

‘Vikarma’ – a Mythical Practise for Social Stability in Meluhan Philosophy
from *Shiva Trilogy* by Amish Tripathi

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Abstract:

Amish Tripathi in an interview with Pandit to Times of India says that “The term ‘mythology’ has been derived from Greek word ‘mythos’ which means to hide the truth and that is up to us to discover through the story.” (Pandit, *Times of India*) In India, myths are discerning more indispensable and have additional expounding power. Myths are the fragment of the twentieth-century literature. *The Shiva Trilogy* by Amish Tripathi, consists of three books namely ‘*The Immortals of Meluha*’, ‘*The Secrets of Naga*’ and ‘*The Oath of The Vayuputras*’. *The Shiva Trilogy* serves as an edifice that opens up new genera of Indian myths to Indian readers. It retrieves Indian antiquity over the deed of revealing by using Indian narrative strategies and presenting the twentieth century as a continuation of the ancient Indian tradition. Philosophy in India has been more practical endeavour to realize the veracity than meagre theoretical argument of optimum doctrines. Indian savants ponder nature and attempt to perceive the substantiality behind it. The aim of this endeavour is not only to satisfy an intellectual curiosity but also to finding out a way for better, truer and happier life. The aims of the Indian philosophies are only not for the purpose of knowing but also being

taught. They want to realize the truth to incorporate it in their life. The Rishis of Upanishads always pray to lead them from the falsehood to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. 'See the self' is the key note of all schools of Indian Philosophy. Vedas are the oldest religious text of Hindus. The origin of Indian Philosophies is easily traced in the Vedas. This paper analyse, Vikarma a mythical system that the Meluhan follows and from which Amish tries to convey the philosophical concept of stability in life.

Keywords: Myth, Philosophy, Vikarma, Stability, Meluhan Society, Lord Ram.

Dibajyoti Chaudhari in her article, 'Modern mythology' explains that why authors have taken ancient mythology as a base to their novels. She has quoted Amish Tripathi- author of best-seller Shiva-Trilogy: "There are crucial reasons for retelling mythology. You see in Greece or Egypt, no one talks about Zeus or Amun Ra. But Indian mythology surrounding Ram, Krishna or Shiva is much alive in the Indian mind. They have become the part of our collective consciousness."(Chaudhari)Any activity that spirits performs under the influence of the modes of material nature, either psychologically or physically is known in Sanskrit as 'Karma or Action'. In the Vedantic tradition there is the concept of a natural 'Law of Karma'. The law of karma is similar to the rules of action and reaction in Newton's Law.

All spirits are engaged in different activities within this cosmic manifestation. From time immemorial the spirits are enjoying or suffering the fruits of their activities according to the law of karma. The results of the law of karma are singular and pointed and there cannot be any error in them. The answer to the question, 'why bad things happen to good people?' is 'karma'. The law of karma remains although an individual may not remember the action that has caused the current reaction. The wheels of karma are driven by the free will and desire of the embodied spirits.

According to *Bhagavad Gita* every second in everyone's life is filled with actions. Life is a connotation and to be interconnected with deeds. A response originates from a secure axis in one's cognizance. It may be impelled by a convention or reminiscence. An action leads alleged at the assumed moment. Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is the most popular series which retold the Indian mythological stories. It comprises of *The Immortals of Meluha* (2010), *The Secret of the Nagas* (2011) and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* (2013). *The Immortals of Meluha* is set in 1900 BC; in the geographical area that we call as the Indus Valley Civilization. The novel begins with a Tibetan tribal Shiva who, along with his tribe, is invited to the Meluha Kingdom which is under the rule of Daksha, a Suryavanshi king.

Meluha is the kingdom of perfection. Meluhan ensues austere rules with obedience. Their rules are centred on the entity and wisdoms of Lord Ram, who laid the foundation to their nearly perfect kingdom. Amish Tripathi has given the vibrant depiction of Lord Ram and how he has created such beliefs for the betterment of the society. But the successors of Lord Ram have made some changes in them and quench the people. The Vikarma system is one among them. It is also initiated by Lord Rama. Shiva finds some flagrantly bigoted practices in the virtually flawless society. After Shiva is identified as Neelkanth, he is taken to Devagiri to meet the king, Daksha. On their way, Shiva and Nandi hears a tall Meluhan soldier announcing the procession of Vikarma women. Shiva asks Nandi,

“Who are Vikarma women?” (IM, 94)

“Vikarma people, my lord,’ said Nandi sighing deeply, ‘are people who have been punished in this birth for the sins of their previous births. Hence they have to live this life out with dignity and tolerate their present suffering with grace. This is the only way they can wipe their karma clean of the sins of their previous births. Vikarma men have their own order of penance and women have their own order.” (IM, 95)

“There are many rules that the vikarma women have to follow. They have to pray for forgiveness every month to Lord Agni, the purifying Fire God, through a specifically mandated puja. They are not allowed to marry since they may contaminate others with their bad fate. They are not allowed to touch any person who is not related to them or is not part of their daily life. There are many other conditions as well”
(IM, 95)

It is a curse or the Karma which decides who would tumble into this group called Vikarma. There are many conditions and situations that would categorise a person as a

Vikarma. For example, one who lost his arms or legs in a war, turning suddenly into a physically challenged person, a woman giving birth to a stillborn child, the father of a stillborn child, one who falls into incurable diseases, would all be secluded as Vikarma. The priests and the scriptures that they abide by have already laid out the rubrics that would classify people as Vikarma. The ordinary life is deprived to the people. They are not endorsed to touch others except their family members and they have to offer puja to the Lord Agni, the Fire God, in the public place every month. The Vikarmas are purported to live isolated life from the mainstream. The widows are not endorsed to remarry as they might contaminate others with their ill fate. They are also not permitted to touch anyone. The worst way, the novel says, for a woman to become a Vikarma is to give birth to a stillborn child. If a man gets paralyzed or physically disabled, it means that the universe is punishing him for his sins. The substratum for these segregations into the Vikarma class has no evidence. Even if it is genetic or a medical cause or because of any unexpected turn of events, they are mercilessly categorised as Vikarma. Even a soldier, who has lost his sight or limb in war for the state, is hardheartedly termed as Vikarma, worse than the classification to be a Vikarma is they have to endure the rules till the end of their life. They are exposed to mortification and thorniness repeatedly. They are supposed to pray regularly for forgiveness. In a special ceremony of Vikarma women, they are made to walk around in long angavastrams while praying to Lord Agni.

“....., the procession of a Vikarma women walked silently on. They were all draped in long angavastrams which were dyed in the holy blue colour. Their heads were bowed low in penitence, their *puja thalis* or *prayer plates* full of offering to Lord Agni. The normally quiet market street became almost deathly silent as the pitiful women lumbered by.”(IM, 97)

“Who decides that the Vikarma people had committed sins in their previous birth?”

“Their own karma, my Lord ’, said Nandi, his eyes suggesting the obvious. ‘For example if a woman gives birth to a still born child, why would she be punished thus unless she had committed some terrible sin in her previous birth? Or if a man suddenly contracts an incurable disease and gets paralyzed, why would it happen to him unless the universe was penalizing him for the sins of his previous life?’ (IM, 95)

According to *SrimadBhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna speaks about Karma, Akarma and Vikarma.

Karma means Action.

Akarma means no action.

Vikarma means forbidden action.

Vikarma is defined in *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*.The concept of vikarma is explained in detail in chapter 3, verse 15:

“karmabrahmodbhavarividdhi
brahmākṣara-samudbhavam
tasmātsarva-gataṁ brahma
nityaṁ yajñepatiṣṭhitam”(3:15)

The Vedas are therefore the codes of working directions. Anything performed without the direction of the Vedas is called vikarma, or unauthorized or sinful work. Therefore, one should always imbibeguidance from the Vedas to be hoarded from the reaction of work. People have to chore and adherethe path of the Supreme Being and they are protected from sins.

According to Vaniquotes Sanskrit Dictionary, Vikarma means “actions which should not be done; activities which are prohibited; against the rules; doing against the prescribed duties; sinful activities; activities which are forbidden in the sastra; against the laws of nature; activities which will lead to the hellish condition of life.” (Prabhupada, Vaniquotes)

However, the most astonishing datum is that the Vikarmas are least agitated or remonstrating against this system. They admit it to be their doom and are acquiescent and modest to it. They believe or made to believe that their low status as a Vikarma is bequeathed to them by Almighty himself. One who raises voice against the system is considered to be doubled sinned. They have to animate this lifespan out with dignity and lenience. According to rules this is the only system which can wipe their karmas clean of the sin of their previous birth. In Meluha peoples who believe that their own people deserve their cruel fate, because they are being punished for their past life sin.

Amish creates a conversation between Shiva and Vasudev pandit at Mohan Jo Daro. It flaunt like teachings of Lord Krishna to Arjuna at warfield in *Ramanya*. While Lord Krishna, charioteer of Arjuna, about to ride Arujan’s chariot into the Dharmayutha, Arjuna hesitates to attack his own blood in the field. Where the situation arises Lord Krishna teaches him about Karma in life. This teaching of Lord Krishna is renowned as ‘*Bhagavad Gita*’ worldwide.

Pandit in Mahon Jo Daro explains a philosophy called stability and flexibility to Shiva and its importance to retain society stable. Pandit gives an instance from *Ramayana*. He explains to Shiva that the role of a lady named Manthara. She has suffered and insulted by many because of her physical deformities. Her mounted anger has triggered a series of events which led the loss of millions of lives during Lord Ram’s period. Like such grumpy people can become a threat to the society. Lord Ram recognized that and then he publicized a

perception called vikarama. There are edicts which support a society towards transformation slowly and allow it to endure stable. The commandment which make a person believe that the catastrophe in his present life is due to their sins from his previous birth and then they resign themselves to their fate and not show their anger towards the society they belong. Thus this law created an ideal balance between stability and flexibility.

Pandit explains further that the law is derived for the welfare of the society. “It is about the society as a whole. The vikarma acceptance of their fate is integral to the stability of Meluha.”(IM, 210)

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