

Application of Langinus' Resources of Sublimity in Amish Tripathi's The Immortals of Meluha



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Abstract: Longinus, besides being one of the most famous ancient philosophers, contributed enormously to the field of art and literature; his concept of 'Sublime' which he introduced in his path-breaking work 'On the Sublime', written in epistolary form and addressing Posthumus Terentianus, has constantly been used to evaluate literature over the years. This paper studies Amish Tripathi's 'The Immortals of Meluha', the first of the three novels of his Shiva Trilogy, using the five parameters that Longinus set forth to appraise if a work of literature has achieved sublimity or not. Written in simple, yet effective language, the fantasy retelling of the story of Indian mythological God Lord Shiva, The Immortals of Meluha has uplifting thoughts and the capacity to kindle readers' emotions which Longinus propagated as two of the major qualities of sublime writing.

Key Words: Blue Throat, Empire, Legend, Mythology, Sublime, Somras, Vikrama.

I. INTRODUCTION

Amish Tripathi, the latest sensation of Indian Writing English, has written two series of novel; Shiva Trilogy and Ramchandra Series, the former consists of three novels and the later of five novels. His first series Shiva Trilogy was an instant success selling millions of copies. It comprises The Immortals of Meluha, The Secret of Nagas, and The Oath of Vayuputras. The Immortals of Meluha, set in 1900 B.C, tells the story of Shiva, a human becoming superhuman, the Mahadev. The author Amish Tripathi employs all the five qualities mentioned by Longinus to achieve sublimity.

II. METHODOLOGY

Longinus, the ancient Greek philosopher and the author of 'Peri Hypsos', the Greek title for 'On the Sublime', states that authors can achieve immortal fame through Sublimity; the distinct and excellent use of language in writing to entrance the readers and by exerting an irresistible force. He has listed five fundamental qualities of sublime writing namely,

Revised Manuscript Received on December 30, 2019.

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the ability to create grand conceptions, the strong emotions, appropriate use of figures of speech, noble diction and dignified composition; all of which the writers have to inevitably employ to achieve greatness.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

GRANDEUR OF THOUGHTS

The author has used a number of grand concepts—they are simple, yet aesthetically appealing to the readers—throughout the novel to make it sublime. For instance, Meluhans are obsessive with the rules of war; they never kill the people who are begging for mercy, for them, it is unethical to attack an unarmed man, a swordsman from Meluhan camp does not attack a person below his waist. The nobleness of Meluha is clearly shown by the words uttered by Nandi "We deal honourably even with those are dishonourable, like the Sun we never take from anyone but always give to others" (40). The concept of Somras as the elixir of life—which not only postpones the death considerably but also gives the mental and physical strength to live as if the people are living in the prime of their youth—is a grand concept which attracts the reader's attention and keeps them glued throughout the book. Parvateshwar character is the sublimest of all the characters. He is the strict follower of Lord Ram—he states a person character and how much respect they deserve is decided by their actions, not by their colour and their birth place, he is the only person apologizing to Shiva, instead of making excuses for not revealing to him about the actual reasons behind bringing him and his clan to Meluha as immigrants. Introducing the concept of Vikrama for the people who have been punished for the sins of their previous birth and later giving a number of reasons for abolishing sends a clear message to the readers that it is a pure superstition to punish somebody for the mistake they have not committed or based on pure assumption. Shiva, despite understanding that he is an important person by the behaviours of Meluhans, is humble and selfless—he is embarrassed when Meluhan chief doctor touches his feet and utters that she is a giver of life and she should not fall on anybody's feet even if the person is superior to them. The above ideas employed by the author, Amish Tripathi, are grand and noble concepts that a work of literature should possess according to Longinus to be alluring to the readers. Thus, Amish Tripathi has successfully incorporated sublime thoughts in "The Immortals of Meluha"

POWERFUL EMOTIONS

A work of art should be filled with powerful emotions—according to Longinus, the emotions of author and the characters of the story do not come under sublimity, only the emotions felt by the readers come under sublime quality. Amish Tripathi has filled the novel with powerful and moving emotional contexts which pulls the reader's attention together, the emotions among the readers even act as precursors to later revelations. A cry resounded loudly through the silent room as Ayurvati staggered back. Her hand covered her mouth in shock while the palm leaves scattered on the floor. Her knees were too weak to hold her up.... tears broke through her eyes through her proud eyes. She kept repeating, 'Om Brahmaye Namah, Om Brahmaye Namah' (23). The above lines show the emotion of the Meluhan Chief doctor Ayurvati when she gets to know The Neelkanth has risen to help the Meluhans. Even the Kashmir King Chitrangadh's act—Chitrangadh emotion is compared to a child's sobbing—upon seeing Shiva's blue throat; kindles readers sentiments as they are left clueless as to why this blue throat is given utmost importance. The reactions of Daksha and Kanakhala when Shiva's blue throat is revealed are supremely emotive because Daksha, who is the emperor of the greatest kingdom, and near perfect empire, Kanakhala, the Prime Minister of Meluha are the most important people; their emotion creates strong impact upon the readers which the author has achieved effortlessly. Shiva's anger on Meluhans for not letting him know the legend of Neelkanth is justifiable, and the author has structured the text in a way that Shiva has every right to be angry. He expresses, 'Meluha was not honest with me...we were not told that a medicine called the Somras would be administered to us as soon as we entered...without my knowledge' (117). Parvateshwar is the only person apologizing to Shiva instead of making excuses. His actions are filled with sublimity throughout the novel. Thus, according to Longinus, powerful and touching emotions felt by the readers play a vital role to make the novel sublime and worth reading.

FIGURES OF SPEECH AND NOBLE DICTION

Figures of Speech is an integral part of any form of writing, or at least Longinus thinks so; when he set the parameters, he gave figures of speech the utmost importance. For Longinus, application of figures of speech in a written work is a supplement to enhance the imagination of the author and readers. Amish Tripathi has employed innumerable figures of speech in his novel 'The Immortals of Meluha', which gives the wings to his imagination to fly.

The author describes Meluha, where major part of the novel is set, as heaven. Here 'heaven' is used as a metaphor to describe a country which has all the resources needed for humans to lead a peaceful, healthy, and a prosperous life. Whereas, one of the earlier introduced places to Shiva, Kashmir, is referred as 'masterpiece' by the author through the protagonist,

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 tress, offering a

majestic, yet warm 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 (10). Sati, the woman protagonist of the novel, is introduced for the first time with a number of figures of speech to create a live picture of her to the readers, among which the notable one, 'Although her black hair was tied in an understated bun, a few irreverent strands danced a spellbinding Kathak in the wind' (47). Here, Sati's hair-waving is compared to Kathak, an Indian form of classical dance which originated from Nomadic period. The author further adds, 'Her piercingly magnetic, blue eyes and bronzed skin were an invitation for jealousy from the goddesses' (47). The above uses of personifications give the standard that a sublime novel needs. Noble diction is the fourth source to make a novel sublime. And Amish Tripathi has employed a number of noble dictions in the novel. 'The young warrior cursed and swung back, opening his flank' (8). Here the author uses the word 'warrior', which is often used in positive tone in everyday English, to describe an enemy; a Pakrati, of the protagonist to the audience. The author is deliberate while choosing the word warrior because he is happy projecting a person who fights for his people as warrior rather than a traitor. This message is even strengthened when Daksha mentions that Chandravanshis attack the public places and kill innocent brahmins, Shiva states that Pakratis, the barbarians will not do such shameful acts. This elevates the sublimity of the novel because any person who fights for his people's welfare is shown as a warrior by the author. The divine drink which postpones the death of Meluhans, and makes them look young and healthy, Somras is referred as the drink of the gods; the referral gives the readers an impression of purification and magnificence of the drink. This also helps the author to build the entire story around the novel.

DIGNIFIED COMPOSITION

The fifth and final source of sublime writing is Dignified Composition, which, if it is employed successfully by the author, helps in the successful application of other four sources. For Longinus, this is the most important of all sources to achieve sublimity because dignified composition gives the novel the final shape. Amish Tripathi has composed the novel with utmost precision to achieve sublimity. For instance, when Daksha, the emperor of Meluha, is introduced for the first time to the audience through a soliloquy by the protagonist Shiva, the narration is exemplary and elevates the dignity of the novel. The following lines give the proof of author's dignified composition,

He is too young to be an emperor of such a large country...Daksha's body indicated that it had not been strained by too much exercise. It wasn't that he was obese either...wheat-complexioned face, average sized, dark eyes flanked a strait nose. His only distinguished feature was his smile...Emperor Daksha looked like a man who wore his royalty lightly (66).

The author also introduces the Kanakhala, the Meluhan Prime Minister, and Parvateshwar, the Meluhan General with almost the same dignity.

When the above characters are introduced to the readers, the readers get a clear idea of their characters and their behaviour. Sati's character is exemplified through the composition, 'Her walk was dignified. Stately enough to let a beholder know that she was detached, but not cold' (47). The author does not cheat the readers because Sati turns out to be the most dignified character throughout the novel. There is coherence through the novel either in the form of signs or in the way a certain event or person is introduced make the novel sublime. When Shiva shows his interest to look at the Somras manufacturing location, Daksha, as given in the text, has a 'nervous' smile, but readers understand the reason for the nervousness only in the second book of the Shiva Trilogy; Somras has a lot of side effects and the emperor Daksha is aware of that from the beginning. Parvesteshwar's expression—when discussing the relaxation given to royal families in Maika system,—as per the text is furious which shows that he evidently disagreed with breaking Lord Ram's laws. Later, it is revealed that Parvateshwar's ancestors aggressively opposed the changes that were to be made in the Maika system, and unsuccessful upon that they pledged lifelong celibacy. Thus, the composition of the novel 'The Immortals of Meluha' is appealing to the reader, helps in achieving sublimity.

IV. CONCLUSION

Amish Tripathi's novel 'The Immortals of Meluha' is a perfect example of how a novel of greater sublime quality should be written. It is clearly proven through the present study that Tripathi flawlessly employed all the five resources of sublime writing—Grandeur of thoughts, Powerful emotions, Figures of Speech, Nobel Diction and Dignified Composition—listed out the celebrated ancient literary critic Longinus. Tripathi creates powerful emotions among the readers by giving a detailed descriptive introduction to each character through picture-perfect composition. The concept of Somras and Vikrama are his stepping stones to achieve the grandeur of thoughts. He also employed a variety of effective Figures of Speech and Noble Diction to elevate the sublimity of novel.

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