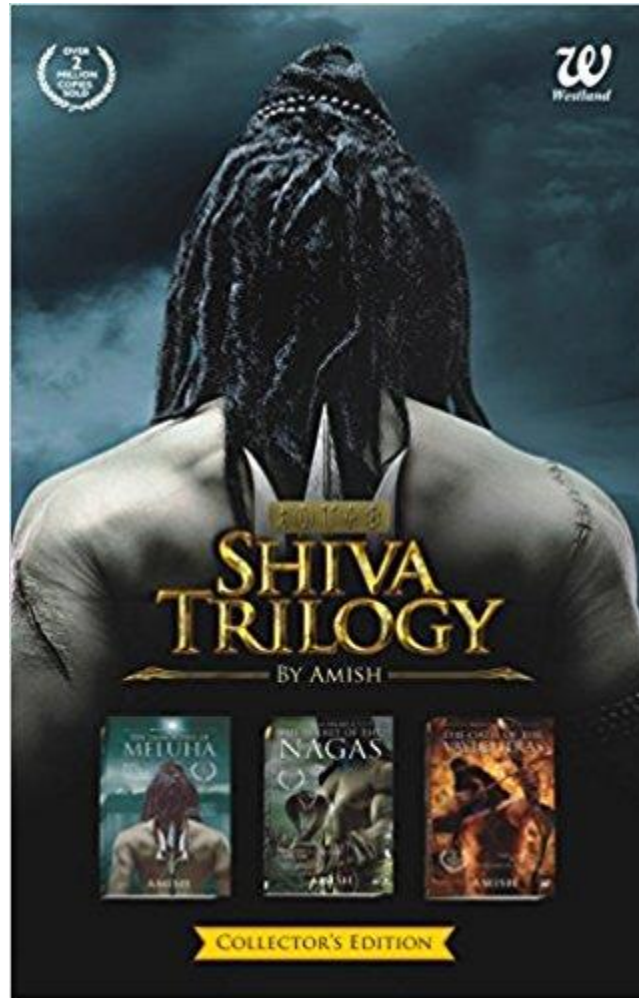


From Heaven to Earth:
Rewriting Myth - An analysis of Ki Longfellow's
Secret Magdalene and Amish's *Shiva Trilogy*

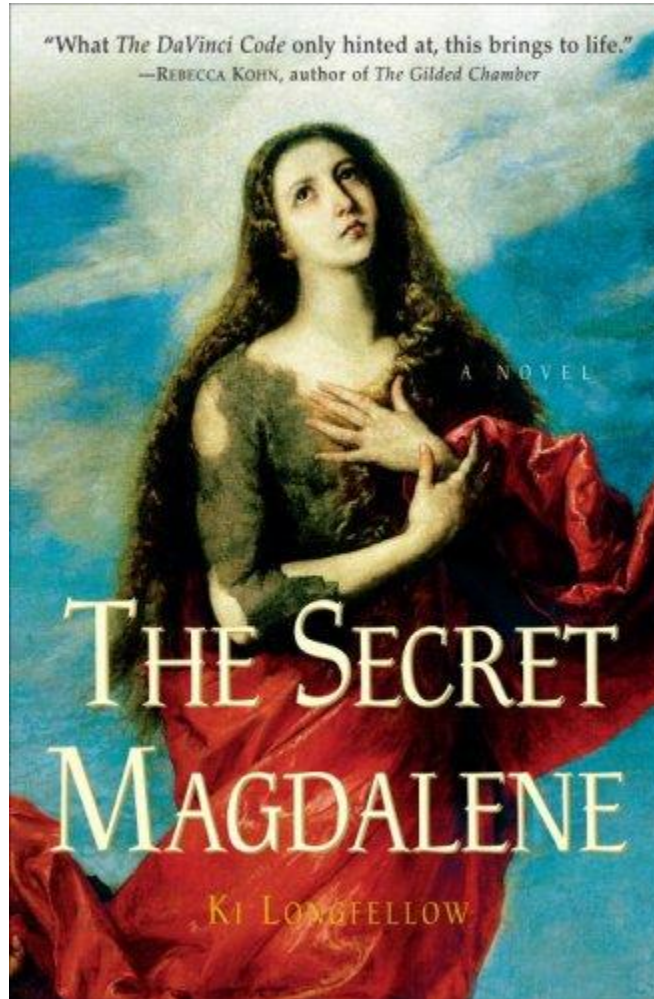
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Abstract

The basic idea behind rewriting myth might be to establish the concept that all gods were once normal human beings. This concept, when expressed as a rewriting of myth, will automatically create interest in old myths. This concept, which had been considered blasphemous in the years past, is now well received. Both Longfellow and Amish speak the god figures with

reverence but succeed in establishing their human sides too. In tracing their evolution, from mere ignorant human beings to gods, both the writers have projected their ascent from the earth to heaven. My paper focuses on analysing, how as beings ingrained with their human aspects, and there by realize their descent from heaven to earth. A typical paradigm shift takes place when these myths are retold in a new light and deserves a special study which I propose to undertake in this paper.



Introduction

Literature is study of human nature. It teaches us to analyse the characters accurately. It provides confidence and motivates us to raise our voice in myths and beliefs. Through this confidence, we can get the in-depth meaning of our life and it enables us to lead a purposeful life. Human mind is always searching for different experiences and it can be possible by a quest of myths. A myth is the collection of ancient stories which talk about beliefs and cultural traditions with historical facts. The characters are often supernatural beings such as gods and unusual creatures, and extraordinary human beings. People always had questions about the world, the universe, religion, gods and evils. All myths have a meaning and advocate some morals. It teaches us the perfect way of living our life. All countries have their own myths and it

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is connected with their culture, lifestyle and natural phenomenon. The retelling of myths for children is probably the easiest type of juvenile fiction. They are naturally interested in mythology. Children like to see old stories especially the story of kings and gods with colourful portraits. These stories teach them moral values. When kids read myths, they learn a lot about the important narrative traditions of the world, including how people are differentiated from cultures and historical traditions. These stories make them more practical and ready to face the world with confidence.

Myths

Myths are also exciting for young students because they often draw on intense themes like power, love, and the conflict between man and nature. The main reason for writing myths are to teach values, unify the group's identity, and explain social and religious rituals. These mythical stories are exposed through fiction for example, The Shiva Trilogy a series of three fantasy myth novels by an Indian author Amish Tripathi and Kid Longfellow's The Secret Magdalene. This is the story of how a normal human being turned into an extraordinary being and how the society projected him as God.

Shiva Trilogy and The Secret Magdalene

The Shiva Trilogy tells about the warrior Shiva, a normal human being and it explains how he turned into an extraordinary being called Neelkanth. On the other side, Ki Longfellow's The Secret Magdalene shows Yeshua, the preacher, a normal human being turned into an extraordinary Messiah and got crucified because of his moral truth and the society projected him as God. Shiva has the image of both God and human.

Hindu Mythology

According to Hindu mythology, Lord Shiva is a ferocious god, and he has another mysterious side as a normal being and also the image of peace, and meditation. When we look at him from several angles, we are always struck with the nature of Shiva. It is believed that he was a normal human being and later on considered as god. As a normal human being, people believed him to be a warrior and it is reflected in Amish's Shiva Trilogy. It consists of three books namely The Immortals of Meluha, The Secret of the Nagas, and The Oath of the Vayuputras. The story tells the life of Shiva and how from being a warrior and tribal leader, he later turned into God. It is an adventurous story that happened before centuries. Today, people remember him as Mahadev, God of all Gods. In this book, Shiva accepts the request from Daksha to save their land from enemies. Shiva and his tribe are impressed with the Meluhan way of life. He comes to know that the princess of Meluha lived her life with no companion as she is a Vikrama, the punishment for her past life sins. He loves Sati, the Princess and decides to marry her, and break the Vikarma law and the associated taboos. Once, the inventor Brahaspati invites them to Mount Mandar, where the secret potion Somras is manufactured, with the water from the Saraswatiriver.

According to this ancient myth, we can understand that the potion did not affect him but his throat turned into blue. He tries to lead the Suyavanshis to victory against their arch rivals Chantravanshis who were accompanied by the evil assassins – the Nagas. Unfortunately, Sati is

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attacked by a Naga and a gold coin leads Shiva to Branga. In the third book, he meets the Chief of Vayuputras, Mithra, who convinces the Vayuputras that Shiva is the saviour. He gives the Pashupathiastra a special weapon, like the Brahmastra, to attack them. The war ends with Sati's death and shiva banishes the Somras and hide it from human vision and secure it under the city. Shiva retires to Mount Kailash where he spends most of his time with the memories of Sati. Sati's death is not forgotten and she is later renowned as Goddess Shakti. Creation and destruction are the two wheels of life. This is common for everyone.

Yeshua

On the other side, the birth of Yeshua as a normal being who grew up to become the greatest man who ever lived, is shown by Ki Longfellow in his *Secret Magdalene*. Yeshua taught people everywhere he met them. He taught them at the seashore and on boats. He taught them in homes and when travelling. Yeshua walked from place to place, teaching people. We learn many things from other people, but we can learn the most important things from a Great Teacher, like Yeshua. He was different from other men. Yeshua is a model for Christian because he was sinless. He was born, lived and died as a Jew. Yeshua taught eternal truth that lasts forever. He gave us principles to live by, and to master every area of our lives. He is an incredibly positive role model. His messages and teachings are evident in all aspects of Christianity. These include Christian beliefs, behaviours and rituals. Each of these have been developed from the way Yeshua carried out his life. He performs many miracles and many people believe in him. He had selected 12 men for his followers, later to become his closest disciples. During the reign of King Herod, they lived in the cave and protest against the brutal law of the kingdom. Some people called them as Sicarii. His closest followers are Peter, Magdalene, Judas, Andrew etc. Longfellow explains a few miracles of Yeshua.

The most important miracles of Yeshua are the raising of the dead to life, healing of Peter's Mother-in-law, healing of a paralytic, healing two blind men in Nazareth and resurrection. The fiction covers the relationship between Yeshua and other disciples. He is a rescuer of Jerusalem. He saves an innocent stone carver Addai from the Fortress of Antonia, and Stephen the disciple of John the Baptizer. The laws of John the Baptizer and Yeshua is different. He wants to act as a common man and does not want to become a king or leader of the group. He started telling moral stories when he observed the impact of telling stories in the street. He knew that the country believes in bad faith and omen. During this period, women were not allowed to get education, even not allow to participate in public prayers. Peter Kreeft said, "Jesus was anything but a male Chauvinist. He liberated women more than anyone else in His time. But he was also a Jew. He believed that Judaism was the revelation of the true God" (Kreeft, 15). Although, Yeshua tried to change it through the good moral stories and belief of God. At the same time, Rome had occupied their land and turned them into slaves. He helped them to get freedom. He taught ignorance is the darkness and love is god and he never ask any offer for it.

In the beginning, none of them accepts his words because it is against the Romans. Later people accompanied him and raised their voices. He knew, he will die in the hands of Romans but he continued to become a rescuer. He preached love, tolerance and he also performed miracles by healing the sick and raising up a man from the dead. In the book *The Secret*

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Magdalene, Yeshua used some herbs to cure the blind man in Bethsaida. It shows that Yeshu had a good knowledge in medicine too. He advised them, knowledge is the power of kingdom and love is God. Samuel A. Odeyinde said, "Indeed, love is one of the most integral aspects to the Kingdom of God" (Odeyinde, 50). People believed him to be the Messiah who would bring them to the kingdom and to destroy the Roman rule. The Romans order them to worship the emperor as God, and occupied their land, and used them as a slave. People worshiped only one God Yahweh. As a result, they were killed by Romans brutally. Yeshua believed that there were no kings and Queens to control them and he motivated them to feel as a king individually. He liked to walk with people and refuse to identify himself as a leader of some community or the country. He just commands them hopefully. However, the miracles are always miracles but on the other side history projected him as a normal human being who turned into an extraordinary being, and later projected as a God. While reading a book and analysing it in depth, we can get more truth and meanings.

Amish's Shiva

Amish portrays Shiva as a normal being and convinces the reader to accept the possibilities of this myth. The trilogy covers on religion, truth, fantasy and the battle between the good and evil. The language is simple and unique and easy to understand the plot of the story. The first book, *'The Immortals of Meluha'*, begins with the introduction of Shiva as a Tibetan warrior. He enters into the city of Meluha to rescue the people from the attack on Chandravanshi. He realised himself as the Neelkanth which literally means the blue-throated, an incarnation of Mahadev, after he takes the Somras, a potion which makes his throat turn blue. It signifies that we do not always need to suppress or react to the vices. We sometimes need to modify the negativities and make them ineffective. He broke the system of Vikarma by marrying Sati, the Princess.

In the second book, *The Secret of the Nagas*, Shiva acts as a rescuer and fights against evil. At the end of the book, the battle is not only to banish the evil but also destroys our mentality based on evilness. The symbol of Naga is fear, it should be destroyed otherwise reaching our goal is difficult. Lord Shiva is often shown with a snake curled three times around his neck and looking towards his right side. The snake holding the neck of Shiva represents the power of venomous speech, as it hurts others too. Through the writings of Amish, the projection of Shiva as a human being, who once lived among us, makes us to think spontaneously. We should appreciate the extensive research by him on specific Hindu mythology and ideals. Shiva accepts that ignorance is the evil and he suggests them to love each other and it is the only solution. No one is bad, it is just that they are different; their thinking and their lifestyles are different. Shiva is the perfect role model for leadership. In the second book, he commands that, we should not judge anything or anyone and realize that every good have some bad in it, and every bad has a few good qualities with it. Our consciousness is the only one to differentiate and find them. Amish said, " Our greed in extracting more and more from Good turns it into evil" (Tripathi, 70).

In the third book, the idea that excess of everything is bad, even excess of goodness can be bad is expounded. Life is a journey of every man towards the righteousness. It motivates us to

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think deeply. Amish creates Shiva as a normal man and he makes us to think. People believe, the right way to reach God is to choose the right path and realize the righteousness of humanity. It is very comfortable and easily holding its grip over the story line and makes us all realize that the writer tried to find the answers to all those hidden questions inside us.

The Secret Magdalene

On the other hand, Longfellow's *The Secret Magdalene* tells the life journey of Yesua and his followers. In the fiction, he turned into an extraordinary being and got crucified because of his law. He spends most of his time alone in a cave, and sea because sea is the symbol of freedom and knowledge. Symbols and their greater meaning are something that requires careful consideration when studying the Bible. It tells us about the life and death. In this Fiction, Yeshua is a silent listener and waiting for his time to reveal himself as a rescuer for people. Historians are confident he was also a religious preacher and healer, and was seen as a miracle worker. It is common to hear Jesus compared with Socrates because they were both executed for standing up for their ideals.

In the "Synoptic Gospels" of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, however, most of his teaching takes the form of parables, which are as stimuli to deeper thoughts and also philosophical devices. Yeshua was a brilliant thinker, who used logical arguments to refute his critics and establish the truth of his views. When Jesus praised the faith of children, he was encouraging humility as a virtue, not irrational religious trust or a blind leap of faith in the dark. Jesus' public mission started with his baptism by John the Baptizer. He lived during the reign of King Herod who hated John because of his principles. During his period, high priests of the temple supported the kingdom and as a result they were killed by Sicarri, for their unfaithfulness. Yeshua is against the punishment of killing them. His follower Peter did it for John the Baptizer. Yeshua felt disappointed on his faithful disciple, Peter, his Rock. Yeshua taught them to love their enemies too. Meanwhile, Herod was waiting for the ideal opportunity to kill the prophet John and he used the situation to imprison him in the Fortress at Machaerus. While he was in the prison, he heard the activities of Yeshua and his ministry. Finally, he was killed by the Romans. This led Yeshua to begin his ministry in Galilee. On the night of the last supper, Yeshua was imprisoned because of a traitor and one among the follower of twelve. His disciples were only small minority and crowds demanded crucifixion for him. Crucifixion was a tortuous means of execution employed by the Romans, and it was typically reserved for lower-class criminals, traitors, and others that the Roman authorities deemed undesirable. Death by crucifixion was considered a disgrace and a curse by Jewish people at the time. Yeshua was beaten and crucified. He sacrificed his life for the freedom of the people. On the third day, Yeshua's tomb was found empty and the miracle of Yeshua was happened. The resurrection is not believed by all. According to the gospel accounts, an angel told the women that Jesus had risen. The women then left and excitedly informed the disciples. In the next few days, the risen Jesus appeared to the disciples, as well as to hundreds of other people. From that point, the disciples began their mission to spread the Christian message. Both writers declare that the two legends were once human beings. They had lived the life of a normal man. Both have tried to fight against darkness and to rescue people from danger. They had focused on uplifting all the people without any bias. It is because of their nobility that they rise up to the level of Gods. The society always praises the unexpected help from someone, if the

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same person did the miracle they happily called them as God. The concept of mythology converted into a tale enhanced the beauty of the re-telling and makes it more interesting. This is the brave attempt of epic proportions and descriptions. According to the view of a religious follower, it is difficult to accept Shiva or Yeshua as a normal human being rather than a divine figure. We knew that God is Divine but this book contains what really God is and what is Good and evil. The definition of right and wrong is very difficult to justify, because something which is right for me can be wrong for someone else.

The work became famous because the writer tried to find out some unanswered questions. It is applicable to compare the book to today's world through strength, fate, pain, sorrows and corruption. As a result, the perspective and situation of a person makes something appear to be right or wrong. According to human faith, they are the messengers of Heaven to earth and dedicate their life for us. Even today we try to show off our normal nature as an extraordinary one and imagine ourselves as a brainy kind or good. The human knowledge is different from divine knowledge. We are very familiar with human knowledge, but when we dedicate ourselves to the completeness of eternal thinking and self-realizing, we can get the divine knowledge forever. Thus, human beings also can achieve the peak of divine knowledge. They can accept the universal truth by self-realization. The retelling of the myths and the alternate history that they project enable us to achieve this self-realization. Instead of looking upon the God figures with doubt and indulging ourselves in customary practices of worship, it is better to identify the earthly elements in them. Such as identification will enable us to see the man behind the god, the earth behind the heaven, and give us an insight into those noble acts that enabled them to rise up to the statue of a God.

Focus of Both the Texts

Speaking of noble acts, both the chosen texts *Shiva Trilogy* and *The Secret Magdalene* strive to uphold the basic virtues needed to lead a noble life. In *Shiva Trilogy*, Shiva is able to understand that people are different from the ideology, doesn't mean that they are wrong. Devad and Asuras are different. Asuras are not evil because they are different.

It is the fact that Devas who judge them wrongly. Similarly, Nagas are not evil, they are the exploited who seek reversal and their just appraisal is labelled evil by the Devas. In *The Secret Magdalene* Yeshua declares that there is no true Messiah. He clearly explains that the kingdom of the father is within us. When people do not hear him, he decides to enact a plot according to their belief. The betrayal and arrest of Yeshua followed by his crucifixion, and he knew it. When things go wrong at the end and Yeshua really dies, they change the plot accordingly. The philosophy advocated by Yeshua is nothing other than self-realization. Gnosis is Self-realization. The real philosophy of these two God figures become visible to us only when we look at the possibility of their human existence. Identifying and accepting the differences between people and acquiring Gnosis through self-realization. This is the essence of these two works. This clarity is achieved only when their figures come down from Heaven to the Earth through these rewritings.

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