



Postcolonial Perspectives in Amish Tripathi's *the Secret of the Nagas*

Vignesh kumar. S^{1*}, Dr. R. Ajith²

¹PhD Research scholar (Full time), PG and Research Department of English, V.O.Chidambaram College, Thoothukudi-628008, (Affiliated to Manomanian Sundaranar University Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli), (Reg.no.21211254011002), Email id: vickysivara@gmail.com, Mob: 9092015096,

²Assistant professor, PG and Research Department of English, V.O.Chidambaram College, Thoothukudi-628008, (Affiliated to Manomanian Sundaranar University Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli), Email id: ajithranchal@gmail.com, Mob: 9446796994,

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ABSTRACT

Amish Tripathi is one of the prominent writers of rewriting in mythology. The *Secret of Nagas* by Amish Tripathi is a reimagination of the Shiva mythology, which focusses more on the identity of the Nagas, who were considered as the outcastes. They were the 'other' who were excluded from the society. Tripathi takes side with these characters and raises voice for them. This paper analyses the themes of marginalisation, hybridity and resistance which are the core concerns of postcolonial theory. The writer highlights on the prejudices of the subaltern. This paper analyses through the postcolonial lens

Key Words: prejudices, other, resistance, identity.

The Secret of the Nagas explores marginalisation, and identity through postcolonial lens. To substantiate the views of Tripathi writers like Said, Bhabha and Spivak are analysed with reference to the identity of the characters in *The Secret of the Nagas*. Postcolonial theory raises voice for the marginalized people. The Nagas were treated as outcastes, they were cursed beings and were victims of oppression. Said in his work *Orientalism* states that postcolonial studies "seek to recover the histories of the oppressed and question colonial power structures" (3). He, further explains that dominant powers suppress the other and justify their control. The Meluhan society considers the Nagas as morally corrupt due to their deformity. As Said has stated the "imperial powers depicted indigenous people as uncivilized to rationalize subjugation" (67). The Meluhans deprived the Nagas to live within the city, they were prevented to enter the city. This prejudice proves that colonial narratives have a different perception of the prejudiced people in order to control them. The Meluhan society is a replica of the imperial rule, the governance is perfect. Outsiders or inferior people are considered as threats. Their caste system is rigid, they follow divisions and the superiority. Theorists like Homi Bhabha state that "divisions are not inherent but are constructed to maintain power" (85). Rules are imposed on people, which raises questions such as governance and moral righteousness.

The concept of hybridity or the state between two cultural identities is represented in *The Secret of Nagas*. Shiva, initially accepts Meluha as a well governed country later to find its flaws. The transition is a kind of struggle in the postcolonial context. As days pass by, Shiva learns about the Meluhans, he decides to reconstruct the power structures in the society. As a man from Tibet and later settling in Meluha, he has a dual and fractured identity which is one of the aspects of the postcolonial nations after colonization.

The other most prominent theorist who raises voice for the oppressed is Gayatri Spivak. In her work *Can the Subaltern Speak?* She questions whether the voice of the oppressed can be heard. The suffering of the Nagas are considered as a divine punishment. No Meluhan accepts it as an injustice. The suffering of these people are treated as punishment from God. Spivak states that "dominant structures silence the subaltern" (28).

The Nagas resist and through the intervention of Shiva, they reclaim their history. This in itself is rewriting history, an aspect of Postcolonialism. The history of Ganesh, the son of Sati and Shiva is rewritten. Ganesh is a naga and is abandoned by Sati's father as he was a naga. Ganesh clearly denotes his agony on being isolated and separated from his mother, "Ugly, aren't I? [...] 'Is that why you abandoned me?' soft tears were rolling down the Naga's cheeks. 'Because you couldn't even bear to look at me?' (223).

Ganesh is a subaltern as he is born with deformity, he longs for parental love. He was abandoned soon after his birth, and was said to be dead. He was brought up, by his maternal aunt, who herself was abandoned by her father Daksha. Ganesh is called as the "The Lord of the People", yet he suffers a lot as a Naga. Sati is

unaware of the existence of Ganesh. Only during a war, when they reach the Naga Land they realise that Ganesh is alive. Kali, the sister of Sati is rebellious and aggressive. Kali is recreated as a Naga Queen, as a subaltern she tries to rise against the oppression. Deprived, and neglected, she treats her sister like a stranger. Kali was able to identify her, but Sati did not know about her. "Sati stared at Naga Queen. 'I swear I don't know. Who are you?' The Naga Queen shut her eyes, took a deep breath, and spoke with the scream at her command. "Then listen, oh exalted princess. I am your twin sister, Kali. The one whom your two-faced father abandoned!" (223). Kali wants to expose the secret of her life but Sati was unknown of all the secrecy. So, Kali clarifies to her sister about the bad deed of her father, Dakshya.

Kali narrates her backstory to Sati. Her ugliness and deformity stood in the way of being a princess. In *The Secret of the Nagas*, Tripathi narrates, "There were small balls of bone which ran from her shoulders down to her stomach, almost like a garland of skulls. On top of her shoulders were two small extra appendages, serving as a third and fourth arm. One was holding a knife...the colour was jet black...face was an exact replica of Sati" (222). Somras, the elixir was the reason behind her ugliness. The deformity of Kali was the intake of Somras by her mother during pregnancy, but the punishment was for her. She was thrown away from the family. She condemned her father for abandoning her in the Naga state.

Tripathi reconstructs both good and bad, and portrays historical narratives are influenced by power structures. The portrayal of Nagas as oppressed raises voice against the hegemony and supports the subaltern. Though Shiva was foreigner in the land of Meluha, he was accepted as Neelakant, but later on he started to resist the power structures and the beliefs of the Meluhan society, raising voice for the subaltern.

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