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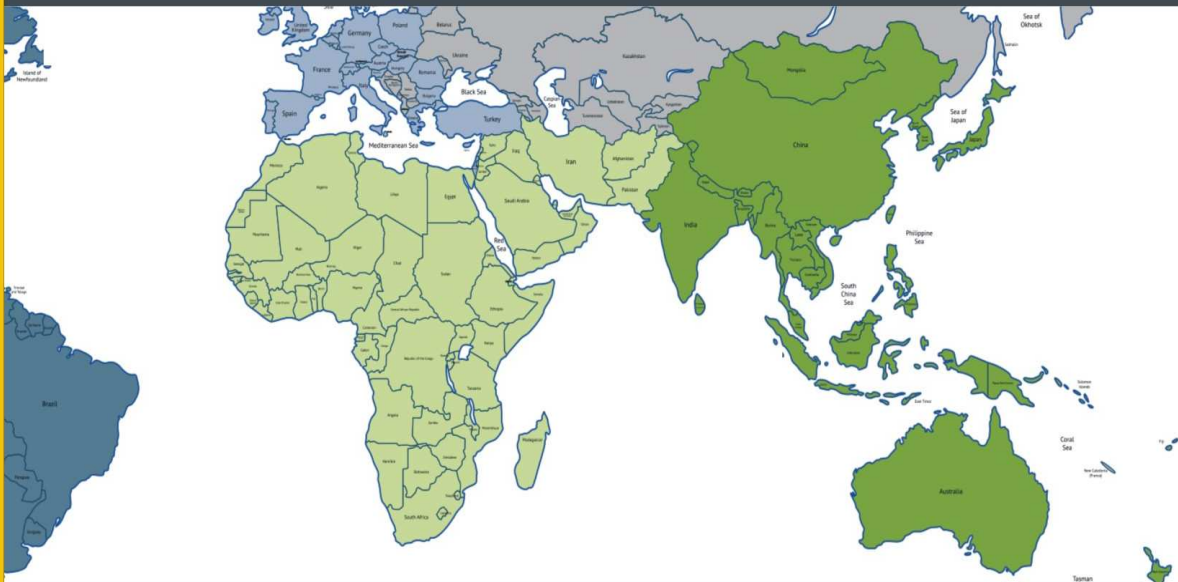
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AN APPROACH TO EQUANIMITY THROUGH *GOOD* AND *EVIL* IN AMISH TRIPATHI'S *SHIVA TRILOGY*

DR. MILAN SWAROOP SHARMA*

Declaration

The Declaration of the author for publication of Research Paper in SAARC: International Journal of Research ISSN 2347-8373 Six-monthly Journal of all Research: I, *Milan Swaroop Sharma* the author of the research paper entitled AN APPROACH TO EQUANIMITY THROUGH *GOOD* AND *EVIL* IN AMISH TRIPATHI'S *SHIVA TRILOGY* declare that , I take the responsibility of the content and material of my paper as I myself have written it and also have read the manuscript of my paper carefully. Also, I hereby give my consent to publish my paper in SAARC Journal , This research paper is my original work and no part of it or it's similar version is published or has been sent for publication anywhere else. I authorise the Editorial Board of the Journal to modify and edit the manuscript. I also give my consent to the Editor of SAARC Journal to own the copyright of my research paper.

Abstract

The present paper entitled: An Approach to Equanimity through Good and Evil in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy, focuses on the understanding of the balanced state of mind for performing duties with non-attachment. Discussions on Good and Evil forces with their activities serve as tool to understand the concept of Equanimity. The novelist suggests that one should always favor good people, habits, behavior and attitude for the ultimate good of society and try to curb evil, which is negative and destructive in nature. Shiva the chief protagonist in Shiva Trilogy keeps on fighting the Evil throughout his life as well as grows up philosophically and gets the understanding of Equanimity in principal and practice. Through his selfless actions Shiva rises from the state of a normal human being to a Mahadev.

Keywords: Equanimity, Good, Evil, Krishna, Lord Shiva, Daksha.

Equanimity is a state of psychological stability and composure which is undisturbed by experience of or exposure to emotions, pain, or other phenomena that may cause others to lose the balance of their mind. The virtue and value of equanimity is extolled and advocated by a number of major religions and ancient philosophies¹ (Wikipedia).

While discussing the divine wisdom Osho states: "When one attains to a state where pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat are all alike, when one transcends all dualities and divisions ,when one realizes the integrity and oneness of life then one is in heaven. Because this state of equanimity and evenness itself is heaven"² (Osho, Krishna). According to Krishna, this *samatvabuddhi* viz. the evenness of intelligence is called yoga:

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योगस्थ कुरु कर्माणि संग त्यक्त्वा धनंजय । सिद्धयोसिद्धयोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥ 2.48 ॥³

yoga-sthah kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṅ tyaktvā dhanāñjaya/ siddhy-asiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṅ yoga ucyate³. (Bhagavad Gita 2.48)

'*Yogasthah*' denotes the state of being established in yoga. Yoga is the fruition of spiritual *sadhana*. The yogic fruition is achieved by karma yoga. And this yoga is samatva towards *siddhi* (fruition) and *asiddhi* (non-fruition) of an effort aimed at achieving a goal. Yogic discipline, says Krishna, is to remain equal to *siddhi* and *asiddhi*. Is this not then the samatva of *sankhya*? In *Sankhya*, the samatva is towards *sukha* and *duhkha*. In *Yoga*, it is with regard to success and failure of the actions as such. Equanimity (*upekhā*) is also mentioned in Patañjali's *Yoga Sutras* (1.33), as one of the four sublime attitudes, along with loving-kindness (*maitri*), compassion (*karuā*), and joy (*mudita*). It is related to the idea of *Vairagya* or "dispassion". The Upeksha Yoga school foregrounds equanimity as the most important tenet of a yoga practice." In many Yoga traditions, the virtue of equanimity can be one of the results attained through regular meditation, combined with regular practice of pranayama, asanas and mental disciplines, which clear the mind and bring one inexorably toward a state of health and balance⁴ (Wikipedia). No society, no age absolutely can be *Good* or *Evil*:

The light emerges from the darkness. The first pair of opposites arises. Polarity comes into existence. Large and small, man and woman, good and bad. Polarity is life. Life is polarity of being⁵ (Werner, 59-60).

Life is multidimensional. Don't confine it, don't make it linear, and don't live like a line. Live the multidimensions of it, the multi-phases of it, and then you cannot be consistent, because life is paradoxical — one moment it is joy, another moment it is sadness: "A man who knows sadness, if he laughs, his laughter will have depth. His laughter will have something of his sadness too, his laughter will be more colorful"⁶(Osho).

Amish Tripathi tends to create a practical understanding of Equanimity in his *Shiva Trilogy*, *The Immortals of Meluha*(2010), *The Secrets of the Nagas*(2011), & *The Oath of the Vayuputras*(2013). He uses the concepts of *Good* and *Evil* in practice and principle as a tool to serve his purpose. Illustration and explanation make his philosophy an easy access. He keeps teaching moral values to his readers through a variety of dialogues emerging out of complex situations.

In the trilogy a consistent strife appears between *Good* and *Evil*. However, as the study proceeds it is explored that there lies a co-existence between these opposite forces of nature. *Good* and *Evil* are two forces natural to every civilization. Pairs of the opposites like heat-cold, pleasure-pain, victory-defeat, honor-dishonor, praise-censure, day-night, ebb-flow, sorrow-happiness, north-south poles etc are the balancing forces. Domination of one is perceived at one time and when it starts fading (in the transitional period) the other gathers strength to reach its zenith. Therefore in the presence of both, one is dominated by the other. According to *Samatwabuddhi Yoga*, nothing is *Good* or *Evil* exactly but men act under the influence of *tri-gunas* (three qualities of Nature) viz. *satogun*, *tamogun* and *rajogun* as Lord Krishna reveals while disclosing divine wisdom on his disciple Arjuna in *Srimadbhagwadgita*:

ये चैव सात्विका भावा राजसास्तामसाश्चये । मत्त एवेति तान्विद्धि न त्वहं तेषु ते मयि ॥ 7.12 ॥³

ye chaiva saatvikaa bhaavaa raajasaas taamasaashcha ye/ matta eveti taanviddhi natwaham teshu te mayi ³// 7.12 //

Whatever things there be that are pure (pertaining to *Sattva*), active (pertaining to *Rajas*) and inert (pertaining to *Tamas*), know them to proceed from Me alone; yet I am not in them, they are in Me. For freedom Krishna advises:

त्रैगुण्यविषया वेदा निस्त्रैगुण्यो भवार्जुन । निर्द्वन्द्वो नित्यसत्त्वस्थो निर्योगक्षेम आत्मवान् ॥ 2.45 ॥³

traigunyavishayaa vedaa nistraigunyo bhavaarjuna/ nirdwandwo nityasatwastho niryogakshema
aatmavaan³ // 2.45 //

The Vedas deal with three attributes (of nature) as Krishna asks Arjuna to free himself from the pairs of opposites and ever remain in the quality of *sattwa* (*Goodness*), freedom from all thoughts of acquisition and preservation (of what you have) and be established in the Self.

As it is well known that every age is privileged with a protector of *Good* or *Evil* causes in the society. Swadeepans and Nagas are projected as *Evil* to fight against *Good*. Lord Rudra was one who took the side of the *Good*. Shiva came to Meluha as a protector of *Good*. In Tibet, his birthplace, Shiva fights against wretched Pakritis and in Meluha against Nagas and Dilip in the beginning, because the emperor Daksha projected their *Evil* images to Shiva. Shiva's object is not only to identify but also to curve *Evil* to a certain level, but only after a profound confirmation. The present paper is focused on the understanding of equanimity through *Good* and *Evil*.

The conflict between *Good* and *Evil* is studied throughout the *Shiva-Triology*. Shiva gradually comes to understand the philosophy of Equanimity. The ultimate purpose of Lord Shiva on earth was the destruction of *Evil*. Amish describes *Evil* practice of Chandravanshi way of life and also evil intentions and actions of important characters like emperor Daksha, Maharishi Bhrigu, emperor Dilipa and in the list of the protector of *Good*, Shiva stands first with Sati, Kartikeya Ganesh, Kali and Bhagirath. Parvateshwar, Drapaku loyal to the throne, work under the command of powerful evil personalities, and Vasudevs are neutral. We observe that the ultimate invention in chemistry, the Somras, the ultimate good of the bygone age turns into the ultimate evil.

In the first book of the Shiva Trilogy, *The Immortals of Meluha*, the Novelist unfolds that *Evil* is just the another face of *Good*. When Shiva walks along the streets of the Chandravanshi Capital, Ayodhya, after the war is over. He does not find slightest hint of self control. Lawlessness predominates everywhere in shops, marketplace, garden etc.. By the end of his walk, an old man noticed Shiva staring at him. Shiva's sympatric eyes and compassionate smile caused the beggar's bony cheeks to spring to life and raising his weak hand with great effort. He offered saying, "Would you like some food, my son... would you like to eat with me, son? There is enough for both."⁷(385). Shiva could not find strength to speak. There was not enough food for even one man. Shiva is compelled to have food for repeated request of the old beggar. He forcefully offers major portion of his food to Shiva "Come on my son. If you are going to eat so little, how will you maintain your big muscular body?"⁷(386). The food was over in no time. And Shiva looked up, bewildered at the astounding generosity being shown to him. The old man smiled affectionately with hollowed cheeks. The beggar was on the verge of starvation, and yet he had practically given all his food to a stranger. Shiva cursed his own heart for the blasphemy he had committed. The blasphemy of thinking that he could actually save such a man. Shiva got up, his heart heavy with tears of guilt, his throat choked with cry of remorse, his soul leaden and its self-righteousness crushed by the old man's munificence. And he concludes "What he had done was wrong. He had committed a terrible mistake. These people were not *Evil*"⁷ (387). A great deal of blood-shed during war against Swadeepans flashes back to Shiva, which develops guilty consciousness "It was my stupidity that led to this war. I had no idea what I was doing. A responsibility was thrust upon me and I wasn't worthy of it! Hundreds of thousands have perished as a result!"⁷ (390). To discover the truth is extremely difficult even for a wise man. Shiva is victim of crooked plans of Daksha. Shiva remorsefully admits his fault for killing thousands of swadeepans. "But I did not destroy *Evil* !... These people aren't *Evil* . They are just different. Being different isn't *Evil*"⁷ (391).

In *The Secret of the Nagas*, the second phase of his journey to fight against *Evil*, Shiva comes to understand the purpose of *Good* and *Evil* philosophically. As per Lord Manu, "*Good* and *Evil* are two

sides of the same coin”⁸ (278). The Devas and Asuras just like Suryavanshi and Chandravanshi , represent two balancing life force –duality. They see their fight with other as the eternal struggle between *Good* and *Evil*. There is no way either can be destroyed. Otherwise the universe will implode. A difference between two dissimilar ways of life gets portrayed as a fight between *Good* and *Evil* . Just because Chandravanshis are different from Suryavanshis doesn't mean that they are *Evil*. Shiva as a Neelkanth had to be an outsider so that he would not be biased towards any one point of view. Still he cannot forget his ultimate aim of destroying *Evil*. Shiva extends his understanding: “*Evil* serves a purpose ... The purpose of destruction. The *Evil* exists in the universe and it cannot be destroyed once and for all. Even when it is apparently destroyed, it rises once again .May be much time is has elapsed, perhaps in another form , but *Evil* does rise and will keep rising again and again”⁸ (276)

Gopal, the chief Vasudev, clarifying the doubt of shiva about the role of Mahadev says that the institution of Mahadev acts as the balance, the control for the purpose –to take *Evil* out of equation at the correct time. Lord Manu according to Gopal said: “*Evil* cannot and should not be destroyed completely. That it needs to be taken out of equation at the right time, the time when it rises to cause total annihilation because the same *Evil* may serve the purpose of *Good* another time”⁸ (276).

Shiva discusses the existence and nature of *Evil* with Gopal, and comes across so many amazing facts. There may be attachment to *Evil* within some. There may be small part of *Evil* within them. But could the great *Evil*, the one that awaits the Neelkanth, exists beyond mere humans? Gopal informs Shiva that it's not people who are *Evil*. True *Evil* exists beyond them. It attracts people. It causes confusion amongst its enemies. But, *Evil* in itself is too big to be confined to just a few. Shiva divulges that *Evil* is a power as strong as *Good*. It does not work by itself, but uses people as its medium. These people, may be even *Good* people, find purpose in serving *Evil*. Shiva further adds: “*Evil* serves a purpose ... The purpose of destruction”⁸ (278). The *Evil* exists in the universe; it can't be destroyed once and for all. Even when it is apparently destroyed, it rises once again. May be much time is has elapsed, perhaps in another form, but *Evil* does rise and will keep rising again and again. Thus, the universe plans the *Evil* from its beginning to the end. Hence, *Good* and *Evil* are two sides of the same coin.

The third novel, *The Oath of The Vayuputras*, opens with a clear message for Shiva from his uncle Manobhu who scripted on rock with his own blood: “Shiva. Forgive them. Forget them. Your only true enemy is *Evil*”...”Anger is your enemy control it, control it”⁹(2). Thus, Manobhu asks Shiva not to limit himself to the fight with Pakritis, the arch enemy in Tibet; but to focus on the eradication of *Evil* within his personality and outside among the people surrounding him. Brihaspati, the close friend of Shiva, reflects on the *Evil* minutely: “*Evil* is never in a rushIt creeps up slowly. It doesn't hide but confronts you in broad daylight. It gives decades of warnings, even centuries at times. Time is never a problem when you battle *Evil*. The problem is the will to fight it”⁹ (5). Brihaspati holds up again that the coin of *Good* and *Evil* is flipping over and India needs the Neelkanth. It needs Shiva. Otherwise, *Evil* will destroy our beautiful land. Shiva is extremely required to protect the resources of this land polluted by the Somras as “Sarasawati is dying because of the massive amount its waters is used to manufacture the Somras”⁹ (18). Shiva recollects Lord Manu's words –*Good* and *Evil* are two sides of the same coin. Therefore, the greatest *Good* and the greatest *Evil* that created this age are exactly the same. Shiva asks Brahspati to explain the ways Somras has tipped over from the greatest Good to greatest *Evil*. The answer is evident which the Naga King Vasuki tells the Vayuputras: “the Nagas were born with deformities as a result of the Somras”⁹ (14). Still no action was taken to stop the manufacturing of Somras and a fine excuse was coined by the king Vasuki that the deformities caused by Somras were the Almighty's way of punishing those who had committed sins in their previous birth. And

Vayuputra council had a pathetic explanation that Somras randomly has this impact on new babies in the womb, if the parents have been consuming it for a long time. Thus, no one is ready to abolish the Somras which has turned out to be the greatest *Evil* of the age. Shiva at this juncture supported the Nagas and Brangas whole heartedly and waged a war against the emperors Daksha and Dilip and Maharishi, Bhrigu supporting the manufacture of Somras.

As it is observed the attachment causes deviation from the path of truth. Emperor Daksha and Maharishi Bhrigu are too attached to Somras and cannot perceive the adverse effect of it. As it causes killing of the Saraswati River, birth deformities and diseases and plague in Brandadarai and therefore it cannot be used any more as Shiva makes clear in his final proclamation prior to the holy war against Emperor Daksha and Maharishi Bhrigu:

I have come to the conclusion that the Somras is now the greatest *Evil* of our age. All the *Good* that could be wrung out of the Somras has been wrung out. It is time now to stop its use, before the power of its *Evil* destroys us all . . . for the sake of our descendants, for the sake our world, we cannot use the Somras anymore ⁹ (119).

But Lord Bhrigu a man of immense moral character is ready to use *daivi astra* already banned by Lord Rudra against Shiva because of his nonsense attachment to Somras. Therefore Amish makes a remark very objectively:

It is attachment that makes people forget not only their moral duties but even who they really are.(129). And further he adds,” Primary source of *Evil* is human greed. Its our greed to extract more and more from *Good* that turns it into *Evil*” ⁹ (133).

Hence, everything between creation and next destruction is the journey of life. *Good* and *Evil* are the ways of life for every living entity. Our creation and destruction is through *Good* and *Evil*; through balance and imbalance. But man is capable of making a conscious choice between *Good* and *Evil* through our intelligence. We have the power to choose *Good* and improve our lives as well as to stop or control *Evil* before it completely destroys us. Many times the *Good* we create leads to the *Evil* that may destroy us. Exactly in the Case of Somras it was *Evil* and it had to be taken out of equation for the greater *Good* of humanity. And therefore fight with Evil is good but what is required more is the understanding and practice of Equanimity, which keeps away from doubts and delusion discharging duties honestly.

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