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A Study of Good and Evil in the Shiva Trilogy of Amish Tripathi

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Abstract :

Every religion says that good and evil are the two sides of the same coin. Ever since the creation of the universe, there has been a constant struggle between the two. It seems really inconsistent that evil is created by the benevolent creator who made good and also it being equally eternal. In the Shiva Trilogy, Amish Tripathi has presented the evil in the form of Somras, sometimes good and evil at the other. It has both positive and negative effect on the consumers. Apart from being very difficult to manufacture it has a bulk waste and garbage which is again difficult to dispose. Its toxic strength endangers human lives. Amish also discusses about Vikarma- the misfortune of the last birth which were caused due to sin and transgression.

Keywords :

Good, Evil, Satan, Beelzebub, Vikarma

Ever since the creation of the universe, there has been a constant struggle between good and evil. Most of the Western literature has as its core theme, the study of good and evil, and good triumphing in the end. Be it Milton's epic 'Paradise Lost' or Joseph Conrad's 'Billy Bud' or Herman Melville's 'Moby Dick'. The study of good and evil, is not only the preserve of the Western literature, it is to be found in Indian literature as well. The finest studies in the struggle of good and evil are the monumental Indian epics 'The Ramayana' and 'The Mahabharata'.

As food could not have a good existence without salt, so also life would be meaningless without a sprinkling of evil in it. The difficulty of the problem lies mainly in the fact that the existence of evil in the world seems inconsistent with the view that it was created and is maintained by an omnipotent and beneficent creator. The various theories on the subject have all sought to elude this

difficulty either by the supposition of some principle of evil equally eternal with that of good, or by regarding evil as having only a relative existence, being a kind of good in an imperfect and immature stage. But the problem remains inscrutable and insoluble.

The traditional Christian account of the origin of evil is that given in the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In the theology based thereon, Satan, is the personal principle of evil. Satan is the English transliteration of a Hebrew word for "adversary", in the Old Testament. He is spoken of as the prince of evil spirits, inveterate enemy of God and Christ, with his throne among men, and takes the guise of an angel of light. By his subordinate demons, Satan can take possession of men's bodies, afflicting them (II Cor. xii,7) or making them diseased (Matt. xii,26; Luke xi, 18). He is identified with the ancient serpent. The name Beelzebub, used in Gospels mainly in reference to Demoniac possession comes from the name of the God Ekron, Baalzebub (II Kings i). The devil and all his hosts were thought of as fallen angels who, like the heathen powers hostile to God, had lapsed through pride and envy into sin and abused their power as God's deputies.

In the Shiva Trilogy, penned by one of the most admired writers of the recent times, Amish Tripathi, the concept of the relation between good and evil is described very clearly. Lord Manu states that good and evil are two sides of the same coin. You cannot have one without the other, but it becomes very necessary to take evil out of the equation at the right time; otherwise the results will be disastrous. Brahaspati, the Chief Scientist, of Meluha says,

'That the Somras has been the greatest Good of our age is pretty obvious. It has shaped our age.'



Hence it is equally obvious that someday, it will become the greatest Evil. The key question is when the transformation would occur.' [The Oath of the Vayuputras pg.11]

The Somras is the drink discovered by the Creator of the Universe, Lord Brahma himself. It has created the way of life and has allowed the Meluhans to live longer in healthy bodies. It has enabled great men to keep contributing towards the society, longer than was ever possible in the past. Previously, the Somras was restricted to the Brahmins, who were expected to use their longer, healthier life for the benefit of society at large. Later, Lord Ram decreed that the benefits of Somras should be available to all.

But any great invention has both positive and negative effects. As long as the positive outweighs the negative, one can safely continue to use it. But when it takes place the other way round, then destruction begins. Somras also apparently started to reveal its negative effects on almost many communities.

The first of these signs were seen on Nagas. There have always been Nagas in India. But they were usually Brahmins. For example, Ravan, Lord Ram's greatest foe, was a Naga and a Brahmin. But even Ram did not consider Ravana as pure evil. He respected his enemy. Sometimes there can be good people on both sides of a war. But later on, the Naga King Vasuki was informed by the Vayuputra Council that the Nagas were born with deformities as a result of the Somras. The Somras randomly has this impact on a few babies when in the womb, if the parents have been consuming it for a long period.

Secondly, Meluhans started believing that Saraswati was dying because of some devious Chandravanshi conspiracy. On the contrary, the manufacturing process of Somras required massive amounts of Saraswati waters. Saraswati started getting depleted slowly by the giant manufacturing facility at Mount Mandar. The Rig Veda sings paeans to the Saraswati. What will happen to the future of

India without this great river?

Thirdly, Somras was not only difficult to manufacture, but it also generated large amounts of toxic waste. This problem was never truly tackled by the Meluhan Scientists. The waste could not be disposed on land, because it could poison entire districts through ground water contamination. It could not be discharged into the sea. It would react with salt water to disintegrate in a dangerously explosive manner. So fresh water was required to reduce the toxic strength. Meluha decided to set up a giant waste treatment facility at the high Himalayas, called Tsangpo River. The evil of the toxic waste mentioned in the book, had a parallel even in modern city life. The waste that homes generate today is so enormous that governments are struggling to find a way to dispose it without endangering human lives. The problem of garbage disposal in Bangalore city, is hitting headlines every day.

Lastly, the destruction of the Saraswati had a more insidious impact of the Somras, that is, the plague of Branga. These people had been suffering by repeated attacks of plague for many years, which had killed innumerable people, especially children. The Tsangpo flowed east of the Himalayas and then took a sharp turn, almost reversing its flow. It then started moving south-west and crashed through massive gorges before emerging near Branga as the Brahmaputra. In summers the ice melted heavily in the Himalayas making the poison flow in larger quantities causing plague and cancer.

Indians have always been gripped by some premonitions which cause unfair practices and binds people to follow unnecessary laws and codes. Over centuries, we have been believing that one ought to pay for its sins in the next birth. Meluha represents some codes set by Lord Ram thousand years back. A person who is born physically challenged or a woman who gives birth to a still-born child is declared Vikarma in the society. On one such occasion, when the procession of Vikarma women pass, Shiva asks Nandi about the same. Nandi



informs Shiva,

"...that these people have to live this life out with dignity and tolerate their sufferings with grace. This is the only way they can wipe their karma clean of the sins of their previous birth. Vikarma men have their own order of penance and women have their own order. These women 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 contaminate others with their bad fate."

Vikarmas are not allowed to touch anyone. Society derelicts them but they are allowed to pursue and excel in which ever field they choose. Although their living expenses are subsidized by the government, they are completely ostracized. A Vasudev Pandit explains and tries to focus Shiva on some positive aspects of Vikarma system.

Their combined rage can lead to unrest, even violence,' said the Pandit. 'Lord Ram sensed that. And that is why the concept of Vikarma came into being. If you make a person believe that his misfortune in this birth is due to sins in his previous birth, he will resign himself to his fate and not vent his fury on society at large.' [The Immortals of Meluha

pg.211]

Shiva is aghast at this explanation. His focus is not only Sati, his beloved, but the injustice caused to a larger part of the society declared as Vikarma. He believed in his heart that this system is unfair and it should be changed.

Good and evil are two sides of the same coin. When good exaggerates in society it tries to destroy civilization; so it should be used judicially and preserved so that it can be regained when required.

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