *Agamas* which are believed to be the discourses of ‘Tirthankara’. It has eleven ‘Angas’ and fourteen ‘Purvas’. *Shatkhandagama* is one of the important texts belonging to the Jain literary tradition. There are more than two hundred *Upanishads* that have attracted the attention of the Western world. Consequently, the translation of *Upanishads* started in the nineteenth century and is called the “Product of highest human wisdom” by Arthur

Schopenhauer. Besides these sacred texts, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are considered to be the greatest of all the epics in the world for their narrative technique and art of characterization. *Bhagavad Gita*, the most sacred Hindu text, is part of the epic *Mahabharata* which is often compared with the Greek epic *Iliad* for its grandeur, sublimity, characterization, and narrative technique. Most of the texts mentioned above are written in Sanskrit and Pali. Tamil texts are also very popular among Shiva devotees and critics. ‘Sant Sahitya’ or the Saint tradition of literature emerged and flourished in Maharashtra from the thirteenth century to the eighteenth century. Great literary works like *Viveksindhu*, *Dnyaneshwari*, and many more poems by great saint poets continued the tradition, and Tukaram and Ramdas in the seventeenth century flourished it. The medieval period saw Chand Bardai’s *Prithviraj Raso* on the life of Prithviraj Chauhan. The works of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Kabir, Namdev, Amir Khusro, Abul Fazal, and Faizi also continued the great Indian literary tradition.

The genre of the novel is new to India as most of the ancient and medieval Indian writings are in verse forms. Drama, however, was an established genre in India. Kalidasa’s finest plays include *Abhigyan Shakuntalam*, *Kumar Sambhavam*, *Raghuvansham*, and *Meghdootam*. Vishakhadatta’s *Mudrarakshasa* and Bhavbhuti’s *Malati Madhava* are written in verse and are called poetic plays in modern terminology. Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, Vatsyayana’s *Kamasutra*, Banabhatta’s *Harshcharita*, Panini’s *Ashthadhyayi*, Sudraka’s *Mricchkatikam*, and Bhaaravi’s *Kiratarjuniya* are some of the other important works in the tradition of ancient Indian literature. Though there is a rich heritage of literary tradition in India, the genre of novels came very late in India. Bana Bhatta is regarded as the first novelist in India to write the maiden Indian novel, *Kadambari*. For some reason, he was not able to complete this novel which was completed by his son Bhushan Bhatta.

The golden period of fiction writing started with pioneers of post-colonial writing like the trio comprising R K Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao who designed the structure of Indian English fiction to suit the cultural milieu of India. The popularity of the genre of novels inspired authors to pen down their concerns/experiences in an easy-to-understand manner which made them extremely successful but the journey has been arduous. Thus, it took a lot of time for literature to become one with actual society and its language.

From the freedom struggle movement to this day writers have narrated fictional accounts of life and situations of their time. Many fads came and disappeared leaving behind a trail of works exhibiting the traits. Feminist writers witnessed many stages of social acceptance before they could acquire a prestigious status amongst readers and critics. Subaltern writers also faced the harsh realities of the publishing world before attaining a respectable place in the field of Indian Writing. Fortunately, the genre of mythological fiction has not faced any such harshness from viewers/readers/critics at national and international levels. Percy Jackson series (2005) is a recent example of mythology-driven fiction that has gained huge popularity the world over. The Indian scenario in this field is quite vibrant with a variety of authors and themes. Indian literature has myths and mythological stories which teach ethical values, customs, rituals, and traditions. The second decade of the new millennium saw the mushrooming of mythology-related fictional literature which started with Ashok Banker's eight-volume *Ramayana series*. Anand Neelakantan, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Amish Tripathi, Kavita Kane, and many other writers of mythological narratives have provided a fictional account of Indian mythology-related stories and characters. Some of these writers go for the sympathetic and opposite side of the popular version of the mythological themes. Kavita Kane has narrated the shadowed and marginalized women characters of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* which did not receive proper attention in the original texts. Anand Neelakantan talks about the losers' perspective of how Raavan and Duryodhan handled

matters according to their wisdom and ambitions. Otherwise, Sita and Draupadi are favourite characters of writers of mythological fiction with books on them around fifty in number. Samrajya Lakshmi (2021) feels that “The myth has now been re-characterized by writers with satisfactory explanations through science, Science deals with observation, hypothesis experiment and law. People try to prove many mythological things true from a scientific perspective” (45).

The best part of popular literature is that it does not always deal with only the winners’ viewpoint/story. Different elements like mystery, science, suspense, thrill, and fantasy also have their fair share in this type of literature. Modern literature is full of a variety of genres dealing with myths, science and history and authors penning their own experiences in the form of stories and poems with allusions to mythology. Nivargi (2014) finds that “The study of popular literature has gained importance since the advent of postmodernism and today the line between serious and popular literature is blurred. Popular literature has been accepted as a noteworthy expression of people’s reading interests as well as a distinctive field of literary creativity” (2554). Easy access to education has enabled several people to write about a variety of themes and issues around them. Fiction has become the most popular and common genre in a world governed by the phenomenon of hyper-globalization which has connected people with the help of new-age technology and an ever-decentralising World Wide Web. The trend of popular literature and the proliferation of mythological fiction has gotten a fillip through the globalization of the English language. Laxmi Dhar Dwivedi (2019) argues that “This popular culture has slowly sieved into literature. It has changed the very facet of literature, which was looked at as something which belonged to the elite group and which always has superior characters that belonged to the elite or middle categories” (18). Adaptations of mythology-related works have provided directors with a golden opportunity to reap rich dividends. The TV serials and web series based on the *Ramayana* and the

Mahabharata, *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev* and many other adaptations have written their success story. Gokhale (2012) comments “There has always been a remarkable flexibility between the oral and written traditions, and the immensely popular television mega-series on the Hindu gods are an appropriation of technology and media by an ancient and uninterrupted culture” (8). Lucrative aspect of this genre has attracted TV serials and web series makers to try their luck in this area of entertainment.

The Legend of Shiva in Popular Literature

The legend of Shiva is spread over our Scriptures, epics like the *Ramayana*, and the *Mahabharata* to Upanishads, and Puranas. The presence of Shiva is visible everywhere in symbols associated with him like in paintings, music, dance, theatre, Frescos, and T-Shirts. His habit of the consumption of marijuana and carefree lifestyle are assumed by his followers and devotees for their own convenience. Varanasi city in Uttar Pradesh is full of foreigners/hippies who try to follow Shiva by keeping dreadlocks and consuming intoxicants. The magnetic attraction for Shiva can be seen in contemporary popular literature and culture. Popular author **Devdutt Pattanaik** has written three books in print form and three online Kindle editions on the legend of Shiva. The present study has focused on three non-fictional printed books (1997-2011) namely *Shiva: An Introduction*, *Shiva to Shankara* and *7 Secrets of Shiva*. His portrayal of Shiva is based on the stories available in Puranas and other scriptures but another highly successful writer **Amish Tripathi**'s Trilogy on Shiva has a fictional Shiva inspired by Hindu mythology. Under the umbrella of popular literature, Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* comes in the category of mythological narratives which is in vogue these days. Zina (2021) finds that “Tripathi with his *Shiva Trilogy* and *Ram Chandra Series* has taken up mythological characters and transformed them into humane ones without tarnishing their grandeur. He weaves his stories with a blend of fantasy, logic and myth” (21).

The sudden surge in this area has given a fillip to the interest in mythology-related ancient literature which was otherwise considered outdated and ambiguous. Although many other writers like Namita Gokhale, Pattanaik, and others have written about the legend of Shiva and gained name and fame, Amish Tripathi has outwitted all of them by narrating a fictional account of Shiva's adventures with fantasy, mystery, and suspense. The Trilogy presents Shiva as a roughhewn tribal chief from Tibet who is fed up with the pointless attacks of the Pakrati tribe. As a twenty-one-year-old, he is wiser and more decisive in accepting Captain Nandi's offer to migrate to Meluha, a near-perfect empire. He takes the whole tribe into confidence and mutually decides to leave his native place and beloved Lake Mansarovar for greener pastures for his tribe. He never regrets this decision as his leadership skills and the faith of Meluhans in the legend of the Neelkanth encourage him to take the lead in finding and destroying evil. Amish Tripathi has created a new Shiva, not as a mythical god but as a historical figure. He introduces to the reader his protagonist Shiva in his first book and wonders: "But what if we are wrong? What if Lord Shiva was not a figment of rich imagination, but a person of flesh and blood? Like you and me. A man who rose to become godlike because of his karma" (The Immortals, xvii).

Basu (2021) reveals that "The protagonist is a human being, Shiva whose bildungsroman through the trilogy transforms him into God, but without actually changing any of his physical attributes. Thus, at the level of anthropomorphism, this method of representation sheds light on the humane aspects of divinity" (96). He concludes by saying:

Indian mythology showcases the Gods as flawless in most of the cases, but this series tries to show that there is a flip side to that coin, through alternative representation. Like the tragic hero, Shiva also falls prey to hubris, and thus the representation of the divine being completes a full circle as he comes back to the realm of the human again, after making a grave mistake (103).

Mythology is an essential part of our consciousness which evolves with changing times and new myths, stories, and concepts come into existence to suit the requirements of the contemporary era. Raj, Smita (2017) concludes in her paper that “In every genre of literature, we find extensive use of Indian myth. Indian mythology served as a muse to writers. Writers like AK Ramanujan, Raja Rao, and RK Narayan and modern writers like Shashi Tharoor, Tripathi, Pattanaik, Kavita Kane, and Chitra Divakaruni, etc. used Indian myth in different contexts in their fictional works” (309). Khan (1998) in the article titled “*The Modern Re-appropriation of Myth*” argues that, “In a context where traditional heritage is of such great importance, its re-appropriation into the public sphere becomes a political act. The tools of modernity interfere with this transmission but are manipulated into this specific representation” (192). Shiva is one of the deities in the Trinity who is otherwise recognized as the supreme God within Shaivism.

Shiva in the Works of Indian Regional Language Writers

The Dance of Shiva by **Anand Coomaraswamy** (2012) is a compilation of essays with an introduction by Romain Rolland. The essay *The Dance of Shiva* is summarised by him in the following words:

The Essential Significance of Shiva’s Dance is threefold: First, it is the image of his Rhythmic Play as the Source of all Movements within the Cosmos, which is represented by the Arch: Secondly, the Purpose of his Dance is to Release the Countless souls of men from the Snare of Illusion: Thirdly the Place of the Dance, Chidambaram, the Centre of the Universe, is within the Heart (93).

This hugely popular book is read and quoted by Indian and Foreign writers like Fritjof Capra.

A K Ramanujan’s book, *Speaking of Siva* (1973) contains Basavanna’s devotional poems for Lord Shiva. The author is known as the ‘Indo-Anglian harbinger of literary modernism.’

In the introduction of the book, it is stated that “The Vira Saiva movement was a social upheaval by and for the poor, the low caste and the outcaste against the rich and the privileged; it was a rising of the unlettered against the literate pundit, flesh and blood against a stone” (21). They were against the rich and privileged who did not respect the contribution/devotion of the poor. Their ideas are comparable to saint Kabir who spoke of worship through good karma. They opposed Hinduism and Jainism as well. “Virasaivas were protesters not only against the Hinduism of their time but also against Jainism, the powerful competitor to Hinduism” (36). The outstanding devotion of Basavanna and other saint poets is exemplary:

“Make of my body the beam of a lute
of my head the sounding gourd
of my nerves the strings of my fingers the plucking rods.
Clutch me close and play your thirty-two songs
O lord of the meeting rivers!”

BASAVANNA 500 (83)

Besides these many writers of Hindi and other regional languages have written on the legend of Shiva.

The Legend of Shiva in the Works of Foreign Authors

The Legend of Shiva has been a favourite among foreign authors also due to his extraordinary philosophy and lifestyle. A French historian **Alain Daniélou** was a writer, translator, intellectual, and expert on Shaivism. He wrote many books on Shiva and Indian mythology like *Myths and Gods of India*, *Hindu Polytheism*, *The Phallus*, *Sacred Symbol of Male Creative Power* etc. **Stella Kramrich**'s *The Presence of Shiva* (1981) presents Shiva by retelling and interweaving the many myths that continue to convey Shiva's presence as a living god, she unfolds the contrast in Shiva's nature by stating:

The myths of Siva have many levels. They have to be entered all at the same time, or else the total, multiple perspectives of each are lost sight of. Crazy beggar, saviour, necrophiliac, voluptuary, ascetic, he is each wholly on the plane where he acts, while on another plane he is Sadasiva, the eternal Siva, who lays out his presence in his five faces, of which the fifth, invisible in principle, is part of the Pancamukha Linga, Siva's concrete, monumental symbol (428).

Kramrich acknowledges Lord Shiva as one of the three great Gods of Hinduism. Early traces of Shiva can be found in Rigveda hymns, Vedic myths, rituals, and even astronomy. Since the dawn of time, Shiva has been known as a wild hunter, Rudra. **Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty's** *'Shiva: The Erotic Ascetic'* (1973) interprets the myth of Shiva with her Western mindset where she can see outward things with a narrow outlook:

As Siva embodies the extremes of each aspect, he explores each one to its fullest, even absurd extension.... Both Siva's sexuality and his chastity pose certain threats to the balance of the universe, and the ambiguous figure of the erotic ascetic is, among its many other functions, the only possible continuous manifestation of Siva which can hold these two extremes in suspension (293).

Some scholars and conservative Hindus criticize her interpretations of Hindu mythology and traditions. The right-wing ideology has objections to her explanations and documentation regarding many aspects. Critics have also raised fingers at Lord Shiva-related information which is interpreted by her through a narrow and biased perspective. **Sheldon Pollock** is also a prominent foreign author who has written extensively on Indian mythology. As a Sanskrit scholar, he was awarded the Padam Shree by the Indian government. **Fritjof Capra's** book *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (1975) explores the parallel between modern Physics and Eastern mysticism. He

perceived a similarity between the dance of waves of the sea and the cosmic dance of Shiva, which he was reading about. His article titled '*The Dance of Shiva: The Hindu View of Matter in the Light of Modern Physics*' traces the sameness between Shiva's dance and the dance of sub-atomic particles. He observes "For the modern physicists, then, Shiva's dance is the dance of subatomic matter. As in Hindu mythology, it is a continual dance of creation and destruction involving the whole cosmos; the basis of all existence and of all natural phenomena" (272). An article titled 'Fritjof Capra and the Dharmic Worldview' published in 2015 in an online Sutra Journal is also about Capra's views on Eastern mysticism. **Andy McDermott's** *Vault of Shiva* is a fantasy where the deity Shiva's name is used for the treasure hunt. This imaginary story has secret contents and weapons which are kept in the Shiva-Vedas, the records of the god of annihilation. **David Frawley's** book *Shiva, the Lord of Yoga* (2015) describes Lord Shiva as the Guru of Yoga and meditation. *Age of Shiva* (2014) was written by **James Lovegrove** who is a New York Times best-selling author. An Indian-origin Maryland-based author **Manil Suri** (2008) has also written a trilogy by the title *The Age of Shiva*.

The Legend of Shiva in the Works of Indian Writers

The corpus of Indian writings on Lord Shiva is very large on account of the Hindu religion's followers across the world. The popularity of myth-related books in the current time has inspired many authors to write about this mystical deity. There are books on Shiva in different genres due to the continuous production of literature to attract younger readers who prefer unconventional forms of age-old stories and myths. Saint Swami Lakshmanjoo, Pundit J L Shastri, Ananda Coomaraswamy, A K Ramanujam, Amish Tripathi, Devdutt Pattanaik, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, Namita Gokhale, Preetha Rajah Kannan, etc. have written on the legend of Shiva. English translations of the *Shiv Maha Purana*, the *Linga Purana*, and the

Peria Puranam are available in digitized form. Translations of all the Upanishads, the Puranas, and other scriptures, containing information on Lord Shiva are also easily available on internet websites. The text of *Vigyan Bhairav Tantra* and books on its interpretations are also many as Swami Lakshmanjoo, Osho, and other writers have written on this work extensively.

The retellings of legends are triggered as much by critical requirements as by the creative verve of the authors. Consequently, the considerable corpus of creative writings on the legend in general and Shiva's in particular and an equally considerable volume of criticism on the said subject are available. However, an integrated critical work of the two authors with different genres is hardly available. The proposed study has tried to fill this gap of critical requirement by critiquing the two popular authors on Shiva, namely Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik. As such, the larger rationale of the study is marked by the need to analyse the treatment of modern-day problems like environmental crisis, parenthood, and discrimination based on caste, culture, and physical features as contained in Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*. Amish Tripathi is one of the most influential writers who has lured the young generation towards literature associated with mythology. Laxmi Dhar Dwivedi (2019) comments:

Amish's way of seeing Shiva as a human has struck the chord with the modern generation, as it gives them the message that anyone can commit follies be it God or human, and humanizing Shiva shows that when the Athma (spirit) becomes pure and when you see one with all irrespective of the place you belong to you can reach the status of Parmathma (20).

His works are thoroughly embedded in Indian culture and spirituality which makes them popular among the masses for entertainment and inspiration. The study attempts to measure the appropriation of commercial and lucrative objectives in the re-interpretive treatment of

legend done by Pattanaik in particular. The subject of the contemporisation of Shiva juxtaposed against the novel departure from the legend of Shiva instils a sustained interest in the readers in general and researchers in particular. The success of these writers in this era of Generative AI and hyper-globalization indicates a surge of interest in legends among youth. The redefined myth of Shiva proves the greatness of virtues over vices and the victory of good over evil. The young generation needs to explore such works which give them information as well as knowledge of our past and make them proud of their heritage and mythology. The spiritual direction provided by the legend of Shiva is the need of the hour when the mental health of people is at stake due to overdependence on technology and the pursuit of material comforts. The study will inspire more such comparative investigations in the field of mythological writings in general and Shiva's legends in particular. Although many writers have written about the legend of Shiva due to the paucity of space, only the most famous authors have been discussed/examined for the study. The thesis has also attempted to look at the poetics and politics of representation, problematics of contemporisation of mythology, and subversion of the myth of Shiva in popular writings in English. Other than the extremely popular writers like Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik, many other writers are well-known to the readers. Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev has earned popularity by writing books on Shiva and by organizing overnight devotional musical programs at Coimbatore where the largest bust of Shiva is situated. *Shiva the Ultimate Outlaw* (2014) by Isha Foundation pioneer **Sadhguru Vasudev Jaggi** describes Shiva, the Adiyogi or first yogi, as the ultimate outlaw, because he flouts laws made for society for his unique lifestyle. He is beyond the reach of material and physical dimensions that hampers his meditation and solitude. This e-book has beautiful graphics and details of wisdom shared by the Lord. All laws of the world are insignificant to Him as He wants to live according to the laws of Nature only. Lord Shiva is the ultimate outlaw who rules the world without getting involved in it.

Santosh Gairola has written five books on the legend of Shiva, *The Love Story of Lord Shiva & Goddess Shakti: A Tale of Divine Love* (2019), *The Incredible Qualities of Lord Shiva, The Benefits of Om Namah Shivaya* (2019), *The Magnificent Shiva: Why there is no one like Lord Shiva and Mahadev* (2020), *The Lord of the Lords* (2019). All these books are available in Kindle editions. Santosh Gairola's *The Love Story of Lord Shiva & Goddess Shakti: A Tale of Divine Love* describes the well-known story of the Shiv-Sati and Shiv-Parvati union. The most powerful god Shiva is omniscient and kind to gods, Asuras, and other lower beings. *Shiva: the Ultimate Time Traveller* by **Shailendra Gulhati** (2015) describes Shiva to be the uppermost god in the galaxy of Hindu gods. His contribution to the art of Yoga is elaborated to establish him as the Supreme Lord of Yoga. His consort, the goddess is the perfect better half for her extreme devotion to the lord and his divinity. The reader travels with him in time and space in a magical and enchanting world where God has human qualities. The protagonist rises through myriad forms of experiences which lead to the discovery of 'self.' *The Book of Shiva* by **Namita Gokhale** (2012) praises Shiva:

Shiva's manifestations are complex and contradictory, for he is the all-encompassing reality who resolves all polarities in his being. His auspicious and terrible aspects are all mirrors of the same primary self. Shiva is the god who must not be named, for to name is to limit and curtail; yet his many names together constitute the sum of his unknowable mysteries (15).

The book carries relevant and precise information on the deity. Gokhale presents Shiva as the supreme ascetic who is also a protector and a destroyer as well. His grief over Sati's death is limitless which shows his human qualities. The writer examines the philosophy behind the popular stories of Shiva and his consort which are life-affirming and terrifying at times. The complexity of Shiva's character attracts devotees from all over the world who accept him as the supreme deity whose divinity can guide them through tough times. She has written this

book as an act of dedication to Shiva by comparing Him with the deities of other popular cultures. **Preetha Rajah Kannan**'s *Shiva in the City of Nectar* (2016) has fifty-four stories that take the reader through heaven, earth, and the underworld. These ancient Indian tales portray Lord Shiva in different avatars such as the eternal guru whose wisdom is par-excellence, the lover who woos Meenakshi, the fierce fighter who slays demons, and a generous god who is a benefactor of devotees. Her next book *Son of Shiva* (2017) details the legend of Kartikeya, the great son of Shiva who was Commander in chief of the army of gods. His monumental victory over Tarakasur for the welfare of the gods is mesmerizing. He fights the battle between Devas and Asuras who represent forces of good and evil respectively. The third book, *The Hounds of Shiva* (2018) is a rich storehouse of tales of sixty-three Nayanmars whose devotion to Lord Shiva was extraordinary. Her source of information has been Sekkizhar's the *Peria Puranam*, a twelfth-century epic. *The Reluctant Family Man: Shiva in Everyday Life* by **Nilima Chitgopekar** (2019) presents Shiva as the destroyer of evil, the pervasive one in whom all things lie. His ferocious and benevolent forms manifest changing aspects of his personality which teaches us to use situations and issues with great discretion. **Ranjit Chaudhri**'s *The Shiva Sutras* (2019) is about the story of Lord Shiva appearing in a dream to sage Vasugupta and instructing him to find a special stone near a stream. The book has all the lessons required for leading a contented life with the grace of Shiva. **Haroon Khalid**'s (2015) *In Search of Shiva* searches for ancient roots of religious symbols, shrines, and traditions. It highlights Islamic puritanism and extremism in Pakistan which is against a different world that does not find affinity in the Middle East for its cultural and religious traditions and finds solace in South Asian roots. The antiquity of Indus Valley civilization is spread through the shrines of phallic offerings, sacred trees, and sacred animals which are in danger of being destroyed by the extremists. The book elaborates on the risk of Islamic fundamentalism which is ready to demolish traces of ancient religious

relics and traditions which have survived over centuries. *Shiva: The Stories & Teachings from the Shiva Maha Purana* by **Vanmali** (2002) gives the stories of The *Shiva Mahapurana* that teach us traditional wisdom and show the path to enlightenment. **Chitrlekha Singh's** *Siva: The Greatest God* (2005) narrates the greatest god of the Hindu Pantheon who is called the God of Gods. Lord Shiva envelops the powers of the genesis of existence and ultimate consummation and he destroys the universe as well. He has numerous manifestations which are described in the mythological scriptures. The author has tried to present the lord, and his various forms as Rudra, Maheswara, Nataraja, and Yogeshwara. The whole spectrum of his being is portrayed elaborately and comprehensively with sketches and illustrations. While describing the significance of symbols she states:

Nataraja wears the skin of a tiger, which he himself slew. Ahankara or the skin of egoism is that tiger; it is beastly and ferocious and fiercely fights when attacked, but it has to be killed and Siva could only do so. Desire, which consumes human beings, without even being satiated, can be compared to a tiger. Siva, by killing the tiger and wearing its skin as apparel shows his complete mastery over desire (69).

The malevolent and benevolent forms of the Lord and his actions/sports through the ages are given in detail for the Indologists, philanthropists, art lovers, and the general public in search of information about Shaivism/Shiva. Vimanika Comics has introduced a series on Shiva's grandeur by the name of *Shiva - The Legend of The Immortal Book-1* (2011) by **Kshitish Padhy & Abdul Rasheed** which deals with the origin of the universe. As a spiritual guide and destroyer of creation, he teaches Vedas in an inimitable Vimanika style to glorify Lord Shiva's exploits. *Mystic Tales from Shiv Mahapurana* (2022) by **Dr. Prashant Pareek** presents the *Shiv Mahapurana* as the epitome of all the Vedas and Puranas, the one who reads or listens to it gets all his sins purified. It is the ideal source to receive guidance on the duties of a human being which includes Purushartha (hard work), Dharma (right conduct),

Artha (money), Kama (desire), and Moksha (salvation). The book *Siva* by **Ramesh Menon** is a simplified form of the *Maha Shiv Purana* categorised into stories to make it interesting for the readers. **D K Hari's** *Understanding Shiva* depicts the Lord as the Supreme Power of the universe. The positive changes are caused by sincere devotion and ultimate surrender to the great almighty Shiva. The Shiv Ratri festival is a celebration of Shiva's union with the goddess thereby helping change to occur.

These authors on the legend of Shiva are continuing the tradition of mythological retellings which is relevant in the tumultuous times of terrorism, environmental pollution, and political unrest. The thesis examines the contemporisation of mythology in these works with a special focus on two prominent and well-known writers: Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik who have raised social issues through mythology.

The primary texts selected for the study are based on the rationale of popular culture and literature in the current time zone. Both authors have written about the legend of Shiva in different genres. Although many other authors have written about the legend of Shiva, these two authors acquired fame and recognition in the Twenty-first century and tried to contemporise the legend of Shiva. Pattanaik's portrayal of Shiva is based on the stories available in Puranas and other scriptures but Amish Tripathi's Shiva is a fictional character inspired by Hindu mythology.

The *Shiva Trilogy* by Amish Tripathi

Amish Tripathi is one of the most successful writers of mythological fiction of our time whose *Shiva Trilogy* has set a benchmark in this genre and popular literature as well. His sensational series of three novels entitled *Shiva Trilogy* is a retelling of the Shiva Myth of Hindu mythology. Balaji (2016) clarifies that Amish "Attempts to hypothesize that how an author can resurrect, reconstruct the mythology and how to bring necessary additions to the

ancient story and continue it or create altogether a new story” (58). It depicts the superhuman hero Shiva who is prophesied to be the destroyer of evil. Tripathi has demythologized the characters to make them appear more interesting and convincing. His voice is the most dominant one in the newly accepted genre of mythological fiction for arousing the interest of the young generation in mythology by interpreting/subverting Hindu mythology, religion, Indian culture, and history for a better tomorrow. An ardent Shiva Devotee himself he inspires Western culture-influenced youngsters to willingly chant mantras like Har-Har Mahadev and Jai Shree Ram which is a rare achievement for a writer in the era of Generative AI where the intelligence of machines is spilling over into human morality and decision-making. His appreciation for Indian culture makes him acknowledge its heritage and spirituality. Patra (2018) identifies “Tripathi’s handling of myths as “jumbled memories of true past” harks back to Jung’s monumental idea of “collective unconscious” or a racial memory comprising of “primordial images” and archetypes” (228). His fan following is responsible for his comparison with the likes of *Tolkien* and *Paulo Coelho*. He is one of the celebrated novelists in the popular mythological fiction category which has become a genre in itself. His debut publication *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010) claimed the best-seller title within a short period. It subverted the myth of Lord Shiva by presenting him as a human being who is initially devoid of divinity but by crusading against evil, he attains divinity. Tripathi’s *Shiva Trilogy* and *Ram Chandra Series* re-visits and re-interprets traditional myths through an altered perspective with special emphasis on the humanization of the divine and showering respect for Indian women who are self-sufficient and empowered. Amish Tripathi believes that gods attained godhood through their good karmas and concern for the world. According to Tripathi “A man becomes a Mahadev when he fights for good. A ‘Mahadev’ is not born as one from his mother's womb; he is forged in the heat of battle, when he wages a war to destroy Evil.” (*The Immortals*, 346). In the *Shiva Trilogy*, the protagonist Shiva has a

lack of confidence and disbelief in his competency initially. He suffers from guilt about his wrong decisions and often displays his fearsome temper using rough language. Despite having the qualities of an ordinary man, he acquires leadership qualities and fights against elites in favour of the oppressed. He wholeheartedly struggles throughout life to eradicate the main evil of Somras which is the reason for environmental pollution in Sapt Sindhu and surrounding regions. Manoranjini (2019) points out that “The events in the narrative parodies people everywhere. The upper-class people do not care even if their enjoyment brings destruction to the life of the common people. This attitude leads to anger and so helpless people are bound to protest just like Nagas and Brangas in the novel” (34). The *Shiva Trilogy* comprises three volumes and addresses the age-old mythology’s relevance in focusing on social issues of the present scientific era. Amish Tripathi has juxtaposed the genre of mythological fiction in his debut series with the elements of history and myth. The migrants from Lake Mansarovar under the leadership of Shiva were highly impressed by their new home: “The city was divided into a grid of square blocks by the paved streets. There were footpaths on the side for pedestrians, lanes marked on the street for traffic in different directions and of course, there were covered drains running through the centre” (The Immortals, 64). To give colours of contemporisation to mythology, scientific terms are used for describing certain phenomena. Moreover, some of the ideas in the trilogy seem to be borrowed from Hollywood movies for example the idea of discarding the physically deformed is taken from the film *300 Spartans* (2007), the idea of destroying the evil within us is taken from *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003). Even the idea of Branga people and the Gates is from the TV series *Game of Thrones* (2011), and the concept of Liger, the offspring of Tigress and Lion is taken from *X-Men* (2000). The *Shiva Trilogy* proves to be a good example of refraction in terms of Lefevere. Vitthani, KB (2017) finds that:

Ashok Banker's *Vengeance of Ravana* (2012) and Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* (2010-2013) are examples of refraction where the old mythology is translated into the modern-day language of science and technology. They follow the pattern of the same characters and different plots. These novels evidently describe the long for utopia and ideological function of myth (10).

The ancient mythological concepts and incidents of magic and supernatural powers are scientifically explained. The focus of the study is to analyse the mythological characters and their sociocultural implications, the relevance of myth and the commercialization of mythology. The *Trilogy* became so popular that overnight it became a bestseller and Amish Tripathi became a literary pop star. Kumari, Neha (2018) states that "The success of popular literature is prominently scaled by its high sales and its capacity to entertain rather than its position in the literary canon" (1). He opines "It is a fallacy to think that a good book sells itself." Other than the sale of the book, many other things alter the circulation and recognition of a book. The trend/fad makes a difference in the sale and popularity of a book. The current spate of mythological works has given very tough competition to the writers of this genre. Amish Tripathi has come out victorious for many reasons like his choice of the protagonist, elements of suspense, mystery, and the theme of the victory of good over evil. The best part is his sincerity in using mythology to glorify Indian culture and contemporise it to find answers to the burning issues of the twenty-first century.

The Immortals of Meluha (2010) the first novel of the trilogy is set in the land of Meluha which is the name of Indus Valley Civilisation. Shiva, an ordinary tribal chief from Lake Mansarovar and his tribe migrates to Meluha with people from his tribe in search of a safe life. In the beginning, Meluha seems to be perfect in every manner but later on, some loopholes are found as usual. When Shiva along with his people are given Somras, the

Meluhan drink for longevity and youth Shiva's throat turns blue indicating his status as the saviour. There is celebration over the appearance of the legendary Neelkanth, the saviour. Shiva, declares war upon Chandravanshis, who are in alliance with the cursed Nagas. But Shiva's search for evil turns out to be different from his perception. After reaching Ayodhya Shiva discovers that Chandravanshis also believe in the legend of Neelkanth and were desperately waiting for him. Shiva marries Sati, a Vikarma, by dissolving Vikarma law. Brihaspati the chief scientist of Meluha, handles the main manufacturing facility of Somras at Mount Mandar. In an unexpected attack on Mount Mandar, many die including scientist Brihaspati. The attack is suspected by the Naga people along with Chandravanshis which provokes Shiva to avenge the death of his best friend. In a fierce battle, the Chandravanshi king is captured and victory of Shiva is declared but Shiva gets flabbergasted when he realises the faith of Chandravanshis in the legend of Neelkanth. The priest at the Ram temple of Ayodhya, the capital of Swadweep, informs Shiva about his future, karma and responsibilities.

The Secret of the Nagas (2011) the second book of the trilogy reveals many secrets and begins exactly where the first book ends. When defeated by Shiva and Sati, the Naga leaves and throws some coins to the owner of the horse which are from King Chandraketu from the Branga region. Shiva, after saving Sati decides to travel to region of Branga in search of the Naga people. The land of Branga suffers from a very painful problem due to the consumption of the toxic waters of the river. Their children are saved by the blood of the peacock which Parvateshwar considers against the laws. He is seriously injured by the Branga people's attack, but he is treated with Branga herbs by Divodas. Ayurvati discloses to Shiva that the herb contains ingredients only available in Panchavati, the land of the Nagas. They also discover that the Branga people are suffering from some plague caused by the use of contaminated water. Shiva decides to travel to the land of Naga with his followers under the

guidance of Naga queen Kali. Sati stays back at Kashi where she tries to help villagers from Ligers. She is saved by a group of Nagas who rescue her from the attack of ligers. She meets her son Ganesh and twin sister Kali who reveals the secret of their father Daksha threw them for their physical deformities. The secrets of the Nagas are disclosed to Sati who happily accepts her Naga son Ganesh and sister Kali. At Branga, Shiva meets Parshuram who turns out to be one of the Vasudevs responsible for guiding Shiva in his journey. On his way to Panchavati Shiva's entourage is attacked by forbidden Daivi-Astras on sage Bhrigu's orders. After reaching Panchavati, Shiva discovers the greatest secret of Brihaspati who is teaching in a school of the Naga capital.

In *The Oath of the Vayuputras* (2013) Shiva discovers them as the legendary warriors who are responsible for nurturing the Neelkanth to destroy evil as and when the need arises. Brihaspati explains how Somras is the evil which causes the plague and deformities of the Nagas. People like Daksha, Dilipa and Bhrigu were misusing it at the cost of many innocent lives to remain in power and for longevity. Despite its harmful effects on the environment and newborns in the Branga region, it is overused by Meluhans. Shiva meets the chief of Vasudev-Gopal and learns about all the mysteries with a deeper meaning in the plot. After returning from Pariha Shiva learns about Sati's murder, and out of rage he declares war and successfully destroys Devagiri. Many innocent people decide to die for the sins of Daksha, Bhrigu and their team. In the epilogue, Shiva and his sons, Kartik and Ganesh are worshipped as gods. Sati is worshipped as a goddess in temples dedicated to her and known as Shakti Peethas. Amish Tripathi narrates Shiva's journey from being a common tribal chief to the Great Neelkanth, who is the saviour. By destroying Vikarma law, accepting Nagas with their deformities, and destroying Somras and Devagiri, he proves himself to be the real saviour and the destroyer of evil.

The Contemporisation of the Myth of Shiva

Ken, W (2000) writes that:

The uses of mythology in today's world are many and varied. For one thing, literal-fundamental mythological motifs are the main social cement in many cultures (including a very large segment of our own), and as divisive and imperialistic as those mythologies are, their particular ethnocentric and social-integrative power has to be reckoned with carefully (260).

Amish Tripathi has been careful in his portrayal of a mythological figure like Shiva as a Theo-cum-superhero who has the potential to change the destiny of people. People have worshipped Shiva, the deity in Indian Theology for nearly thousands of years so he has become an integral part of the culture and the psyche of the masses. The image of Shiva in popular culture of India and abroad is that of a God who dares to defy unnecessary rules which are against the well-being of society/nature. He is not rigid but follows principles to show the right path to wisdom and peace through his examples. The protagonist Shiva's bildungsroman gives him the privilege of being identified as the mythological Shiva who is the god of gods. Subversion in the story has not diluted the aura of the hero as a potential superhero. Tripathi's use of the language of twenty-first-century youth has lured young readers who can identify themselves with the hero. Shiva is a good orator who inspires his soldiers with motivation by delivering an impressive and motivating speech. Above all, he is a patriot which is clear from his statement to Sati, "We cannot afford to lose, the fate of the nation is at stake" (The Oath, 117). He is skilled in warfare tactics also. Above all, Shiva possesses all the qualities of an ideal human being who is compassionate and believes in non-violence. He is broadminded and a votary of equality and justice which he proves by breaking useless traditions like the Vikarma law for all. He does not hesitate to beg pardon for his

mistakes and is habitual in practising forgiveness. He keeps the interests of the public above his family and has great regard for women, particularly Sati. His concern for the environment is visible in his efforts for his saving Saraswati from depletion and pollution. Throughout the *Shiva Trilogy*, Amish Tripathi emphasizes the fact that every person has the potential to rise above the status of an ordinary person by imbibing virtues in life. Deshmukh and Dwivedi (2016) observe that “The author has taken the strands of myth, philosophy, and religion and also contemporized it with numerous guiding principles which can be perhaps by the modern generations in order to turn into a virtuous leader and a better person” (149). The Nishkama Karma theory of Gita can be traced to his efforts to destroy evil without any personal gain. Shiva asserts, “When one fights against Evil, one has to fight with Good...not just on the side of Good, but with Good in one’s heart” (The Oath, 211). In the *Trilogy*, Shiva, Sati, and both the children have an altruistic tendency which leads them to their godliness in the end. Sati works for the inclusive welfare of society by contributing her services on the battlefield and protection of Nagas, Vikarmas, and frightened villagers. She is against the unlimited supply of Somras for her children, “Kartik is my son. He will not like to benefit at the cost of others. Because I will teach him what raj dharma is” (The Secret, 131). Through the characters, Amish Tripathi proves the worth of good Karmas for the performance of duties. Lord Bhrgu illustrates to Parvateshwar, “Duty must be performed for its own sake, not for the power and pelf it might bring. I am sure that even your Neelkanth is familiar with Lord Vasudev’s nugget of wisdom which encapsulates this thought: Karmanye vaadhikaa raste maa phaleshu kadachana” (The Oath, 172). The management skills of Shiva are remarkable during crises like the battlefield where he inspires his soldiers to fight tooth and nail. His war strategies are innovative and practical for victory over the rivals. He fills soldiers’ minds with inspiration by calling all of them Mahadev for having a spark of God within them.

The Discrimination Based on Birth and Disability

The spiritual quotient of the author is reflected in his portrayal of the hero who is the messiah of the marginalized oppressed by the Meluhan society. For him, Vikarmas and Nagas are equal to others as they are the citizens of the same region and have been contributing to the progress of the kingdom of Meluha. The reasons for their banishment/segregation are illogical and cruel as they are not accountable for their misery/extra growth on their bodies which are cited for their tag of being untouchables and unlucky. Unlike mythology, Ganesh was born with a very long nose and was abandoned by King Daksha who called him a ‘Naga’ with physical deformities. In Sati’s words:

His nose was abnormally long, stretching out like the trunk of an elephant. Two buck teeth struck out of the mouth, one of them broken. The legacy of an old injury, perhaps. The ears were floppy and large, shaking off their own accord. It almost seemed like the head of an elephant had been placed on the body of this unfortunate soul (The Secret, 119).

The actual myth of Ganesh’s fight with Shiva is replaced with a new imaginative story where he is the son of Sati from her previous marriage to Chandradwaj, who was killed by Daksha for his selfish motives. Here Ganesha is the Lord of the People (Nagas) who fights tooth and nail to save the righteous. Tripathi has attempted to demythologize this myth by replacing the mythological elephant-headed god with a strong person who hides his Naga identity (Physical deformity) with a hood. The practice of abandoning Naga children for their physical deformities/physical disabilities is equivalent to discrimination in present-day society based on caste. VijayKarthic and Immanuel (2018) declare that “We see these novels as an attempt of the author to satirize the society for its victimization of Dalit, deformed people and widows” (205). They further point out that “To understand Amish, the novel should be

analysed with a post-humanist lens where the alterity is common. Therefore, we infer that the novel is actually a satire on contemporary society by the author against its treatment of deformed bodies, the class system, and ideological construction” (209).

Shiva revolts against this and marries the widowed Sati after eradicating the Vikarma law for one and all. Similarly, Nagas are hated and kept away from the Sapt Sindhu due to their hideous physical deformities. They are believed to have an alliance with the evil Chandravanshis. Nagas are introduced as evil by Nandi in *The Immortals of Meluha*:

They are cursed people, my lord... are born with hideous deformities because of their previous births. Deformities like extra hands or horribly misshapen faces. But they have tremendous strength and skills. The Naga name alone strikes terror in any citizen's heart. They are not even allowed in the Sapt Sindhu'...our land my lord, the land of seven rivers (The Immortals, 61).

Their queen Kali does not have faith in the theory of punishment for past life sins that exclude Nagas from society due to their physical deformities as cursed people who should stay away from their families in Meluha. These stigmatized and peripheral beings are forced to live in Panchavati, a place away from the so-called civilized Meluhan Empire. Their goodness is proven many times over but people, in general, consider them evil and inauspicious due to their physical abnormalities. Amish Tripathi's subaltern concerns are relevant in the present society which is reeling under the burden of marginalization on many fronts. Suresh Kumar (2014) appreciates Shiva's efforts by stating that:

Shiva doesn't mind touching of the Vikarmas. 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. He resolves to demolish this social structure and comes out as a spokesman for the

Vikarmas... He works as a link between the privileged and non-privileged, between the king and the subjects. The people of Meluha, Swadeep, Branga, and Naga become his followers. These people sacrifice their duty (Swadharma) for the greater cause- Universal Dharma (363-364).

Discrimination based on caste, race, colour, and status is killing the spirit of equality glorified in the constitution of India. The current study attempts to highlight the place of the subalterns in the Meluhan kingdom of Sapt Sindhu in Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* and the necessity of their assimilation into society. It is high time to raise such issues and look for solutions like Tripathi has suggested through his superhero, Shiva. Not only the subaltern issue the author has also provided the remedy for the problem of environmental pollution as well.

The Issue of Environmental Pollution

Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm (1996) in *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* discuss literary ecology that reflects and influences our interactions with the natural world. Glotfelty (1996) defines Ecocriticism as:

The study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feministic criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies (xviii).

As the prophesied saviour Neelkanth, Shiva fights to eliminate the harmful effects of the divine drink Somras' production by banning it. Shiva, the protagonist is informed about the evil of Somras:

When Somras was being made for just a few thousand, the amount of Saraswati water used didn't matter. But when we started mass producing Somras for eight million people, the dynamics changed. The waters started getting depleted slowly by the giant manufacturing facility at Mount Mander. The Saraswati has already stopped reaching the western sea. It now ends its journey in an inland delta, south of Rajasthan. The desertification of the land to the south of this delta is already complete. It's a matter of time before the entire river is completely destroyed (The Oath, 17).

When Shiva discovers Somras as evil and puts a proclamation in different cities of Sapt Sindhu ordering to stop the use of Somras King Daksha becomes furious and gets it removed from his territory to protect his honour. Paul, Ritika (2017) observes in her paper about Tripathi's first book, *The Immortals of Meluha* "Amish Tripathi raises this issue in the novel, "Saraswati River is under threat. It is slowly depleting as the Meluhans are using a lot of water and throwing toxic remains of Somras into the river" (426).

People associated with the preparation of the Somras are spared at the time of attack by Pahupatastra on Devgiri as the drink might become helpful sometime in the future. The mastermind against Shiva's life, sage Bhrigu is spared as he is the reservoir of knowledge and wisdom. Despite his personal loss, Shiva works for the safety of the environment and the welfare of people in general. In this context, Gupta (2021) claims that "When nature is viewed as a profane entity consisting merely of a stockpile of resources that are meant for human exploitation, humans will be demotivated from properly caring for the earth and acting for its long-term flourishing" (9). His victory is the victory of the Good over the evil and ecocidal aspects of the Meluhan obsession are destroyed for the greater good of humankind. Tripathi has contextualized the ecological destruction of the Saraswati River "as

a method of group destruction, drawing a link between ecocide and genocide (Lindgren, 2017, P. 2). In this context, it is worthwhile to bring up the reference to the recent pandemic, which in a way is the consequence of human intervention with nature and natural resources. This kind of violation of Nature in the twenty-first century is being aggravated by the greed of the insensible and insensitive people causing the depletion of natural resources, habitats and wildlife. Tripathi has also added other problems like parenthood, cultural imperialism, and terrorism in the text of the *Shiva Trilogy*.

The Problematics of Parenthood

The representation of child-parent relationships has always been one of the favourite subjects for writers in general and new-age writers in particular. With the help of the psychoanalytical lens, Amish Tripathi probes the conceptual framework of the text for endorsing responsible parenting as a must for rearing children for the greater good of society in general by citing examples from the *Shiva Trilogy*. In the story, a superior moral order dictates the maintenance of a child-parent relationship. As such taking the 'elixir' or *Somras* as referred to in the text is an apparent cause of parental aversion and dislike towards their own children. The Nagas are associated with the elixir and the resultant Naga offspring is bound by an irony where parents are at fault by drinking *Somras* in excess. Daksha as a Meluhan has easy access to *Somras* which empowers him with longevity. This makes him think about more and more power over other provinces of the Sapt Sindhu region. For him, parenthood means greater access to security through normal and able-bodied Sati and Shiva, who is the Neelkanth. Anyone who is a hindrance in his path to power is an enemy even if it is his own child (Kali) and grandson (Ganesh). He does not even think of Sati's grief over the death of her first husband Chandradhwaj, who gets killed by Daksha himself. Daksha's irresponsible parenting is of the worst kind that leads to the death of Sati and the destruction of his own

kingdom, Meluha itself. Cauvery and Medasani (2019) recognise this “Thus Shiva and Daksha are juxtaposed, portraying a stark contrast of characters—the ‘noble heart’ of a barbarian with the ‘ignoble heart’ of an aristocrat” (49). The prime importance given to dynamic, unconscious, and psychological conflicts by the Freudian theory is applied to the text for understanding the problematics of parenthood. Georgieva, M. (2009) concludes in her paper on Parenthood in literature: “Through diverse forms of literature, society gradually came to conceptualize parenthood, often without making direct reference to the word itself. However, the ramifications of the theme are numerous and provide a rich background for innovative academic research” (Georgieva, 6). In contrast to Daksha’s ambition to get respect from the Meluhan society, Shiva and Sati as ideal parents don’t care for society’s opinion of them. Not only for their own children but for others’ children also they give their best to help them. Though he has been successful in highlighting the problem of parenting by citing many examples in his *Shiva Trilogy* based on mythical characters, the juxtaposition of their cases paves the way for further research in other mythological works.

In the garb of mythology, the *Trilogy* carries many burning issues that plague the contemporary hyper-globalised world. The humanized character of Shiva gives solutions to many problems which are relevant in the present time. VijayKarthic & Immanuel (2018) observe in this context: “We affirm that Tripathi actually endeavours to give an account of contemporary society in the guise of Meluha” (207).

Power Politics/Cultural Imperialization

Like contemporary society, the social structure of Meluha is under the influence of the power structure owned by Daksha. The study theoretically explores the phenomenon of cultural and political domination of Meluha over smaller regions of Sapt Sindhu in Tripathi’s well-known *Shiva Trilogy*. Postcolonial theory deals with the ideas and concepts developed in the anti-

colonial struggle against the oppressor. Imperialism of some kind has always been a part of every society/nation throughout human history. From ancient times to the contemporary era this trend has caught the attention of writers and critics who have mirrored its complexities. The recent fad of mythology-based fiction has also incorporated this aspect in varied situations. The *Shiva Trilogy* by Amish Tripathi focuses on the cultural imperialism in Meluhan society which has an edge over the other parts of the Sapt Sindhu. King Daksha's colonial aspirations make him sacrifice his own Naga child and grandchild to keep his hold on power. His ambition of becoming emperor of India leads him to get his first son-in-law killed at the hands of mercenaries. Bourah (2018) states that "The colonial power tries to be the guardian of all other states under it. *The Secret of the Nagas* presents a picture of constant occupying of lands/provinces by the Meluhans with the help of, or to say by virtue of Shiva" (149). He misuses natural resources to get longevity and youth through the over-consumption of Somras which causes serious damage to the people and environment. In his greed for power, he manipulates Neelkanth, the prophesied saviour who actually wants to fight evil but Daksh's cunning intentions bring the destruction of his own kingdom itself. The research examines the politics of King Daksha through the lens of postcolonial theory and its destructive consequences. Meluha, under King Daksha wanting to prove superiority over the Chandravanshis, gets a chance to do so with the appearance of the prophesied Neelkanth. He uses Shiva for his ulterior motive of gaining power over the other so-called inferior cultures in the guise of seeking the victory of good over evil. His arrogance in the Suryavanshi way of life leads to his disdain for Chandravanshi principles. Mandal (2016) shares similar ideas, "Daksha becomes a power-hungry ruler whose sole satisfaction lies in enlarging the reign and maintaining the image before his subjects even at the expense of his family" (51) With the help of Shiva's leadership, he plans to win over Swadeep and sends general Parwateshwar to teach them the Suryavanshi way of life. He has high expectations and he feels that giving

them this opportunity to reform themselves would be a great gift. Amish Tripathi provides several lessons through Shiva's human character who counters the cultural imperialism founded on pride and ego proving the worth of an inclusive and tolerant society and alluding to its contemporary relevance for the wholesome progress of the world.

The Post-feministic Elements

His post-feministic take manifested in his portrayal of his women characters is laudable for the power and self-confidence they exhibit in their dealings. His female characters are already empowered and hold important positions in politics, medicine, and other fields. Neha Kumari and Kumar (2017) remark "Women like Sati, Ayurvati, and Krittika represent certain prototypes of women in this Utopian Ram Rajya. A few other female characters like Kali and Anandmayi are from outside yet their social status is equally superior. Amish recreates these ideals to present true social and community models for 21st-century India" (289). His reverence for women as the epitome of goodness is reflected in a non-mythological character called Kankhala, the prime minister of the Suryavanshi Kingdom, Meluha under King Daksha. Her introduction given by King Daksha reflects her important position in the country. She takes care of administrative, revenue, and protocol matters besides other duties. She commits suicide when she is ordered to go against Dharma and the saviour, the Neelkanth. For her Dharma protects those who protect it. The same is the case with Ayurwati, the chief of Medicine in Meluha, a nearly perfect empire. Her marvellous and diligent work saves the lives of Shiva and Sati from poisonous fatal wounds and weapons like Agniban. Her faith in the legend of Neelkanth makes her a very devout follower of Shiva who is the saviour of Meluha from evil. Yet another character named Tara suffers stoically and devotes her life to the welfare of others. As a Parihan scientist, she helps in the production of Somras as well as Daivi astra, Pashupatiastra, and Brahmastra. Despite learning about her fiancé

Brihaspati's death, she continues her work silently. In the vengeance of Neelkanth against evil she convinces others for the use of Pashupatyastra which leads to massive destruction. Sundari (2020) finds that "In all the three novels of the *Shiva Trilogy*, women characters like Sati, Ayurvati, Kankhala and Kali showed their leadership qualities by their knowledge, valour and administration" (3226).

The Post-diasporic Expressions

The post-diasporic reflections are also part of the Trilogy as the Gunas tribe finds Meluha a near-perfect empire that is more secure and peaceful than their native place. The rootlessness, alienation, and nostalgia are missing in the Guna tribe of Shiva who migrated to Meluha from the land near Lake Mansarovar. Shiva is completely mesmerized by the beautiful landscape of Kashmir:

The vast valley was covered by a lush green canvas of grass. On it was painted the masterpiece that was Kashmir. Rows upon rows of flowers arrayed all of God's colours, their brilliance broken only by the soaring Chinar trees, offering a majestic, yet warm Kashmiri welcome. The melodious singing of the birds calmed the exhausted ears of Shiva's tribe, accustomed only to the rude howling of icy mountain winds (The Immortals,10).

Cauvery B. and S. Medasani (2014) state that "Amish, the author is convincing in portraying how different cultures affect or influence people; what happens to people when they are placed from one society to another, and also when and how the unexpected hits the 'other' in a foreign land" (306).

The usage of colloquial language.

The contemporisation of mythology is done through day-to-day language used by youngsters. Throughout the Trilogy, there are examples of anachronistic expressions like the phrase '*Holy Lake*' or 'by the holy lake,' "By the Holy Lake, I finally have him" (The Secret,15)

Teenagers and young children use the word 'holy' as slang in conversation. The phrase '*bloody hell*' is also used as a swearing and curse word the way people use it in present society. Another example is when Kali scolds Sati "Stop playing innocent, you daddy's spoilt little girl!" (The Secret, 119)

The phrase 'daddy's spoilt little girl' is used by people of the current era. The word 'daddy' is surprisingly very modern for a mythology-based story as it is more related to contemporary society and does not belong to mythology. Another example is "I asked you to do just one simple thing," hissed the Queen. (The Secret, 37). Cauvery and Medasani in a book chapter point out that:

The narrative strategies, the style, the vocabulary and expressions and tone adopted are intended to cater to the taste of the world audience and to capture the global market" (90). They further remark "The short sentences with a very racy style make for a fast reading for a fast-paced generation with no time for reading voluminous novels in a heavy style adorned with archaic expressions (91).

The inclusion of scientific terms and technology

"It's a very simple science really. The science of radio waves". (The Secret, 61). "It's a machine,' said Shiva. Divodas had told me about some accumulator machines, which store the energy of various animals over hours and then release them in seconds." (The Secret, 87)

Through the above quotations, it is visible that some scientific terms such as ‘radio waves’ clearly don’t belong to this period. It should also be noted that in medieval societies, especially in Indian societies, more emphasis was given to gods, and thus science wasn't given much credibility. Also, the description given by Shiva of ‘accumulator machines’, describes most of the machines in the modern world, which would not be available in the medieval or even the mythological world.

Devdutt Pattanaik

The second author of the current study very proudly describes himself as a ‘mythologist’ who writes and speaks extensively on Hindu mythology and tries to relate it to contemporary life. Nayar (2019) scrutinizes him by observing his websites and works:

His works, we are informed, are on “the relevance of mythology, in modern times” (a phrase that occurs quite a few times on the website, Pattanaik n.d.b.). Pattanaik presents himself as a man who links past and present and, more importantly, demonstrates how the past–mythology--is relevant in domains such as “management, governance and leadership” (Pattanaik n.d.b.) (93).

His books carry personalized titles like *My Hanuman Chalisa* (2017, and *My Gita* (2015), etc. to avoid plagiarism. His books surprise the people who have mastery over Sanskrit texts of epics and scriptures. Young readers are happy with his choice of subjects like LGBTQA+ from mythology. Khatana (2017) observes that “Devdutt Pattanaik’s *The Pregnant King* problematizes the essentialized notions of the human body and desire and unsettles the socio-culturally constructed truths (myths) about human existence. It addresses the current debates on gender and sexuality in queer studies and other disciplines” (39).

Regarding this Pattanaik argues “There is a world beyond the flesh, a vision greater than anything that is shown and seen” (33). As a writer of mythological books, he is also having the same cultural agenda as Amish Tripathi to help glorify India’s mythological past in the eyes of the world. His techniques of writing and presentation of mythology are different from other authors, especially Tripathi. Pattanaik’s books are filled with pictures of calendars, paintings of various schools, tables, diagrams, and comic-book-style illustrations to make them reader-friendly. He illustrates in his books with sketches made by him which are apt and interesting to attract readers’ attention. His non-fictional books have a unique style of narrating mythology. Not only Indian authors like Amish Tripathi, Pattanaik, and Namita Gokhale have written on Shiva but foreign authors like Andy McDermot and James Lovegrove have also written books on Shiva. From poster and calendar art to current TV serials on Shiva, a unique familiarity with the image of God can be traced.

Lord Shiva is full of paradoxes, rough but ascetic, wrathful as well as kind and generous. He is frequently portrayed as a man with matted hair, a body smeared with ash, and sitting on the top of a snow-clad mountain away from the civilized world. Thus, he represents the enlightened man who considers the outside world as unworthy of real attention and seeks the source of joy within himself. He represents the soul/supreme consciousness of the universe in Shiva. Divinity according to Pattanaik cannot be sought in the world outside but in the world within. The metaphorical manifestations of the individual’s journey from the illusory nature of the universe to actual understanding of it bring unlimited joy. His three printed books on the legend of Shiva are quite popular among scholars and critics for having information with visual illustrations. The three online books on the legend of Shiva available in Kindle edition are *Shiva the Destroyer* (2016), *What Shiva Told Shakti* (2017) and *The Ultimate Tapasvin* (2018).

The very first book on the legend of Shiva is *Shiva: An Introduction* (1997) has sixteen chapters on basic information and stories from the *Shiv Maha Purana* in glossy pages with pictures of gods, goddesses, and anecdotes associated with Shiva. It explores the meaning of worship through various pictorial images of Shiva iconography and makes the reader understand the philosophy, beliefs, history, folklore, and myths of Shiva. Out of one thousand names of Shiva, 108 names are given along with the glossary for the uninitiated readers.

The mythological, sociological, and philosophical implications of Shiva popularised him among artists and sculpture makers which can be seen in paintings/pictures from different parts of India. Pattanaik has given enough space to these visual representations of the deity in his books also. Sneha Tripathi and Jani (2020) remark “He adds to the understanding of the text by giving relevant diagrams, illustrations and commentary. He unravels ancient Hindu myths which frame the Hindu culture and customs” (263). His training in Comparative Mythology from Bombay University has guided him in analysing different myths in simple language/terms. He has given credit to sources by mentioning names of Puranas, Brahmins, and Vedas also from where he has taken material for the chapters. The book reaches readers of all age groups by recasting and presenting tales of Shiva in simple narrative form with visual material which arouses interest to find more about the deity. Around one hundred and fifty illustrations (both coloured and black and white) and a map of India showing important Shiva temples like twelve Jyotirlingas make this book a treat for an Indian/a foreigner who finds Shiva too complicated to understand. The writer has justified the purpose of writing this book by explaining the reasons and importance of myths in our lives. According to Pattanaik:

Myths are not common tales; they are not parables or legends. They are not conceived in dreams and expressed through symbols as a reaction to man’s inexplicable yet desperate need to validate his presence in the cosmos. They do not teach, they generate experience. And in minds fertilized by curiosity, turn into seeds

of profound thought that enable man to discover his true personality, his *Svadharm*a (Shiva: An Introduction, xii).

In *Shiv Maha Purana* incidents and stories are given in a plain and prosaic manner but Pattanaik has added visual representations of these stories and events to arouse readers' interest. Besides, these representations are from different schools of painting from India and abroad, he has also included dialogue forms for some events to make them dramatic and interesting. A bibliography of relevant books is also added at the end of the book for readers who want to explore the legend of Shiva further.

Shiva to Shankara: Giving Form to the Formless (2006) tries to bridge the gap between the Puritanical view and the view of people who go to extremes in finding the meaning of the Linga. The controversial topic of iconography is under the sub-title 'Phallic but not Fertile', which explains the two schools of thought, Vedantic, and Tantric with different meanings of Shiva Linga. The Vedantic theory calls a Linga an attribute, but Tantric theory considers it a phallic form of Shiva. Like Egyptian Min or the Roman Priapus Shiva can also be regarded as a fertility god.

The isolation of Shiva as an ascetic is given a positive makeover to highlight his grandeur. Pattanaik explains "Shiva is the greatest Tapasvin. He spends no heat engaging with the outside world. All the heat he generates remains contained within his body. Naturally, the world around Shiva, unseen by him, gradually loses all heat and becomes cold" (7 Secrets, 23). Different stories from Puranas with sketches drawn by the writer himself represent the morals, incidents and philosophy. The story of Daksha when he was unknowingly insulted/ignored by Shiva is taken from the *Shiv Maha Purana* which shows Shiva's indifference towards the material world. The castration of Shiva is symbolic of His Swayambhu or self-stirred form. In Pattanaik's words "For all his indifference to the world, Shiva's manhood stood firm and erect. This conventionally suggested arousal by external

stimuli, and it confounded many” (Shiva: An Introduction,11). As Tripurantak, Shiva destroys the three flying cities called Tripura, ruled by the sons of Asur Tarakasur when they are aligned in a single line to save the world from the terror created by these cities because the wealth was regenerated and hoarded by them and not distributed. Physical, mental, and causal bodies are also mentioned for describing the phenomenon. The importance of number three is established by equating it with the three eyes of Shiva, the three blades of the trident, and the three-leafed Bilva sprig used for the worship of Shiva. The *Skanda Purana*’s story of enlightenment through dance and the dance after the venomous snake he wound on his neck and leaping on the back of the goblin represents the desire for self-preservation, self-propagation, and self-actualization. Pattanaik does not adhere to the exact meaning of the text taken from different sources as he feels that everyone has a right to understand and interpret our religious books. A Sanskrit scholar, Dr. Nityanand Tiwari has criticized Pattanaik’s works for the blatant errors in interpreting mythological texts. This is the reason why he names his books, *My Gita*, *My Hanuman Chalisa*, etc. The blame for plagiarism cannot be levied on him as he very cleverly saves his skin in novel ways. In conclusion, the writer deconstructs the destruction for establishing harmony in the world and quotes:

“The divine Inside you is God

The divine around you is the Goddess

Without either, there is neither” (Shiva: An Introduction, 139).

7 Secrets of Shiva (2011) book on Shiva is from the series on the Hindu gods of the Trimurti. Tiwari and Khan (2021) comment that “For the writers like Devdutt Pattanaik (7 Secrets of Shiva 2007), who have tried to unveil the mystery of philosophy disguised under Hindu mythology of ‘Tridev’ and ‘Shiva-Shakti’, Shiva represents the mental state of an individual indifferent to worldly pleasures as the result of highest wisdom and the enlightenment” (3605).

In the beginning itself, Pattanaik clarifies the context and the structure of the book that the secrets of different forms of Shiva glorify the power of imagination that makes us human. Like Lingeshwara's Secret has the word 'Linga' which can be translated as 'sign' indicating a mark, a characteristic of gender or sex but due to the influence of Western writers like Wendy Doniger, Pattanaik takes it as phallus which connotes procreation. In his book *7 Secrets from Hindu Calendar Art* (2009), he illustrates Lord Shiva's trident "indicates the dissolution of the three worlds into one", the three worlds being "our private world, our public world and all the rest there is." (83) The pictures shown on the left side pages of the book have varieties of Shiva Lingas such as naturally formed Amarnath cave ice Linga, and man-made Lingas made of soil and metal which reminds of the followers of Basava in Karnataka who wear such Lingas in their neck. Vira-Maheshwar and Lingayats follow this tradition of wearing Ishta-Linga around their neck to show their dedication and admiration for Shiva. Since the Basava movement dates back to the twelfth century onward, it influences *Shiv Maha Purana* and other scriptures but it is a new form of Shaivism which is based on equality in society. The story of the pillar of fire is also related to establishing the superiority of Shiva over Vishnu and Brahma. The limitless pillar appears to be indestructible and defies the laws of nature which make it a symbol of Shiva communicating the idea of spirituality. Pattanaik has suggested that this phenomenon promotes imagination which makes us human. From imagination, understanding of the world comes which guides us to conceptualize the idea of infinity. Everything that exists only in imagination represents the reality that is transcendental, existing beyond the senses. The Lakulesh form of Shiva is also analysed for its symbolic meaning of liberation from the confines of nature. The *Bhairva's secret* explains that it is fear that brings/causes all corruption. Shiva is called Kaal Bhairav for his ability to remove the fear of Kaal or time, the devourer of all living things. The concept of fear, its causes, and the deity who can remove the fear of death are discussed with stories and

examples. The story of Markendeya, who is saved from the clutches of death by Shiva further proves that one who outgrows fear of death becomes immortal. The idea of immortality is part of human imagination against the fear of death so only faith can liberate a person. The *Shankara's secret* advises us to be empathetic as it will lead to evolution. Prajapati's unreasonable demands caused by his arrogance invite Shiva's wrath, who punishes the patriarch by cutting his head. Tripathi's Shiva has empathy for the Nagas, Chandravanshis, and other suffering communities harmed by the evil of Somras. *Bholenath's secret* has the concept of culture which is actually a delusion. Parvati indulges him and makes him Somsundara, someone beautiful like the moon. Pattanaik is no scholar of the Sanskrit language so he tries to give his own meanings to the text's scriptures. Most of the stories he has related are regarding Shiva's ignorance and indifference towards conventions and rules of the society decided by the Prajapati. When Shiva arrives on his bull for the marriage it horrifies Mena and others so the innocent groom is directed by Parvati to become presentable for the ceremony. He also does not provide a house to Parvati when she reaches Kailash, the abode of Shiva, and to save her from rain the Jimuta-Vahana takes her above the clouds. This indifference is adopted by the Aghoris who go for everything that is tabooed in society. Bholenath's Secret has another incident of extreme innocence in the story of Bhasmasur who tries to destroy Shiva himself after getting a boon from Shiva. Many more stories displaying his innocence are interpreted by the author to prove the worth of God Shiva and his powers.

Shiva's son *Ganesh's Secret* talks about the material world outside. It establishes that food alone does not satisfy hunger. Shiva's reluctance over food and Parvati's avatar as Annapurna at Kashi indicates the necessity of Prakriti and its complementary nature. Similarly, Shiva does not find any need for children like Parvati who is adamant about having a child. She makes a doll out of scraped body ointment and infuses life into it for her satisfaction. The other son Murugan's secret describes the importance of facing fear so that one can outgrow

fear. The *Secret of Nataraja* explains that destruction, in reality, is deconstruction. A peculiar feature of this book is that it has visual representations and illustrations on the left page and the right page written matter is printed.

Comparative Frame of Representation: Tripathi vs Pattanaik

Mythology has never-ending implications for the literature of different cultures and civilizations. Myths and legends play an important role in social, economic, supernatural, and political aspects of life symbolically as well as metaphorically. Pattanaik expresses his views on the nature of Hinduism, its stages of development, and its current status. Ramesh (2021) comments that “Pattanaik uses ancient mythology to expose the harsh reality of the modern world. Somehow, he explains the fact that society doesn’t consider everyone competent and equal even after having so much wisdom and progress. Mythology is used as a way to mirror the biases of society” (18).

They are used to bridge the gap between ancient and contemporary for guidance and spiritual direction. The legend of Shiva is represented by Tripathi and Pattanaik in different genres so the comparison is quite comprehensible through their style and language. Basu (2020) observes that “The protagonist is a human being, Shiva’s bildungsroman through the trilogy transforms him into a God, but without actually changing any of his physical attributes. Thus, at the level of anthropomorphism, this method of representation sheds light on the humane aspect of the divinity” (96). Both authors have presented Shiva for reviving Indian culture and the significance of mythology in our day-to-day lives. In this context, Devi and Singla (2021) compare the representations of Shiva by Tripathi and Pattanaik:

His blue throat, Trident, His third eye, Aum, Ganas, Halahal, Snow clad mountain that enwraps the persona of Shiva are elucidated. In this era of demythologization and re-mythologization, myths of Shiva are studied from a new

perspective. Shiva arose as the cool-hot dude in Tripathi and a high philosopher of life in Pattanaik. Modern trends of guide-by-slide, sage-on-sage and digital humanities have drastically transformed the mask of myth from Nagmandala times to Shiva Trilogy (57).

Both have tried to contemporize the myth for the sake of readership, popularity, and lucre. Their agenda for popularising Hindu mythology also appears to be the same as both have used their talents/potential to present it in their own peculiar manner. Tripathi has humanized his Shiva by subverting the actual myth/story and adding the elements of a thriller. Dharmendra Kumar (2022) sums up by noting:

Ingeniously combining facts and fiction, Amish has given classic Indian mythology a modern spin in his books. His use of traditional myths does not contradict the original tales' conventional ideas or faith. Instead, it affords the chance to reimagine the myths from alternative viewpoints and contextualise them in the present. He has modified and reinterpreted myths and legends from Indian epics, Vedas, and Upanishads, giving them a modern spin by humanising them (155).

His use of colloquial language and scientific terms make his fiction more interesting for the readers of twenty-first-century readers. His contemporisation of myth is also remarkable for raising all the current problems of recent times. Solutions for the contemporary problems offered by Tripathi through his protagonist are practical and implementable as well, for example, the burning issue of environmental pollution has to be remedied on a war footing for quick results. For the same problem, Pattanaik refers to the original story and his own interpretation offers a solution according to the Sanskrit texts. Pattanaik explores the mysterious nature of humans by reinterpreting myths from revered epics, classics, and folklore. Patel, Gaurang (2022) clarifies that "Devdutt Pattanaik elucidates the difference

between mythology and mythological fiction. He comments that mythological fiction is trendy because it belongs to ancient traditional tales” (38). He clarifies and elucidates the root cause of traditions and taboo practices in Asian nations. Pujari and Jani (2022) state that:

Devdutt has used myths in his retellings with a new perspective, without losing the essence of originality, to bring out the similarities and contrariness between the past and the present. For him, myth becomes a powerful literary device to explore and understand Indian culture and mindsets. Retelling of myths helped him to explore existential concerns in the contemporary social context which makes his work moral and worthy (2103).

Overall, the study analyses Shiva’s character in a comparative context of representation done by many authors who have written in English including the writers/editors of graphic novels. The main comparison between the Shiva of Tripathi and Pattanaik highlights the difference as both have taken inspiration from the *Shiv Maha Purana* but representation in Tripathi’s case is fictional and theme based, on the other hand, Pattanaik simplifies the myth of Shiva for readers according to his own understanding. The main objective of the study is answered by examining the genre used by both authors. One has chosen the popular genre of mythological fiction to idolize the character/legend of Shiva by subverting the actual story. The elements of mystery, adventure, suspense, and fantasy are added to lure young readers who otherwise prefer to read Western mythology. Pattanaik’s style of writing is aimed at readers of all age groups who are not well-versed in Sanskrit texts/abstract concepts but are interested in finding the truth behind mythological texts. The easy availability of explanations of difficult texts attracts readers to buy his books which can be bought everywhere including airport shops, book shops, and roadside vendors. Vitthani (2017) remarks regarding Pattanaik “In his writings, he challenges conventional views of the myths and provides scope to rethink

age-old perspectives” (39). There are many admirers of Pattanaik who have documented their opinions very positively about him and his writings. Batra (2017) writes:

In contrast, however, to the chaotic mélange that writers like Banker and Tripathi have created in their works, Devdutt Pattanaik provides a fresh approach to epics. He is a management consultant, who quotes mythology to buttress his management lessons. His work is different in that he approaches the ancient epics with the eye of humble seeker and researcher (65).

Both authors are popularizing Hindu Mythology in public spaces by entertaining and informing through their books. Another objective of the study also meets the same end by interpreting the subversion of mythology done by the authors for the same reasons. Tripathi has subverted the myth of Shiva by representing him as an ordinary human being whose apotheosis is attained by his hard work and selfless motive of obliterating the evil of Somras. The myth of Shiva represented by Pattanaik is from different Puranas and scriptures of the South and other parts of India. He has also subverted the myth of Shiva according to the requirements of readers and publishers who want to focus on the sensational and lucrative aspects of mythology rather than the devotional aspect.

Sub-objectives are also answered critically in the second, third and fourth chapters. The reasons for the popularity of the genre of mythological fiction are discussed and a spate of mythological representation in print and visual media is critically addressed. The second chapter has elaborated upon the legend of Shiva represented in mythological texts like the *Shiv Maha Purana*, *The Linga Purana*, and the *Peria Puranam* juxtaposed against the Shiva Tripathi and Pattanaik. It draws attention to the ancient texts which mention Shiva and stories associated with him.

Research questions raised in the first chapter/synopsis are also answered critically by analysing all the aspects of the mythological fiction and the legend of Shiva. The question of commercialization appropriated in creative retellings connects to the threads of lucrative aspects of a piece of art/literature which makes it saleable. The thesis elaborates and builds on solutions offered for contemporary problems in the *Shiva Trilogy* which modernizes the mythology for establishing/emphasizing its importance in our life. Pattanaik also acknowledges the relevance of Mythology for solving problems of our time by contemporizing various myths associated with Shiva. The third chapter presents the legend of Shiva in popular culture with special reference to Pattanaik whose works/retellings inspired the director to immortalize the Shiva legend in the TV serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev*. The success of this serial is behind many serials based on mythology in different languages.

In the next chapter titled, **Conclusion**, the researcher summarises the findings of the research and provides some suggestions and recommendations for further investigation. The valuable addition of the study to the existing knowledge system is elaborated from the futuristic perspective. The social significance of the study is long-lasting due to its involvement in ancient mythology for finding answers to current issues of the present society. At the end future research areas are also enlisted for research scholars. Social impact of the thesis is explained for proving its significance in the field of research in particular and public welfare in general. Bibliography in the end includes primary texts chosen for the study and a comprehensive list of secondary readings.

CHAPTER-V

CONCLUSION

The beauty of myths lies in the fact that they do not “belong exclusively to the past and archaic cultures but constitute an intrinsic part of modern culture as well” (40)

Aleksei Semenenko, *The Texture of Culture* (2012)

The present study has explored the legend of Shiva in popular culture in India and neighbouring countries having Hinduism with special reference to the works of Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik. The myth of Shiva is used by both authors differently by using separate genres but for the same purpose of glorifying Hindu mythology. Both can be credited for suggesting solutions to many contemporary issues by using mythology in the modern context. Although revisiting and re-interpretation of mythology has always been done by many prominent authors in the past these two authors have made mythology so popular that it has become lucrative and prestigious. The young generation has started taking an interest in their heritage and culture by reading books based on epics and mythology. The *Shiva Trilogy*, an epic fantasy of Amish Tripathi has broken all previous records of popularity and *Devon Ke Dev-Mahadev* TV serial based on Pattanaik’s books on Shiva has made Lord Shiva a household name. Currently, there is a deluge of mythological serials, Web series and books due to the success of mythology-related books and their marketing done by publishers and authors. Myth has become a saleable commodity used by writers and directors for the consumption of readers and viewers. Appropriation of mythology is being done at a very large scale to reap profits in the form of name, fame and lucre. This popularity of mythology

has given birth to a new genre of mythological fiction which has become part of popular literature. Hence popular literature as part of popular culture is being consumed by our middle-class readers who consider English a mark of their high status. After consuming Dan Brown, Rick Riordan, J K Rowling etc. for years there has been a need for Indian counterparts of such authors. The thrill, mystery and suspense added to mythology serve all the masala required by the readers and viewers. Writers of mythological fiction are revisiting old tales to spin new stories out of them by mixing elements of imagination. Indian superheroes like Shiva, Hanuman, Ram and others are being juxtaposed against Western superheroes who were favourites of the young generation. The wave of Hindutva is also one of the reasons for the huge success of such books. The best part of reading these imaginative narratives mixed with mythological characters is that they inspire readers to explore the original mythological works. Amish Tripathi has provided the best practice for future authors by setting a benchmark in this field. The success of the *Shiva Trilogy* has encouraged many authors to choose this genre for the re-representation of mythological characters and episodes. His *Ram Chandra Series* of books has also received approbation from the publishers, scholars and critics. His faith in Lord Shiva propelled him to write the *Shiva Trilogy* to make Shiva, a friendly superhero who fights for the protection of the environment, and marginalized class. He obliterates evil and establishes the rule of the righteous thereby earning the title of Mahadev eventually. Pattanaik's books on Shiva have also contemporized mythology and provided solutions for current issues prevalent in society.

Myths, religion, and legends are important parts of every culture and literature. All civilizations have their myths, folklore, scriptures, epics and symbols which form their culture and ideology. Their perception of the world is altered by their thinking, practices and traditions influenced by myths and history. Myths keep evolving with time and circumstances to feed the cultural appetite of people and help them understand the ways of

the universe. Myths are intermixed in literature as they preserve cultural practices by documentation in narratives, stories, and songs for a better manifestation of society. New myths are created and old ones are altered with time to renew them for adaptation. Hindu theology is extremely rich with gods, myths and supernatural creatures which are part of epics and scriptures. Recently mythology has become prominent in new cultural forms like TV serials (*Devon Ke Dev Mahadev*) films (Ponniyin Selvan), web series, fiction, graphic novels, and animation. In these tumultuous times, the relevance of mythology cannot be avoided for the solutions it provides for numerous problems. Readers are spoilt for choice as many versions of a character or epic are available in the market. Fictional mythological novels have acquired a special place in contemporary culture as more gods, heroes, and underdogs from the Vedas and Puranas make appearances on the pages. These books appeal to readers who can now enjoy a story that examines and questions well-known characters and theories. Writers like Ashok Banker and Pattanaik are connected with the young and Westernized generation of Indian readers through their books. They have engaged readers with simple language and colloquial expressions of cultural background. Some of the authors such as Chitra Divakaruni and Amish Tripathi have explored stories about popular characters like Shiva, Sita, and Draupadi. Kavita Kane has glorified peripheral characters like Karna's wife, Urmila, and Shurpanakha to uplift their status. The rapid advancements in science and technology have connected the world in which material happiness is aimed. The fast pace of life has increased loneliness and mental problems which can be healed with spiritual enlightenment and a disciplined lifestyle that respects nature. The myth of Shiva paves the way to recognize the laws of nature and provides solutions to these problems. Amish Tripathi has cleverly chosen Shiva as his protagonist to revitalize ancient wisdom and morals by fictionalizing the original story. Tripathi also believes/argues that our gods might have been human beings who were ahead of their time, in the ancient past. It has become a trend to

revisit mythology by retellings and re-representations that are being read/criticized by readers and critics as literature has the power to bring complete transformation in perspective, thinking, and lifestyle.

Shaivism is popular across India and the world having a Hindu population. He is the supreme consciousness of the universe who creates, sustains, and destroys the world. He is part of the popular culture of India which breathes in traditions, rituals, Hindu festivals, and deities. Lord Shiva whose presence can be witnessed in villages, cities, wilderness, mountains, and visual and print media. He is everywhere in some form like sculptures and Shiv Lingam inside and outside temples, under the tree, in the caves and on mountain peaks. His contribution to fine arts, dance, meditation, etc. is recognized by academicians, artists and laypersons. In this context, the thesis investigates the legend of Shiva in Popular culture and literature in social, political, and cultural contexts with the resurgence of mythological fiction in English in the second decade of 21st-century India. The legend of Shiva is as old as the hills in our culture and its origin and future are never-ending. Many writers have tried their hand at Shiva mythology and contextualised the socio-cultural issues which are relatable in the current era. Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik's works on the legend of Shiva are focused on the current study. Although Pattanaik has three books on Lord Shiva in Kindle editions also only three printed books have been taken into consideration for the research. Tripathi's magnum opus the *Shiva Trilogy*'s Shiva is compared with that of Pattanaik's Shiva described in his three books. Adaptation of Pattanaik's books into a TV serial created history by the success of *Devo Ke Dev Mahadev*. Although the genres of both the authors are different their themes and characters are the same. Tripathi's Shiva is an ordinary Tibetan chief of a tribe who rises to the status of a god through his extraordinary feats for the welfare of people. Pattanaik's Shiva is an extremely popular deity of Hinduism who is famous for his compassionate and contradictory nature.

The current research is an exploratory study that has applied a few theories to analyse the legend of Shiva in popular culture and the phenomenon of the proliferation of mythological fiction. The *Shiva Trilogy* books have raised many contemporary problems and also given solutions to these problems for example environmental crisis can be dealt with through strict measures as done by Shiva who annihilated Devgiri for putting an end to the manufacturing of Somras which was causing depletion of river Saraswati and causing diseases in Branga and Swadeep. Glotfelty (1996) warns that “Either we change our ways or we face global catastrophe, destroying much beauty and exterminating countless fellow species in our headlong race to apocalypse” (xx). The empowered women characters in Amish Tripathi’s books have given a post-feminist touch to mythology and honoured all the women characters in the story. Sati, Kankhala, Ayurvati, Renuka, and Krittika are self-sufficient and super-smart in any work they are assigned. Similarly, post-colonial aspects are also focused which makes his mythology-based stories more refreshing and relevant. These stories are not entirely true but a new twist is given to raise issues related to recent challenges like ecocide and marginalization/discrimination based on baseless criteria. The issue of cultural imperialism is raised in the trilogy where King Daksha of the Meluha Kingdom tries to force their autonomy on their rival Swadeep in political and cultural matters. Small regions surrounding Meluha are also influenced and coerced to follow Meluhan’s way of life. In his search for the solution, the hero finds that no one is bad only the way of life is different from each other. Meluhans and Swadeepans consider each other as evil who would be wiped out when their saviour Neelkanth arrives. The parent-child relationship is highlighted for providing a remedy for the issue by relating Daksha’s cunning intentions of remaining in power. Amish Tripathi shows that anyone on the wrong side must be disowned be it a parent or a child. Colonization, disability studies, and parent-child relationships are also highlighted

in popular literature. The issue of longevity and immortality through magic potions like Somras is also presented as evil for its harmful effects on the environment.

Although Amish Tripathi has been criticized for his lack of literary language, but for the same reasons his books are popular among all age groups. According to Tripathi, most readership is among readers of Hindi, regional and other languages. Earlier many writers and publishers were mainly focusing on only English language so they were losing profits from the market of readers of languages other than English. But now they are bringing out translations in many languages to make more money from his works. This move has had a huge impact on the circulation of these books. Non-English readers are also admiring and enjoying the translated versions. Mythological fiction as popular literature has become truly instrumental in sharing stories and thought-provoking ideas with a greater number of people surpassing all geographical distances. Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* has been translated into many languages including Indian and foreign languages. Recent years have seen a proliferation of Indian novels in the English language that can be categorized under the umbrella of 'popular literature.' Throughout the generations, the stories may have changed, but the message of victory of good over evil remains the same. Hindu mythology is the storehouse of famous epics like *The Mahabharata*, *The Ramayana*, *The Upanishads*, and the *Purana* are full of motivational stories and representations of Hindu culture. Postmodernism has given rise to micro-narratives and these fictional works are micro-narratives of Indian mythology where the writer mixes mythology with his imaginative ideas to infuse a new life into the story.

The research methodology for the current study has been a close reading of the texts and an in-depth analysis of the relevant contemporary writers. The genre of fiction is flooding the market with mythological themes as retelling and re-representation of Indian mythology has

become a lucrative venture. Although vernacular writers had acquired success in myths before the Indian publishing industry was doubtful about the demand for such fiction in English. This imaginative literature entertains readers with traces of mythological elements where goodness is always rewarded and villains are suitably punished. A unique characteristic of this genre is the enjoyment derived from repetitions of the same tales with new angles to the storyline. Since reading is no longer considered exclusively a scholarly habit, this new genre has democratized the readership of mythological fiction. Books are written by authors who have different perspectives to narrate the story for example some writers have chosen only marginalized characters from mythology like Kavita Kane and Anand Neelakantan and some are writing about the prominent ones like Amish Tripathi, Ashok Banker and Pattanaik. Few writers are interested in the feministic point of view like Chitra Divakaruni and some are subverting the story for young readers to make it interesting and worth reading.

Language also plays a major role in this genre as writers use slang and day-to-day language to make the story more appealing to young readers. Demand for mythological fiction has remarkably risen in the market with a boom and has inspired new entrants to write more such stories for voracious readers. The integration of mythological stories with fictional characteristics is what is in vogue in the creative world of the twenty-first century. Consequently, the future of this popular literature looks bright and promising for wholesome entertainment and spiritual direction as well. English has become a status symbol for the middle class so readers of fiction written in English are many in number. After the success of Indian Writing in English most of the writers prefer to write fiction in English for greater circulation. These novels are meant for the English-educated elite-class youth who are already consuming Western fiction. With time, Indian English fiction has completed its journey from the margin to the centre. The new mythological fiction written in English, are

generally subversive and revolutionary. This revival of mythology in Indian fiction is creating a history in the field of popular Indian literature. Many contemporary writer's works can be classified into rewritings, re-representation, refractions, or retellings. These novels treat the same mythological characters with imaginary stories by adding masala elements of thrill and suspense. They present a blend of myth, science, and magic with special scientific and logical explanations to give a tinge of contemporaneity. These novels also raise current social and cultural issues with caste and gender discrimination present in society. In the global context, our youth are consuming and recommending Indian mythology to the world outside.

Findings:

The study's findings are relevant to the current problems of society and add to the existing knowledge on the legend of Shiva who is associated with the faith of millions of people in India and abroad. The problems addressed by the authors provide practical solutions for people/govt/stakeholders. Ancient epics and mythological episodes have always been a part of literature written around the world for their eternal charm and relevance. This tradition of retelling/revisioning of mythology can be traced to the ancient past but subversion/inversion in Indian mythological fiction in recent times was pioneered by Ashok K Banker whose success of *the Ramayana Series* in 2003 created a new genre in itself. The extant mythological fiction writers fantasise with new elements like suspense and thrill. Their narrative style and language also carry grains of contemporisation. Writers have juxtaposed different genres like fantasy, detective fiction, thriller etc to make mythology more palatable for the consumers of mythological fiction. Despite not having a literary or scholarly background their imaginary and interesting fiction of slang mixed with common language is lapped up by young readers. The humanized mythological characters are deified after a long

battle with adversaries. This deliberate humanizing of the already venerable mythological characters is appreciated by viewers and scholars. People can identify themselves in these characters who speak and behave like normal mortals. Amish Tripathi's Shiva faces dilemmas and confusion like any other person but by great hard work recognises evil and battles it to finish it by all means. Shiva's character reminds us of avatars of Lord Vishnu who takes birth as humans to obliterate evil.

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* has set a benchmark for commercial success in the field of the Indian publishing industry by using innovative marketing strategies to promote his books. The culture is not different from these conventions and traditions that have been in existence to be continued in the future as well. Generally, it is observed that myths are associated with gods, legends or characters having supernatural abilities. Pattanaik's Shiva is a simple god who can be pleased with eulogising and penance. The paradoxes in his nature seem weird but they are necessary for keeping balance in the universe. He abandons his ascetic form to grant a boon to Parvati and dons the role of a householder. As a parent also he sets examples for human beings who can follow in his footsteps for day-to-day misunderstandings between parents and children. Stories and anecdotes from epics and scriptures are interpreted by Pattanaik for the uninitiated readers who have neither time nor interest in reading Sanskrit texts. His efforts are rewarded by publicising Hindu mythology among readers of all age groups. He has made the name of Shiva extremely popular through the TV serial (*Devon Ke Dev Mahadev*) based on his works on Shiva.

The thesis, has utilised various theories and concepts to analyse contemporary mythological novels are applied. Contemporary mythological novels especially the Shiva Trilogy by Amish is studied and analysed using an eclectic framework of theoretical approaches drawn from the theories of popular culture, post-feminism, post-diaspora, ecocriticism, and subaltern theory.

The problems raised by the reconstruction of the past give impetus to the narrative an important quality of re-interpretation. For example, Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* (2010-2013) is taken from the story of *Shiv Maha Purana* in a fictional manner to idolize the character of Shiva. Amish Tripathi has shown a great deal of environmental degradation through the concept of Somras and the waste generated during its manufacturing. The harmful repercussions such as diseases like cancer, tuberculosis, and the plague are caused by water contamination by Somras production. The nectar of Meluhans becomes poisons of others who consume the water of rivers polluted by Meluhans. Even Meluhan parents give birth to Naga children caused of the consumption of Somras. *The Immortals of Meluha* depicts the Nagas as terrifying beings with physical strength and exceptional courage but with certain physical deformities. They are abandoned by their parents and adopted by people in Panchavati, the cursed region far away from the Sapt Sindhu region.

The issue of the rise in popularity of mythological fiction is addressed with reasons like a rise in readers who prefer to read books in the English language, the demand for mythological characters and episodes in visual media, and mental health issues. The reasons for the popularity of the genre of mythological fiction are analysed and a spate of mythological representation in print and visual media is critically addressed.

Research questions raised in the synopsis are also answered critically by analysing all the aspects of mythological fiction and the legend of Shiva. The reasons for the unprecedented popularity of the genre of mythological fiction among the elite English-speaking class in India are elaborated. The question of commercialization as a purpose of creative retelling connects to the threads of lucrative aspects of a piece of art/literature that make it marketable. The thesis projects on the solutions offered for present-day crises in the *Shiva Trilogy* which modernizes the mythology for establishing/emphasizing its importance in our life. Pattanaik

also acknowledges the relevance of mythology for solving problems of our time by contemporizing various myths associated with Shiva. The deluge of mythological fiction due to globalization, a wave of Hindutva, and the rise of middle-class readers of English are discussed. The poetics of the new genre having elements of suspense, mystery, and science to lure the readers is also justified. The translation of ancient mythology into the simple language of logic, science and technology has embodied the contemporary social reality of society symbolically. The Indianness reflected in these mythological narratives represents our national tradition of universal brotherhood and compassion. The thesis contains the following chapters:

The first chapter titled **Introduction** carries a discussion on the popular culture, and mythological fiction writers, Shiva in the writings of regional, foreign and English language authors. Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik's introductory biographies and works on Shiva are detailed with a methodological framework that was used to analyse them. The brief information of the next chapter is given at the end of this chapter.

The second chapter, **Shiva in Mythological Texts**, has compared Shiva of eighteen Maha Puranas, Upanishads, and other scriptures with the works of modern authors like Amish Tripathi and Pattanaik. Especially the text of the *Shiv Maha Purana*, the *Linga Purana*, the *Peria Puranam*, and the *Vigyan Bhairav Tantra* is discussed in detail. The main argument of comparison of the Shiva legend and his representations in the mythological fiction is done with Lord Shiva depicted in the Puranas and other scriptures. Different types of Shaivism prevalent in India and other countries having Hindu populations are also analysed. The prominent books of the current era written on the legend of Shiva have formed part of the analysis.

The following chapter, '**Shiva in Popular Culture**' analyses the legend of Shiva in the popular culture of our time. Every aspect of culture and its relevance in our lives is discussed along with an analysis of the representation and presence of Shiva in fine arts, meditation, and visual and print media. The works of Pattanaik are also analysed as he has contributed towards popularising the legend of Shiva. TV serial *Devon Ke Dev Mahadev*'s phenomenal success is responsible for the spate of mythological TV serials. His books on Shiva carry information from different sources in easy-to-understand language that has increased the number of readers who take an interest in mythology.

The next chapter, **Shiva in Popular Literature** discusses the books on Lord Shiva written by authors of Indian and foreign origin. It evaluates the role of Shiva as the protagonist in the *Shiva Trilogy* written by renowned author Amish Tripathi. Pattanaik's Shiva narrated in his three books is juxtaposed against the Shiva of Tripathi. The chapter has also unearthed how mythology can be used to find solutions for society's current problems.

The current chapter titled, **Conclusion** provides a conclusion, limitations of the study and insights into future research. It has summarised the findings of the research and offered some suggestions and recommendations for further investigation. The valuable addition of the study to the existing knowledge system is elaborated from the futuristic perspective. The social significance of the study is long-lasting because of its involvement in ancient mythology for finding answers to current issues of the present society.

It will add new dimensions to the criticism of mythological fiction and enhance the growing corpus of fantasized mythology which accords opportunities to the authors to modernize and contextualize myth for bringing positive changes in society. As for the future direction of the present research, it could be emphatically said that this research has significant academic, social and literary relevance and it adds to the existing body of knowledge. The research will

be helpful for students and scholars from literature and interdisciplinary fields such as sociology, psychology, history, anthropology, cultural studies and so on because the intricacies of racism, sexism, patriarchy and power dominance have critically been analysed in this thesis.

Limitations of the Study

Although there is a substantial corpus of mythological writings on other deities, this study has focused only on the legend of Shiva in detail due to the time constraint and feasibility of the research pursuit. Also, the proposed study is restricted to the critique of only two authors namely Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik from popular creative representations.

Suggestions for areas of future research work

This study will inspire scholars to research the following:

- a) Ecological Aspects in the *Ramayana Series* and the *Shiva Trilogy*
- b) Women characters of Amish Tripathi
- c) Comparison between the retellings of ancient epics by male and female authors.
- d) The narrative style and language of mythological fiction
- e) Appropriation of mythology by different authors
- f) Prominent mythological female characters
- g) Marginal female characters of Hindu mythology
- h) Comparison between Indian and other mythological characters
- i) Adaptations vs original works of mythology
- j) Problem of Parent-child relationship in mythology
- k) Issue of immortality and longevity in mythology
- l) The concept of Good and Evil in mythology
- m) Theory of Karma in the *Shiva Trilogy*

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ANNEXURE

SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE THESIS

The current thesis establishes Lord Shiva's popularity in popular culture and literature with special reference to mythological fiction which has occupied an important place as a new genre of popular literature in general. The social relevance of the study can be measured by its long-term consequences which include inspiration for understanding the rich cultural heritage of India, especially our scriptures and epics. These epics and scriptures are the eternal source of guidance and spiritual awakening among readers and viewers for their themes and moral lessons. Amish Tripathi and Devdutt Pattanaik have aroused the interest of the young generation in Indian/Hindu mythology by revisiting and reinterpreting it in a very interesting manner. The social impact of the thesis will enhance and enrich the current body of knowledge and criticism in the field of mythological fiction for posterity

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Student Name: Ms. Saroj Bala **Roll No:** 2K18/PHDHU/505

Department: Humanities

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Rajiv Ranjan Dwivedi

Title of Thesis: Shiva in Popular Culture: Reading Amish and Devdutt Pattanaik

| JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS | | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------------------|-----------|
| S. No. | Paper | Type | Index | Status |
| 1 | Bala Saroj, and Rajiv Ranjan Dwivedi. "The Post-Feministic Perspective in Amish Tripathi's Sita: Warrior of Mithila", <i>Drishti: the Sight</i> , Vol. XII, Issue 1, May-Oct. 2023. Pp. 154-157. | Journal | UGC Care List - 2 | Published |
| 2 | Bala Saroj, and Rajiv Ranjan Dwivedi. "Shiva Folklore for Therapeutic Measures for Modern Challenges." <i>Amnayiki</i> , Vol. 23, Issue II, Jan-June 2023. Pp. 150-155. | Journal | UGC Care List - 2 | Published |
| 3 | Bala Saroj, and Rajiv Ranjan Dwivedi. "Ecocidal Aspects of the Environment in the Shiva Trilogy: A perspective", <i>The Scientific Temper</i> , Vol. 14, 2023, Doi: 10.58414/SCIENTIFICTEMPER.2023.14.1.01 pp. 1-7. | Journal | WOS | Published |
| 4 | Bala Saroj, and Rajiv Ranjan Dwivedi. "Problematics of Parenthood in the Shiva Trilogy by Amish." <i>The Scientific Temper</i> , Vol. 13, No 2, 2022, doi.org/10.58414/SCIENTIFICTEMPER.13.2.2022, pp. 110-117. | Journal | WOS | Published |
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