

# Myth and Love: A Popular Sensation as Seen in the Works of Amish Tripathi and Chetan Bhagat

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## Abstract

This paper entitled “‘Myth and Love’ – A Popular Sensation: As seen in the Works of Amish Tripathi and Chetan Bhagat”, focuses on the affect and effect of popular culture in India and the cultural issues which are showcased through the selected novels. The notion of Myth and Love has undergone an immense change in this modern world of the Millennials. Chetan Bhagat and Amish Tripathi who belong to the Generation X have thoroughly introspected in to the mind set of Generation Y and Z. They have found the intriguing nature of the modern life, which often craves for an out of the world experience filled with adrenaline rush. The modern society craves for a fantasy which they can dwell upon but at the same time they want to be connected with reality. Love is no more pure and forever as speculated by many till now. It has become a fleeting emotion than a lifelong commitment as shown in **Bhagat’s “Half Girlfriend”** and myth doesn’t mean stories of Gods and Demons anymore. It can be the storey of a great human being raised to the position of a God, as seen in **Tripathi’s “The Immortals of Meluha”**. This is what popular culture emphasises upon, a mix between what’s popular and the need of the hour; which it showcased in the works of Tripathi and Bhagat.

**Keywords:** Myth, Love, Millennials, Modern, Popular Culture.

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## INTRODUCTION

The onset of the year 2000, we saw a rise in the production of works solely based on the likings of the then modern society; which craved for an alter reality filled with out of the world scenarios. Regularity wasn’t wanted anymore. The audience of these works of art, irrespective of the field started wishing for certain aspects which were acknowledged by the creators. This paved way for a new trend called as ‘Popular Culture’ or ‘Pop Culture’. Popular culture is defined as “the accumulation of cultural products such as music, art, literature, fashion, dance, film, cyber culture, television and radio that are consumed by the majority of a society's population.”(Crossman) It is “generally recognized by members of a society as a set of the practices, beliefs and objects that are dominant or ubiquitous in a society at a given point in time.” (Wikipedia) Popular Culture is found in all sets of arts. It surrounds the activities and emotions produced as a by-product of interaction with these influential products. It is the outcome of the constant influence of the mass media in the modern day. The likes and dislikes of the audience would be so similar in a way that they will define an individual’s attitude towards certain topics. Popular Culture can be seen in different forms such as folk culture, working – class culture, high culture, structuralism, postmodernism and can be seen in categories such as entertainment industry like movies, music, television and video games, sports, news, politics, fashion, technology, slang and literature. Many people look popular culture as something dumb and trivial in order to be accepted by mainstream people, because of this attitude it comes under heavy criticism and is scrutinized by various non-mainstream sources like religious and countercultural groups and political and royal families who deem popular culture as artificial, consumerist in nature; where the quality does not matter but the hype matters.

## THE POPULAR SENSATION:

This popular culture has slowly sieved into literature. It has changed the very facet of literature, which was looked as something which belonged to the elite group and which always has superior characters that belonged to the elite or middle categories. Often popular culture in literature otherwise called as popular culture fiction is marketed as genre literature.

“Genre literature is accused of being simplistic, sometimes banal, and at its most controversial, of defying social norms. Genre literature is a type of mass and popular culture material. It is studied by popular culture theorists as a branch of literary study. To popular culture theorists, a text is any societal production, therefore any media—books, film, television shows, recordings, radio, and music—are texts. Genre literature consists of written texts.” (E Notes)

Popular Culture in literature is well placed in the modern viewpoint. The texts are recognisable as well as relatable by the readers with conventional themes and plots. The generation Y (the Millennials) and Z are the ones who are really eager and comfortable with this genre of work and they are accustomed to it. The generation Y and especially the generation Z wants to be in the forefront and they suffer from the constant pressure to be updated

and in trend; so that they will be recognized and accepted by their peers. This leads them to follow popular culture. This is one of the main reasons for the thriving of popular culture irrespective of crude criticism. This constant want of recognition and approval drives these generations to yearn for an alter reality where anything is possible and for love which can transcend anything. As it's for this same love, the generation Z yearns for, but a love without any pains or commitments.

Love and Myth have kind of become a popular sensation in the field of popular culture. Love has lost its sheen. It's no more pure and innocent sans lust, but it's the opposite of that. It has become a fleeting emotion than a lifelong commitment. The modern generation is afraid of commitment and does not know how to love purely and truly without any regulations and desires like their peers. This can be seen clearly in the novel "Half Girlfriend" by Chetan Bhagat. Half Girlfriend, talks about the love story between a Bihari boy who is not well versed in English and a Delhi girl who is fluent in English and is also modernized. It's the usual small town boy falls in love with the city diva, who's either rich or from the upper middle class elite, kind of story but what differentiates it from the rest is the way the audience gelled with its story, as Bhagath has kept the description as real as possible. The story starts with Madhav Jha, a sports person who gets a chance to study in the city like most of the generation Y and Z, who travel places for the sake of studies and job. He's a typical Bihari boy who can't speak proper English but gets a seat to study at St. Stephen's College which is an elitist institution in India and they are proud of this fact too; through sports quota. He is side-lined by everyone, in reality he side-lines himself as he feels inferior due to his lack of conversational skills in English. He sees Riya Somani who's the exact opposite of him. He's attracted towards her beauty and elegance and her way of speaking in English. She's not attracted towards Madhav but she feels an admiration for him later due to his excellent basketball skills, as she is a fan of basketball herself. They become friends but Madhav wants something more than that which Riya is not interested in but she agrees to be his Half Girlfriend as she's reluctant to acknowledge him as her boyfriend, but caves in due to Madhav's constant persuasion and pressure. This is what happens commonly in today's generation. Two unlike minded people are joined together due to physical attraction and or social status of one or both parties. They are not in love truly but this fascination they call love drives their lives and at last they settle for it or they leave it when this fascination ends. They are afraid of commitment. This is the form which love has taken in modern popular culture. It has become kind of a sensation. Everyone wants love and to be in love and they want to have a boyfriend or a girlfriend. It has kind of become a status quo for today's generation to say that they are in love. Romantic novels and movie sell more in number today as it's a part of the popular culture, which people fantasize about. Riya's voice echoes the status of modern contemporary Indian woman in a romantic relationship. More than romance man is highly passionate and will hunt until he full fills his aim.

At last she agrees to be his Half Girlfriend

'Okay I 'am your Half Girlfriend'

So we are more than friends?' I said.

'Well more than just casual friends'

'But I don't get to kiss you'

'You are obsessed with kissing, aren't you? Is that I am to you, a pair of lips?' (Half Girlfriend)

Half Girlfriend shows the brutal truth of modern social norms and the state of love in modern society. Love does not triumph always, for some it is immediate, for some it takes time, for some it's never. But finding love in what finds us is a concept which the modern generation is yet to learn.

This then can also be found in myth. As myth, precedes all forms of writing. In "The Immortals of Meluha", Amish Tripathi has reinterpreted Lord Shiva and the myth that surrounds him. The name Shiva literally means "The auspicious one", when translated from Sanskrit into English. He is the one of the three principal deities to be found in Hindustan, along with Brahma and Vishnu.

"Deeply revered by Hindus, Shiva is regarded as transcendental in form and a limitless absolute. He has many compassionate and ferocious depictions. In his gracious aspect, he is depicted as an omniscient yogi who lives an ascetic life on Kailash Mountain with wife his Parvati and his two children Ganesha and Kartikeya. In his fierce aspect, he becomes the destroyer and transformer. In this form he is depicted as a powerful demon-slayer and destroyer of Evil.

Shiva is also known as "Adiyogi Shiva" and is regarded as the patron god of yoga, meditation, and the arts. Lord Shiva is considered to be one of the most enthralling gods in Hindu mythology and he signifies passion and strength." (Hobbylark)

In Meluha, Amish has broken the norms of traditional myth. He has made Shiva or in other words depicted Shiva as this saviour and bringer of peace in a dystopian society. He takes away the supernatural elements and makes it kind of historical in depiction. According to myth Shiva was the first of the God's to be created by the Mahasakthi, but here he comes after the avatar of Rama and Shiva himself is seen as an avatar who comes to earth to save humanity. Amish humanises Shiva and shows him as a human who was hailed as God, raised to that position due to his character and actions. Shiva's birth and place of origin is not known clearly. But he has come to the Guna tribe and has become one of them, becoming their chief and protector. Suryavanshi, the clan which

was based on Lord Rama's bloodline is under attack from the Chandravamshi's who have joined forces with Nagas a cursed race with physical deformities. They want a saviour and it's foretold that 'Neelkanth', the saviour can save Meluha and save the clan of Suryavanshi's.

The King of Suryavanshi clan, king Daksha of Meluha is in search of a saviour. He comes to know about the Guna tribe and their popular and well known leader Shiva, who is undefeated and triumphant. Shiva comes to Meluha and he's touched by the hospitality of the king and the people of Meluha. So, he accepts the offer of the king for him and his tribe to be put up at Meluha. On the first night of them staying at Meluha the entire Guna clan becomes sick due to some poison, but they find that Shiva is the only one who wasn't affected by it and that his throat has turned blue. This is taken from the myth when Shiva ingests the poison poured on to earth during the churning of the mythical ocean for amruth and was stopped when Sati or Sakthi hold his neck and that's why Shiva is depicted having a blue throat, but the events has been turned in to that of a humanly occurrence. Thus, the oracle comes true and the 'Neelkanth' is found. Shiva is now celebrated by all at Meluha and the king announces him as the 'Neelkanth'. This is where the ill fated journey of Shiva begins. He rises to the image of a Godly figure or 'Mahadev' from that of a mere tribal chief. Shiva meets his would-be wife Sati, who's the daughter of king Daksha. Shiva wages a war against the Chandravamshi's and Nagas and emerged victorious and soon finds out that his committed a huge folly.

## CONCLUSION

Shiva as a normal human being with his follies and virtues, has become the epitome of godliness, a human so great in character that he achieves the position of a God revered by many. This shows that myth is eternal and Amish's way of seeing Shiva as a human has struck the chord with the modern generation, as it gives them the message that anyone can commit follies be it God or human, and humanizing Shiva shows that when the Athma (Spirit) becomes pure and when you see one with all irrespective of the place you belong to you can reach the status of Paramathma (God). Where as in, "The Half Girlfriend" we can see Chetan showing the poor and fleeting state of love. But in the end love gets the better of us; whether we like it or not. Love is found in Myth as found in "The Immortals of Meluha", where Shiva finds Sati and Love itself is a Myth like that of "The Half Girlfriend". They have become a popular sensation. But, what becomes of us is in our hands. Life is but a myth filled with love in this sensational world of popularity.

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