

= The Immortals of Meluha =

The Immortals of Meluha is the first novel of the Shiva trilogy series by Amish Tripathi . The story is set in the land of Meluha and starts with the arrival of the Shiva . The Meluhans believe that Shiva is their fabled saviour Neelkanth . Shiva decides to help the Meluhans in their war against the Chandravanshis , who had joined forces with a cursed group called Nagas ; however , in his journey and the resulting fight that ensues , Shiva learns how his choices actually reflected who he aspires to be and how it led to dire consequences .

Tripathi had initially decided to write a book on the philosophy of evil , but was dissuaded by his family members , so he decided to write a book on Shiva , one of the Hindu Gods . He decided to base his story on a radical idea that all Gods were once human beings ; it was their deeds in the human life that made them famous as Gods . After finishing writing The Immortals of Meluha , Tripathi faced rejection from many publication houses . Ultimately when his agent decided to publish the book himself , Tripathi embarked on a promotional campaign . It included posting a live @-@ action video on YouTube , and making the first chapter of the book available as a free digital download , to entice readers .

Ultimately , when the book was published in February 2010 , it went on to become a huge commercial success . It had to be reprinted a number of times to keep up with the demand . Tripathi even changed his publisher and hosted a big launch for the book in Delhi . It was critically appreciated by some Indian reviewers , others noted that Tripathi 's writing tended to lose focus at some parts of the story . With the launch of the third installment , titled The Oath of the Vayuputras , on February 2013 , the Shiva Trilogy has become the fastest selling book series in the history of Indian publishing , with 2 @.@ 5 million copies in print and over ? 60 crore (US \$ 8 @.@ 9 million) in sales .

= = Plot = =

Meluha is a near perfect empire , created many centuries earlier by Lord Ram , one of the greatest kings that ever lived . However , the once proud empire and its Suryavanshi rulers face severe crisis as its primary river , the revered Saraswati , is slowly drying to extinction . They also face devastating terrorist attacks from the east , the land of the Chandravanshis who have joined forces with the Nagas , a cursed race with physical deformities . The present king of Meluha , Daksha , sends his emissaries to North India in Tibet , to invite the tribes that live there to Meluha . One of those invited are the Gunas , whose chief Shiva is a brave warrior and protector . Shiva accepts the proposal and moves to Meluha with his tribe . They reach the city of Srinagar and are received there by Ayurvati , the Chief of Medicine of the Meluhans . Shiva and his tribe are impressed with the Meluhan way of life . On their first night of stay at Srinagar , the Gunas wake up amid high fever and sweating . The Meluhans , under Ayurvati 's orders , carry on the healing process . However , Ayurvati finds out that Shiva is the only one devoid of these symptoms and that his throat has turned blue . The Meluhans announce Shiva as the Neelkanth , their fabled saviour .

Shiva is then taken to Devagiri , the capital city of Meluha , where he meets King Daksha . While staying there , Shiva and his comrades , Nandi and Veerbhadra , encounter a beautiful and mysterious woman , who has a look of penance on her face . They later come to know that she is Princess Sati , the daughter of Daksha and is a Vikarma , an untouchable in this life due to sins committed in her previous births . Shiva tries to court her , but she rejects his advances . Ultimately Shiva wins her heart and they decide to get married , even though the Vikarma rule prohibits them from doing so . Enraged by the so @-@ called obsolete law , Shiva declares himself as the Neelkanth and swears to dissolve the Vikarma law . Daksha allows Sati to get married to Shiva , amid much joy and happiness .

During his stay in Devagiri , Shiva comes to know of the treacherous wars that the Chandravanshis are carrying on the Meluhans . He also meets B?ahaspati , the Chief Inventor of the Meluhans . Brahhaspati invites Shiva and the royal family on an expedition to Mount Mandar , where the legendary Somras is manufactured using the waters of the Saraswati river . Shiva learns that the

potion which made his throat turn blue was actually undiluted Somras , which can be lethal when taken in its pure form . However , Shiva was unaffected , which was the first sign that he was the Neelkanth . He also learns that Somras was the reason why the Meluhans lived for so many years . Brahaspati and Shiva develop a close friendship and the royal family returns to Devagiri . One morning , the whole of Meluha wakes up to loud noises coming from Mount Mandar . Shiva and his troops reach the hill to find out that a large part of Mandar has been blasted off and many of the inventors killed . There is no sign of Brahaspati , but Shiva finds the insignia of the Nagas , confirming their involvement in the treacherous wars of the Chandravanshis .

Enraged by this , Shiva declares war on the Chandravanshis . With consultation from the Devagiri Chief Minister Kanakhla and the Head of Meluhan Army , Parvateshwar , Shiva advances towards Swadweep , the land of the Chandravanshis . A fierce battle is fought between the Meluhans and the Swadweepans in which the Meluhans prevail . The Chandravanshi king is captured but becomes enraged upon seeing the Neelkanth . The Chandravanshi princess Anandmayi explains that they too had a similar legend that the Neelkanth will come forward to save their land by launching an assault against the " evil " Suryavanshis . Hearing this , Shiva is dumbfounded and utterly distressed . With Sati he visits the famous Ram temple of Ayodhya , the capital of Swadweep . There he meets a priest from whom he comes to know about his karma , fate and his choices in life , which would guide him in future . As Shiva comes out of the temple , he notices Sati standing out of the temple waiting for him and a Naga standing near a tree . The book ends with Shiva charging to save Sati .

= = Characters and locations = =

Tripathi believes that " Myths are nothing but jumbled memories of a true past . A past buried under mounds of earth and ignorance . " The book has known characters from Hindu texts as well as those born from Tripathi 's imagination , however the characters from the Hinduism do not inherit all of their classical traits .

Characters

Shiva ? The main character in the story . He is a Tibetan immigrant to Meluha and the chief of the Guna tribe . On arriving in Meluha and consuming the Somras , his throat turns blue making him the Neelkanth of the Meluhan legend , which speaks of the appearance of Neelkanth as a destroyer of evil . The Meluhans end up believing that Shiva would be their saviour .

Sati ? The Meluhan princess , she is the daughter of emperor Daksha . Shiva falls in love with her but cannot marry her because of a law that considers her to be a Vikarma , an untouchable . Vikarmas are people who bear misfortunes in this life due to sins of their past births . She is a skilled swords @-@ woman and is very brave since childhood . During the course of novel she marries Shiva and bears his child .

Nandi ? A captain in the Meluhan army . A loyal devotee of Shiva , who is often considered for his opinion and suggestions by Shiva .

Veerbhadrar ? A captain of Shiva 's army and his close childhood friend . He was later renamed as Veer Bhadrar , a title earned by once defeating a tiger single @-@ handedly . He also asks Shiva 's permission , the leader of Gunas , to marry Krithika .

Brihaspati ? The chief Meluhan scientist who becomes Shiva 's good friend . Though he does not believe the legend of the Neelkanth , he believes that Shiva is capable of taking Meluha to its new glory .

Daksha ? The Emperor of the Meluhans , he is appreciative of every effort that Shiva does to save his country .

Kanakhla ? The chief minister of Daksha 's royal court , Kanakhla is an extremely learned and intelligent woman , who gets into verbal conflicts with Parvateshvar regarding Shiva .

Parvateshvar ? Head of Meluhan Army and a Suryavanshi , Parvateshvar is critical of Shiva 's ways with the Meluhans , and is a dedicated man to Daksha . He eventually becomes an avid follower of Shiva as he realizes that Shiva could actually lead them to victory and finish Lord Ram 's Unfinished Task . He is a good follower of Lord Ram

Ayurvati ? The Chief of Medicine , Ayurvati is another intelligent and revered woman , who is

capable of curing any disease . She is the first one to realize that Shiva is the " Neelkanth " , their savior .

Races

Suryavanshis ? The Suryavanshis are followers of Shri Ram and the Solar Calendar and try to lead a life that is as ideal as possible . The Suryavanshis believe in Satya , Dharma , Maan ? Truth , Duty , and Honor .

Chandravanshis ? The Chandravanshis are followers of the Lunar Calendar . Traditionally the Chandravanshis and Suryavanshis are enemies.They are democratic dynasty who believes in Shringar , Saundarya and Swatantrata- Passion , Beauty and Freedom .

Naga ? A cursed race of people who have physical deformities . They are extremely skilled warriors .

Kingdoms

Meluha ? The empire of the Suryavanshis , also known as the land of pure life . Meluha is based in the areas of the modern Indian provinces of Kashmir , Punjab , Himachal Pradesh , Delhi , Haryana , Rajasthan , Gujarat and the whole of Pakistan . It also includes parts of eastern Afghanistan .

Swadweep ? The empire of the Chandravanshis , also known as the island of the individual . Swadweep comprises the modern Indian provinces of Uttarakhand , Uttar Pradesh , Bihar , Jharkhand , West Bengal , Sikkim , Assam , Meghalaya and all of the country of Bangladesh , besides most parts of Nepal and Bhutan .

Dandaka Forest ? Located in the modern Indian province of Maharashtra and parts of Andhra Pradesh , Karnataka , Chhattisgarh , Orissa and Madhya Pradesh , Dandaka is a dense and treacherous forest where the Nagas stay , at their capital Panchavati .

Characters and locations adapted as per the books from the series and from the official website .

= = Development and publication = =

Author Amish Tripathi is a finance professional educated from Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (IIM @-@ C) . While working in the insurance industry , Tripathi felt that his life was devoid of any meaning or self . Ultimately he decided to take the spiritual route . He started reading on the different philosophies and the Indian mythologies . One day , while watching a historical program , Tripathi and his family got into the discussion about consciousness and the evil inside man . In the program they learned that in ancient Persia , demons were known as Daeva (a term reserved for the Gods in Indian mythology) , and angels were called Asuras (a term reserved for demons in Indian mythology) . Tripathi added , " It set me thinking that this was exact opposite of our Vedic etymology where evil was Asura and gods were Devas . It struck me that if the two civilizations were to confront each other , they would be at stark odds and calling each other evil . " But when he decided to write a book about the philosophy of evil , his family discouraged him , saying that the subject itself was not popular and would get a narrow audience . They suggested that Tripathi write a thriller / adventure novel and the philosophy should be a part of the story , hence there would be a mainstream appeal in it . Tripathi felt that no subject was better than Shiva , one of the major Hindu deity and the destroyer of evil ; his journey and stories about him would deliver the philosophy that he wanted to convey , to his readers . Once he started to write a book about Shiva , he decided to base it on some fundamental beliefs of his . He noted that the Hindu Gods were probably not " mythical beings or a figment of a rich imagination " , but rather they were once human beings like the rest . It was their deeds in the human life that made them famous as Gods .

The story was based on Meluha ? the probable ancient name for the Indus Valley Civilisation , according to modern historians . Tripathi also included the Indian Royal lineage of the Sun and the Moon Dynasties , calling them Suryavanshis and Chandravanshi . Tripathi had been an avid reader of history from a long time , and his other inspirations for The Immortals of Meluha ranged from writers like Graham Hancock and Gregory Possehl to the Amar Chitra Katha series of Indian comics . For the mythological parts in the novel , Tripathi relied on the stories and fables that he had heard in his childhood from his family . Tripathi 's grandfather was a pundit and his parents are avid readers of Indian mythology , hence he found it easy to trust what he had heard from his parents

and grandparents , and relied on them for the stories in the novel . Tripathi utilized Microsoft Excel to divide his writings into different parts , including characters , the plot , sub @-@ plots and deadlines for events . However , it did not work out correctly as he was losing track of events , and he gave up the strategy . Around this time , Tripathi 's wife suggested an alternative . She asked him not to control the fate of his characters beforehand , but let the plot develop on its own . Tripathi applied these suggestions and the result was a smoother outflow . " Things came in bits and pieces , not in a sequence but were put into perspective later . "

= = Release and marketing = =

After the book was written , Tripathi felt that it would be difficult for him to get a big publication house to publish his novel . The manuscript for The Immortals of Meluha got rejected by 35 to 40 publication houses . Hence , he decided to apply his management skills and promote his book . The Immortals of Meluha ? originally titled Shiva : The Man , The Legend ? was finally released by Tripathi ? s literary agent Anuj Bahri , the owner of the landmark BahriSons Booksellers in Khan Market , New Delhi . Tripathi explained with Daily News and Analysis , " I would be lying if I said that I was sure I would get a big publisher for my first novel . I was a finance guy and a staunch believer in digital marketing that has a better reach in the books market . It actually puts up a conversation rather than a two @-@ minute wire on the same . " Together with his friends , Tripathi launched his promotion of the book on the internet . He put up the entire first chapter of The Immortals of Meluha as a digital download from his website , so that the readers would get interested . With the help of his musician friend Taufiq Qureshi , he launched a live @-@ action trailer film on YouTube and built an online community in Facebook and Twitter , surrounding the video , to further hold the reader 's interest .

Another friend of Tripathi , Rashmi Pusalkar , designed the book cover according to his specifications , which were to keep a balance between reality and fantasy . Hence Pusalkar chose to just portray the back profile of Shiva , standing in front of a huge lake . Since Pusalkar had never designed any book covers before , she felt that the task was more daunting for her , and explained " Shiva is a human of flesh and blood , he is not a God . The challenge was to show him as vulnerable . I portrayed him from the back , because Indian Gods are never seen from the back . He has battle scars and a sculpted physique . " Tripathi wanted the cover to have a symbolic meaning . The scenery behind Shiva 's image is taken from Mount Kailash and Mansarovar Lake . He also created a clay model of the broken Pashupati seal , which was later photographed and used in the book inlay . The increasing brightness of the book covers , from the dull colors of The Immortals of Meluha to the bright hue of The Oath of the Vayuputras , signified the triumph of good over evil , according to Tripathi .

Other promotional campaigns included introducing bound versions of the first chapter of the novel , across city bookstores . Tripathi felt that a celebrity name associated with the book would do wonders for its promotion . Hence he sent the book to various known faces in the publishing world like Anil Dharker and Prahlad Kakkar . Ultimately , when Tripathi 's agent Tiwari decided to publish around 5 @, @ 000 copies of the book himself , they already had the celebrity preview attached to it , and it helped in promotion . The UK publication rights of the Shiva trilogy , including The Immortals of Meluha was purchased by Jo Fletcher Books , with the deal being made by Claire Roberts at Trident Media Group , acting on behalf of the author and Bahri from Red Ink Literary Agency . The book would be released in the United States in summer 2013 . In 2013 , a music album called Vayuputras , an original soundtrack based on the Shiva Trilogy books , was released . The album is an extension of The Immortals of Meluha and The Secret of the Nagas with special tracks inspired by important junctures like Shiva 's dance and the war speech in the books . Artists like Sonu Nigam , Taufiq Qureshi , Palash Sen , Bickram Ghosh worked on the album . This was the first time ever that an original soundtrack was made for a book series .

= = Critical reception = =

After its publication, *The Immortals of Meluha* received mostly positive response from critics for its concept but the prose received mixed reviews. Pradip Bhattacharya from *The Statesman* felt that the "plot skips along at a brisk pace, the characters are well etched and the reader's attention is not allowed to flag. It will be interesting to see how the trilogy progresses. One cannot but admire the creative drive that impels a finance professional to embark on such an ambitious odyssey on uncharted seas." Another review by Gaurav Vasudev from the same newspaper wrote that "the book is a gripping mythological story written in modern style."

Devdutt Pattanaik from *The Tribune* commented that "the writer takes us on a sinister journey with the characters, who frequently sound as if they are one of us only." *Society* magazine complimented Tripathi's writing by saying, "Reading this beautifully written creation is like plunging into the icy and venerable waters of the Manasarovar Lake. One can actually sense the beats of Shiva's drum and fumes of intoxicating chillum. Simply unputdownable." Nandita Sengupta from *The Times of India* felt that "while the author spins a tale of adventure, it could have been a slightly snappier, tighter read. Some crunching of thoughts that tended to overlap and repeat would be welcome in the next two books." However, Sengupta was most impressed by the author's crafting of Shiva as a "rough @-@ hewn, hot @-@ headed, a great dancer, smitten by Sati ... Shiva's our definition of a hero, ready to fight for a good cause anytime."

Lisa Mahapatra from *The New Indian Express* was impressed with the story and Tripathi's writing and praised "the interactions between Shiva and Sati, [which were] intriguing. Age @-@ old thoughts and philosophies were delivered in a very modern context, which I thought made for an interesting juxtaposition." Mahapatra added that "the only downside throughout the novel, I was unable to really get into the main characters? they remained mostly on a two @-@ dimensional level." It received a mixed review from *Hindustan Times*, where the reviewer was critical of Tripathi's usage of common, everyday language. "There are many other subtle depictions of Lord Ram and other characters and overall it's very well written. I wrote to Amish to express one small observation, the script writing is not that sharp. You have words like 'Goddamnit', 'bloody hell', 'In the name of God what is this nonsense?' etc, which I guess would be great for an Indian audience but after you just finish a Steven Erikson novel you find it falling a little flat," the reviewer concluded.

= = Commercial performance = =

The Immortals of Meluha was a commercial success. Just after a week of its publication in February 2010, the book hit the best seller list of several magazines and newspapers, including *The Statesman*, *The Economic Times*, *The Times of India*, *Rolling Stone India*, among others. The book had to be re @-@ printed for another 5 @, @ 000 copies thrice within the next week, and by the end of July, it had sold around 45 @, @ 000 copies across India. Both Tripathi and Tiwari decided that a transfer of the rights of the book to a larger publisher was needed, so as to take the book to higher grounds. Many publishers bid for it, but they went with Westland Publishers, who had been the distributing partner for the book. The Westland edition of the book was published on 10 September 2010, in Delhi amidst a media frenzy. It was launched by former UN diplomat Shashi Tharoor, who praised it. The edited version of *The Immortals of Meluha* was accompanied by the release of an audiobook for the novel. As of January 2013, *The Immortals of Meluha*, and its sequel, *The Secret of the Nagas*, have crossed a print run of a million copies. These books have continued to top the bestseller lists of Nielsen BookScan, with the gross retail sales being impressive at ₹ 22 crore (US \$ 3 @. @ 3 million) within two years of publishing. As of June 2015 over 2 @. @ 5 million copies of the Shiva Trilogy have been sold and have also made over ₹ 60 crore (US \$ 8 @. @ 9 million) in revenue.

= = Translations = =

The books have been translated into a number of languages like English (South Asia), Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati, Assamese, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada, Bahasa Indonesian, Tamil

, English (UK) , Estonian and Spanish , with the author believing that publishing as a whole is gradually being embedded in the Indian business sensibilities . Further explaining his thoughts , Tripathi said " I genuinely believe those five years from today , we will have a situation when other languages will account for higher sales of books than in English . That is the big change happening in publishing ? it is taking pride in its own culture than knowing other cultures like in television , where regional language channels have more TRPs . " The local language versions were also commercial success . The Telugu version was translated by Rama Sundari and published by BCS Publishers and Distributors ; the book sold more than 5 @, @ 000 copies in a month and went for a second print order of 10 @, @ 000 copies . Other than the local versions , the books have also been released in the Amazon Kindle version , available only in India .

= = Film adaptation = =

Film director Karan Johar 's Dharma Productions has landed the film rights of The Immortals of Meluha . Johar said that he was " blown away with the world of Meluha and rivetted by Amish 's creation of it . I think the book lends itself beautifully for celluloid and we are very excited to promote Amish 's labour of love effectively . " The director was confirmed to be looking into the finer details of the production , along with the screenplay . Though initially speculated that Karan Malhotra 's Shuddhi would be the theatrical adaptation of the book , it was later proven false . In September 2013 , Johar announced that Malhotra would be directing The Immortals of Meluha , but only after the theatrical release of Shuddhi . Tripathi also revealed during Jaipur Literature Festival that an unnamed Hollywood producer bought the rights for an American version of the films . This led to speculation in the media whether Johar would indeed helm the film or the release would be an American production . In January 2015 , while revealing the title of his next book , Scion of Ikshvaku , Tripathi revealed that the film adaptation was on @-@ going and was probably the biggest budget that any film series have had . He also confirmed that director and screenwriter Karan Malhotra was adapting the story into the film script , with Tripathi acting as creative consultant and reviewer .