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## **Portrayal of Lord Shiva in *Shiva Trilogy* and *7 Secrets of Shiva*: A Comparative Study**

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### **Abstract:**

Indian mythological literature is incomplete without the description and portrayal of Lord Shiva. Shiva is believed to be the most illustrious deity of Indian culture. He does not abide by the norms of society. Shiva leads his life on his own terms and yet he is irresistible and is admired by all. Lord Shiva was so bewitching that even Goddess Shakti had to go into deep meditation to beguile him. His charisma and lifestyle have caused and left a mystic residue in people's hearts. Indian writers of the English language have always tried to depict his character as accurate as depicted in the ancient scriptures. The present paper aims to compare and contrast the portrayal of Lord Shiva in *The Shiva Trilogy* (2010) by Amish Tripathi and *7 Secrets of Shiva* (2011) by Devdutt Patnaik using Jonathan Culpeper's theory of character analysis. The present research paper analyses and compares how the character of Shiva in *Shiva Trilogy* is a schema refreshing character and in *7 Secrets of Shiva*, is a schema reinforcing character.

**Keywords:** Cognitive Stylistics, Mythology, Post-modern Indian fiction, Lord Shiva, Character Analysis.

## Introduction

Characterisation belongs to the stylistic facet of cognitive process, where the readers interpret any character in a literary work, based on the individual and social roles in the text. The characters present in literature are the amalgamation of textual content and context of the reader's mind. In *Characters in Fictional Worlds* (2010), Eder et al. suggest that there are four significant positions with respect to the status of characters:

1. "Semiotic theories consider characters to be signs or structures of fictional texts."
2. "Cognitive approaches assume that characters are representations of imaginary beings in the minds of the audience."
3. "Some philosophers believe that characters are abstract objects beyond material reality."
4. "Other philosophers contend that characters do not exist at all."

(Eder et al. 2010)

Jonathan Culpeper (2001) suggests that while reading a literary text, we must consider the characters behaving rationally like real people. This idea of Culpeper employed cognitive stylistics in the theory of characterisation, which links together linguistics and cognitive science. Cognitive stylistics is "the way in which linguistic analysis is systematically based on theories that relate linguistic choices to cognitive structures and processes" (Elena & Culpeper, 2002). Cognitive Stylistics is considered as an approach which uses cognitive processes to analyse linguistic structures. This approach examines the relationship between the literary work and the interpretation of the readers more effectively. It lays an emphasis on the reader's participation – focusing on how a text also involves cognitive powers of the reader to understand the elements of the text which stimulate reader's emotions and thoughts.

In literary studies, character analysis generally lacks objectivity and has been opinionated. Therefore, an objective method for analysis is required. Jonathan Culpeper is an educator of English Language and Linguistics at Lancaster University, England. His notable works cover a range from literary stylistics to the English history. He wrote *Language and Characterisation in Plays and Other Texts (2001)*. Culpeper's model for characterization incorporates cognitive structures and processes. The model allows the researchers to have an understanding of the interactions of the characters in the text and the effects of it on the reader's consciousness and mind. Authorial Cues and Schema Theory of Culpeper's model for characterization have been used to analyse the character of Lord Shiva.

“Authorial Cues are significant to the character analysis as they provide a peek into the perspective of the author, which influences the depiction of the characters in the text” (Culpeper, 2001). They can reveal the character's personality and motivations. The author has complete control over these cues as he is the one who imparts such clues to the readers, opposing the cues interpreted by the readers. These cues are the directions the author provides to guide the readers in their understanding of the characters. Authorial cues can play an important role in forming a character's image and its reception by the readers. They contribute to the textual analysis in the following ways:

- Characterisation- Authorial cues often offer direct and indirect information about characters; like their physical attributes and background information.
- Shared Understanding- Authorial cues ensure that all the readers are provided with similar baseline information of the narrative.
- Unpacking Textual elements- Authorial cues point towards the narrative themes and symbols encouraging better research.
- Provides context- Authorial cues provide a timeline, cultural background, social norms and historical accounts in the narrative.

It is therefore safe to conclude that the Authorial cues serve as a roadmap, guiding the researchers for better textual and character analysis.

“Schema Theory is a basic concept in cognitive psychology that helps researchers to understand how readers organise and interpret textual content in their minds after reading a text” (Nejad, Asghar and Winsler 2000). Schema theory has been a foundational theory in both cognitive stylistics (e.g. Cook 1994 and Semino 1997) and social cognition (it is anticipated in Asch 1946). The theory suggests that the prior knowledge of the readers form cognitive frameworks which further guide our understanding or interpretation of the new information. These schemas act as templates that help make the world around us sensible. As per this model, when a reader reads about a character in a text, he/she uses his prior knowledge or schemas to infer about that character. According to Culpeper, readers often refer to their own personal and social schemas to form impressions of the characters. Culpeper applies Schema theory as his model of character analysis by admitting that the interpretation of any character is based on our pre-existing cognitive structures. This theory takes reader-oriented aspect into account by considering both textual cues and cognitive processes leading to reader’s interpretation and emotional response to the text.

Lord Shiva has been depicted as a young man who wraps tiger skin around his waist and hence is known as ‘Vyaghracharmdhari’, holds a trident with a tied ‘damru’ in his hand and is known as ‘Trishuldhari’ or ‘Damrudhari’. He has a snake sitting alert around his neck and is known as Nagnath. His throat is blue and is known as Neelkanth. He has an extra eye between his brows and is known as ‘Trinetra’. He ties his hair in a bun where the crescent Moon resides and is known as ‘Somnatha’. He also adorns a human skull with bones and smears ash on his body and is known as ‘Kapali’. All the above characteristics depict his physical appearance. However, what are his personal traits? The

principles that he abides by? What makes him ‘Mahadev’? The present paper analyses texts that depict the life and character of Lord Shiva in various situations and light of life.

Amish Tripathi, after quitting his successful career in finance, decided to try his luck in fiction writing. He chose Indian mythology as the genre of his novels. He published his first novel, i.e. *The Immortals of Meluha* in 2010, followed by *The Secret of the Nagas* in 2011 and *The Oath of the Vayuputras* in 2013. The three novels contribute to the novel series, known as Shiva Trilogy, which is believed to be full of modern and factual references, making it an important text to study. The first novel of the series begins with Shiva being the tribal chief of “the Gunas” (*The Immortals of Meluha*, 2010) living far away in an arid land in the foothills of Tibet. There he and his tribe members had to fight with their neighbouring tribe for their resources and survival. As the plot progresses, the novel depicts how Shiva moves from his settlement along with his men to somewhere known as Meluha in the hope for a better life for himself and his tribe members. On reaching to Meluha, Shiva is made to believe that it is an utopian society having no match all over the world. The citizens of Meluha are known as Suryavanshis – the decedents of the Sun, who have an ongoing rivalry with the neighbouring kingdom of Chandravanshis – the decedents of the Moon. The fight has been going for decades over the waters of the Saraswati River. The Suryavanshis know a way to stop aging, by using Somras and due to overuse of Somras, the water from the river started to dry out. The suspicion is on the Chandravanshis, who are believed to be stealing the holy water. Shiva is believed to be their saviour as some prophecy has been called out in his name. Shiva fights with Chandravanshis who are believed to get allied with the malefic Nagas against the Suryavanshis. However, as the fight ensues, Shiva realises he has made a dire mistake. It is then revealed in the second novel, i.e. *The Secrets of the Nagas*, that the malformed Nagas are not at fault but are themselves the victims of the ill effects of the Somras. Shiva

helps to rescue Sati from them and travels to the far east to the land of the Brangas to have some more shocking revelations waiting for him. It is in the third book, i.e. *The Oath of the Vayuputras* that he travels to the land of Pariha to meet the legendary tribe of the Vayuputras, where he gets to know about his true lineage and his purpose in life. Shiva comes to know that he is the chosen one to stop the evil from flourishing and to retain the balance of the world. It is discovered that the consumption of the Somras is leading to numerous health hazards in the neighbouring kingdoms of Meluha and that the Somras is the real evil. Shiva declares a war against Sage Bhrigu and his associates King Daksha and King Dilipa, who have been assisting Sage Bhrigu in production of Somras secretly. Meanwhile Sati, his wife, gets murdered and the enraged Shiva destroys the Meluha and the secret Somras manufacturing site completely. He wipes off the last remains of Somras and the ones who consumed it. The last novel of the series concludes at the same place where the first one begins – at the ‘Mansarover’ lake. Shiva, along with his son and few followers attain the status of Gods because of their good Karma and valour.

Devdutt Patnaik is a doctor turned author. He has an M.B.B.S degree from Grant Medical College, Mumbai. Later, he got a diploma in Comparative Mythology from the Mumbai University. He specialises in mythology, folklore and religion as a writer. He has written several works being devoted to Hindu inspired lore, folklores, and fables. His most famous works are *Myth = Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology* (2006), *7 Secrets of Shiva* (2011) and *Sita: An Illustrated Retelling of the Ramayana*<sup>[</sup>(2013).

His work *7 Secrets of Shiva* belongs to Patnaik’s *The Hindu Trinity* series. The novel hold accounts from ancient scriptures, folklores and traditional narratives about Lord Shiva. Patnaik has carefully curated the myths from the past into his work and has blended them with the factual knowledge ever known about the Lord. The book consists of seven

chapters, each contributing to Lord Shiva's several names. Patnaik has explained and elaborated on the reason and the story behind every name of Shiva. The chapters contain pictorial accounts to support the mystic tales behind the particular name or tale. Chapter one is named Lingeshwra, explaining why Lord Shiva is prayed in the Linga form. The second chapter is named Bhairava, depicting the Lord as a destroyer of fear. The third chapter is named Shankara, portraying the Lord as a husband or a household man. The fourth chapter is named Bholenath, depicting the innocent side of the Lord. Fifth and Sixth chapter are devoted to the Lord as father of Lord Ganesha and Lord Kartikeya, explaining how through his sons, Shiva establishes a connect with the outer world. The seventh and the last chapter of the book is named Nataraja, portraying Shiva as the Lord of the dance and other art forms. Through this novel, Patnaik has tried to cover all the personality traits of Lord Shiva.

In the trilogy, the hero of the novel series- Shiva is vis-à-vis of Lord Shiva. He possesses all God-like qualities but is not a God. He is bound to human limitations. He is shown to be a chief of Guna tribe, residing in Tibet. He has a muscular body frame and a tall stature. The battle scars on his body depict him to be a warrior. He is the leader and he puts up his leadership by protecting his tribe members by fighting the Prakarits, a neighbouring tribe. Nandi, a captive of the Guna tribe, convinces Shiva to come to his country- Meluha, for the betterment of his tribe members. Shiva becomes reluctant but for the sake of his people he agrees to move from his homeland. On reaching Meluha, Shiva and his tribe members are given an elixir to consume, naming Somras. The effect of Somras turns Shiva's throat blue, making the prophecy of Neelkanth to be true. Forth that day, Shiva is called Neelkanth, and is believed to be destined to save the Suryavanshis from the evil Chandravanshis. While at Meluha, he meets up with Sati, King Daksha's daughter. To impress her, Shiva asks her to show her his dance moves. He becomes the



Nataraja. He gathers energy from the cosmos and moves his body gracefully enchanting everyone who watches him. He wishes to marry Sati but soon he gets to know that she is a 'Vikarma' woman- and she can neither be touched nor married to as she has given birth to a still born few years ago. He fights for her and abolishes the law of 'Vikarama'. He believes that it is unfair to treat people differently based on life's events that no one can control. He shares a deep brotherly bond with 'Bhraspati'- the Meluhan scientist. He asks him several questions ranging from science to his own, personal life. Upon his death, Shiva becomes grim and vows to take revenge. He leads the Suryavanshis in the war against the Chandravanshis, in which he defeats them. He marries Sati and becomes a passionate and loving husband. Shiva accepts 'Ganesha' as his son who is a Naga and the murderer of 'Bharaspati' but since he is the long-lost son of Sati, Shiva accepts him in the family. Shiva is a doting father. He shares his battle tactics with his sons. Shiva has the ability to sense the upcoming dangers. In the novels, it is shown that Shiva has nightmares which get true in the upcoming future. After sometime, Shiva realises his telepathic powers, through which he can communicate with the Vasudeva Priests, spread throughout the land.

Whenever there is a tense situation, or Shiva becomes furious, a dark mark appears between his brows and starts throbbing. Shiva has to press it down hard to make it stop. Moreover, when he sees the corpse of Sati, the dark mark burns his forehead and leaves a permanent mark. Throughout the plot, he is on a quest of eradicating the evil by following the right way but when he loses Sati, he loses all the sense of self and of the world. He decides to blow up Meluha with the 'DaivaAstra', a kind of nuclear bomb. As he has pledged to free the people from the evil, i.e. the consumption and the manufacturing of the 'Somras', he destroys the site altogether. Also, He could not bear the thought of Sati being killed by her own Father. He orders to finish off the people who were involved in

her murder through the astra. After blowing up the manufacturing site of ‘Somras’ and that of Sati’s homeland, Shiva returns to Mt. Kailash. He is followed there by ‘Nandi’, ‘Ganesha’, ‘Kartikeya’ and a few other followers. He spends his remaining life meditating on the banks of the ‘Mansarover’ lake.

In the novel, the author has handled the narratives very well. From dialogues to the settings to the thought processes of the characters, everything has been described. As the novel begins, the use of proper names attests the factual elements of the novel, making it almost an accurate account of history. The name of the protagonist – Shiva, is the name of the Hindu Deity, Lord Shiva. As he is a mythological-historic figure, readers already have an impression of him before they read the text. The readers have an idea of him being a God or at least an ideal personality who destroys evil and helps the world regain its balance. However, in the trilogy series of the novels, Amish Tripathi has portrayed Shiva as an ordinary human being. The author described the journey of Shiva from being a normal human to being elevated to achieve the status of a deity. At first the readers would think that Shiva will already start as a God in the novel but with the passing plot, it becomes clearer to the readers that he is a mere human being, who goes through many obstacles. It is projected by the author that it is only through Shiva’s wisdom and good deeds that he has achieved the status of a God.

The authorial cues in the novel guide the readers along the journey of Shiva. At the beginning of each novel, the author presents the readers with a preface and a brief introduction about the textual content. The author hints about the greatness of lord. At the start of the first novel, Shiva is seated at his habitat which is “Mansrovar lake (at the foot of Mount Kailash, Tibet)” (pg 01, *Immortals of Meluha*). The realistic setting presented by the author, gives the readers hope that the character of Shiva would be similar to that of the Lord Shiva. The authorial cues of Shiva facing a dilemma whether or not to leave

his homeland makes him more human like. Shiva falling in love with Sati and failing repeatedly to woo her also indicates his characteristic trait. In the last book, his human limitations have been shown. Despite being a great warrior, he fails to save his wife from being killed by assassins. The use of Culpeper's Authorial Cues for the analysis of the character of Shiva offers a deeper understanding of him. This pragma-stylistic point of view helps the researcher to study speech-context, enhancing the ability to examine language and connotation used in the text used for the portrayal of Shiva.

The schema theory when applied to the novel, makes Shiva a schema refreshing character, because he opposes the general schema of him being a deity. The character of Shiva, historically, culturally and mythologically, points him to be a God. As the reader begins to read the text, he expects the character of Shiva to behave and act in a certain way- similar to that of a God. Nevertheless, it is due to his depiction in the novel, the reader comes to a point of realisation that the character is more ordinary than they have expected him to be. The behaviour and actions of the character are none like that of a deity. The schema of the character changes altogether. Applying of Schema theory on Shiva Trilogy offers researchers a helpful lens through which character's development and thematic elements are visible. The theory also points towards the shortcomings of idealized reader interpretations and universal literary patterns.

Since the book is divided into 7 chapters, each depicts the different forms of Lord Shiva. The foremost form presented to the readers is Shiva as 'Lingeshwara', meaning the pure one. The Lingeshwara is characterised to be formless, which cannot be measured by time or space. If human beings are capable of imagining a world which is beyond nature, then Linga captures the essence of that idea. It simply means that Shiva is indifferent to any form. The story goes back to the beginning of the time when Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu needed to examine the ends i.e. the height and the depth of a pillar which

appeared from the fire which was burning without presence of any fuel. Lord Brahma took the form of a swan and flew upward to measure the pillar's height. Lord Vishnu took the form of a boar and began digging deep to measure the depth of the pillar. Several days passed and none of them was successful in their venture. Hence, Lord Shiva emerged from that pillar. It was since then that the linga is believed to be the representation of the pillar and is worshipped by all. Lord Shiva is seen to be sitting under a banyan tree beneath a pole star, on the snow-covered Mount Kailash. Through this image, an idea of spirituality is communicated among his devotees. Shiva is the ultimate Tapasvin, who feels no pain, hears no sound, sees nothing, tastes no flavour and smells no odour. For him, nothing dies or ages, everything remains the same.

As the being of life, we humans are the most afraid species. We are afraid of death. Yama is seen as the bearer of death and we fear his name. Shiva as Bhairava removes the fear of time, which is said to be the devourer of all living things. In terms of nature, there are two types of fear. One is of being hunted by the predator, and the other one is fear of food scarcity. Fear of death is an unavoidable factor in the cycle of life. Bhairava symbolizes Purusha, giving higher credence to the mind and imagination. Shiva is also known as 'Yogeshwara', the lord of the yoga. Yoga is believed to scalm the restless mind. As fear destroys the alignment of the mind, yoga is known to restore it. It is believed that the serpent which sits around the neck of Shiva is Patanjali, who wrote the YogaSutra. Shiva holds a Damru in his hand which signifies that he uses the rattle drum to distract the human mind off the useless pondering. The human mind, needs to be occupied as it refuses to accept having imagination with no meaning.

Shiva is known as Karpura Gauranga, meaning that he is white as he reflects all the materialistic things. Goddess Shakti opposes Shiva's ideas. According to her there is no point of gaining wisdom if Shiva is liberated from the world and its ways. Shakti is

Prakriti and needs to be seen and heard, she cannot be ignored. Therefore, Shakti dances on top of Shiva to draw his attention and transform him into Shankara, who is patient and empathises with nature. The story goes back when Shakti takes rebirth as Parvati- after setting herself ablaze in her previous birth as Sati. In the current birth, Parvati does tapasaya to wake Shiva up from his meditative sleep. Her determination and selflessness towards Shiva stir him, and he opens his eyes for her. He tells her to ask for a boon to which she asks him to become her groom. Shiva agrees. Parvati asks him to come to her home and ask for her hand in marriage from her father, Himavaan. Shiva agrees to this, too. He finally sees Shakti in the form of Parvati – signifying that the world holds no meaning without wisdom. Shiva becomes attentive to Parvati’s needs and becomes ‘Shankara’ – the householder as he marries Parvati after her father’s rightful consent.

Shiva is immortal and hence does not feel the need of procreation. Being ignorant of the worldly ways, Shiva does not know how to make love to Goddess Shakti and as a result she sits on top of him and guides him in the ways of the world. Shiva being unaware of the worldly ways, does not know what actions are socially inappropriate. He is too innocent. His mind is pure and untouched by the demands of the world. Therefore, he is named – ‘Bholenath’. The story of his gullible nature goes back to the time when a woman named Draupadi asked for a husband with five qualities being: sincere, powerful, skilful, fine-looking and intelligent. However instead, Shiva gave her five husbands possessing each quality. Shiva questions the basis of cultural behaviours and appropriateness.

Nataraja means the Lord of Dance. It is a name given to Shiva because of his dance ‘Tandava’. A dance through which Shiva communicates. A dance which reflects the blissful state of mind. A dance which reflects wrath of the Lord. A dance which needs intellectual attention. A dance which teaches through its mudras and bhavas. The story

behind this divine dance goes back to when a group of Mimansikas was busy in the practice of Yagana and Lord Shiva walked past them naked. The group got distracted and frightened of Shiva's behaviour. They felt insecure because they saw Shiva to be blissful and self-assured, something they lacked. Through their abilities, they invoked several creatures from the holy fire of the yagna to attack Shiva: a tiger, a serpent and a demon. Shiva was not afraid. He killed the tiger, wrapped his skin as a skirt, picked up the serpent and coiled him around his neck and finally, broke the demon's back and stood on it and began his dancing. His body moved in coordination. His body began to expand gracefully. His thick locks touched the skies. The thud of his feet created earthquakes. Goddess Shakti fell in love with Shiva all over again after seeing him dancing like that. Rishi Bharta was watching too, writing down everything, he was seeing: the bhavas, the mudras and the rasas, and as a result Natyashastra was born. The Mimansikas were enlightened by the dance. The dance evoked the thought. The final pose of the Anand-Tandava stirred the imagination, and was equivalent to the wisdom contained in the Vedas.

The novel, being a non-fiction work, entirely depends on the authorial cues. The author provides descriptions to the readers which are factual. The readers get almost everything that he hopes to get in the novel. The novel, describes Shiva as his seven names callings based on his seven different characteristic traits. The traits are supported by the historical accounts. The authorial cues describe Shiva as the God that he is. The text does not contain any dialogue but is full of proper names and factual references. The names and the stories are the same as any other religious scripture.

In applying the authorial cue, it is crucial to consider the historical, cultural and religious context present in the text. Culpeper's cues provide an insight to understand the hidden meanings associated with the character of Shiva. The interpretive methods help to gain a better understanding of the layered symbolism within the stories surrounding this Hindu

deity. The character of Shiva in the text, after applying the Schema theory, turns out to be a schema reinforcing character. The background and the cultural-religious intention of the character is same as it is inferred by the readers. The character of Lord Shiva remains intact throughout the text. The context and content of the work, supports the first impression of the readers about the character. Culpeper's application of Schema theory draws attention to the idealisation of the process of reading, the pre-assumption of an ideal reader and the favouring of universal patterns over textual singularity when applied to the *7 Secrets of Shiva*.

Lord Shiva is the member of the Holy Trinity and is one of the most worshipped gods of Hinduism. He has been an inspiration behind numerous mythic works of art. Authors have used their imaginations to fire up writings on Shavisim. Amish Tripathi has blended modernism with mythology to produce his work *Shiva Trilogy*. He presented Lord Shiva as a being with God-like Virtues but with human limitations. His portrayal of Shiva is very logical, and the modern population can relate to him very well. Shiva, in the trilogy is an ordinary man, who through his good Karma achieves great things. He is a great warrior, a righteous leader, a passionate lover, a brilliant dancer, a doting father and a saintlike man who loves fair trials for his people, whereas, in the *7 Secrets of Shiva*, Devdutt Patnaik has presented Shiva in his most raw state as recorded in the ancient religious scriptures. Shiva is called Rudra when he is in his full fury. He is called Bholenath as he is the innocent one. He is called Shankara as he gets married and becomes patient while learning the ways of the world, and so on. The novel depicts how Shiva always went with the flow and how he held his beliefs firmly. A lover of yoga, dance and meditation, Shiva always found bliss while doing these activities. He is the destroyer of evil and generates balance in the world. Culpeper's theory provides a systematic approach for character analysis. It provides a framework to understand the

process of character portrayal in the literary works. As the present research has brooded into a comparative analysis of the character of Shiva in the *Shiva Trilogy* and the *7 Secrets of Shiva*; it is evident that the model effectively assists in comprehending the complex nature of characters in various literary texts.

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