



## Analyzing the Mythological Avatars of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva in Amish Tripathi's *Ram Chandra Series*

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**Abstract:** Amish Tripathi is one of the famous modern Indian mythological writers. He was a non believer of Gods in his childhood. He turned the devotee of Lord Shiva while he was writing his first novel. The writings of Amish Tripathi deal with the life story of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu's avatar, Rama. The present study tries to interpret the avatars of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. It is said that Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu have taken many avatars to destroy evil. The avatars of Hindu Gods look similar with evolution theory. In Shiva's Trilogy, Amish Tripathi deals with Lord Shiva and Veera Bhadra. He presents Veera Bhadra as one of the close friends of Lord Shiva in *Shiva's Trilogy*. The archetypal Veerabadra is the man who is considered as one of Shiva's avatars. Amish Tripathi's works deal the avatar of Lord Vishnu and Shiva. Lord Ram is considered to be one of the avatars of Lord Vishnu and Hanuman is believed as Lord Shiva's avatar. Amish Tripathi interpreted Lord Vishnu's avatar and Shiva's avatar in a beautiful manner. The mythological avatars of Lord Vishnu and Shiva were born to save the people from evil where the mythological writings fail to present the sufferings of the avatars of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu but Amish Tripathi presents the real sufferings of Shiva, Ram, and Hanuman in his works.

**Keywords:** Avatar, Devotee, Gods, Interpret, Mythological.

**Introduction:** Lord Shiva and Vishnu are the famous deities in India. The huge number of Indian people considers Shiva as the ultimate God and other Hindu Gods were below to Him. All the states of India consider Shiva as the most powerful God. We could find the temples of Shiva in all over India. Our ancestors built the temples to express cultures. Sometimes, it is believed that the legends had created the temples by using their magical powers. The avatars of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu look similar to the evolution theory. Darwin discusses about the transmutation of species in his *On the Origin of Species*. It was Thomas Henry Huxley who had originated the word *Darwinism* in 1860. The concept of Darwinism was introduced to describe the concept of evolution. The same concept has been dealt in Indian mythology a long ago by making use of the word "avatar". The 6<sup>th</sup> century people used the word 'avatar' to refer the incarnation of the Gods and Goddess in India. Lord Ram is a well known incarnation of Lord Vishnu and Lord Hanuman is considered as a famous incarnation of Lord Shiva. *Garuda Purana* presents ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu and *Bhagavat Gita* portrays twenty two incarnations of Lord Vishnu. The medieval

Hindu texts discuss about the incarnations of Devi, Ganesha and Shiva. The word “avatar” is used in Tamil literature as “Avatharam”. The Christian theologians disagree with the translation of avatar as ‘incarnation’ because the Christian theology presents “incarnation” is connected with imperfect and flesh but the concept of avatar deals with perfect and mythical. Oduyoye and Vroom states that the concept of avatars is unreal. (Oduyoye, 111) Sheth proves that the concept of avatars is true and disagrees with the arguments of Oduyoye and Vroom. (Sheth, 98–125) He states that the avatars help the people to reach their live goals.

### **Analyzing the Mythological Avatars of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva**

The word “avatars” always make us to think of Vishnu. It is believed that the descendants of Vishnu were born to fight against evil and restore humanity in the world. The people who are worshipping Vishnu were called “Vaishnava”. The worshippers of Shiva were called themselves as “Shivivism”. Their ultimate aim is to destroy evil. The avatars of Lord Vishnu mentioned in *Bhagavad Gita* as “Whenever righteousness wanes and unrighteousness increases I send myself forth. For the protection of the good and for the destruction of evil” (*Bhagavad Gita 4.7–8*) The avatar of Vishnu raises in the world whenever the cosmos in trouble. It means Vishnu is born in the world to control the growth of evil and destroy it to maintain balance in the world. The most celebrated and well known avatars of Vishnu are Krishna, Rama, Narayana, and Vasudeva. Each and every avatars of Lord Vishnu has the significance, legendary stories, and characteristics. For example, The *Mahabharata* presents the life story of Kriahna and the *Ramayana* portrays Rama.

It is mentioned that Vishnu has innumerable avatars in *Bhagavata Purana* and ten avatars are the major avatars. *Agni Puran* and the *Garuda Purana* present the ten avatars of Vishnu. The ten avatars of Vishnu are known as the “Dasavatara” in Sanskrit. Freda Matchett states that the avatars of Vishnu have been arranged purposively. The famous ten avatars of Vishnu are: Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narashima, Vamana, Pharashurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, and Kalki.

“Matsya” is the first avatar of Lord Vishnu. It is believed that Lord Vishnu was born in the form of half fish and half man. Lord Vishnu had taken the first avatar to save the world from deluge. He saved Manu and all living things. A demon called Hayagriva had stolen the knowledgeable scripiter and Matya rescued the scripiter. He killed him. The second avatar of Lord Vishnu is “Kurma”. Lord Vishnu was born in the form of tortoise. It is believed that he had taken Kurma avatar to help the Gods and demons to produce the nectar. The nectar has the quality to turn a man as immortal. It is told that the demons had stolen the nectars and Lord Vishunu took a lady shape called, mohini and attracted the demons. The nectar had been restored by Mohini.

The third avatar is “Varaha”. In this avatar, Lord Vishnu took the form of boar. The third avatar had been taking by lord Vishnu to rescue the earth. It is told that the demon Hiranyaksha had stolen the earth and it had hidden in the deep ocean. The boar found the earth and fought with the demon. He rescued the earth by killing

him. The fourth avatar is “Narashima”. Lord Vishnu took the form of half lion and half man. Hiranyakashipu was an uncontrollable king. He was known for his immense knowledge and strength. He controlled the people by using his kingship. When he was about to kill his own son, Lord Vishnu took the shape of half lion and half man to kill the most powerful man on earth. He rescued his son Prahalada from Hiranyakashipu. The fifth avatar is “Vamana”. In this avatar, Lord Vishnu took the form of dwarf. The king Bali ruled the universe by using his power. He controlled the people like Hiranyakashipu. No freedom had been given to them. Dwarf defeated Bali by gaining three worlds and he had sent him to the world where Bali would not return.

The sixth avatar is “Parashurama”. Lord Vishnu appeared with axe in a sage form. This avatar had taken to destroy the greediness of the warriors. They used their immense power and destroyed the innocents. Lord Vishnu took Parashurama form and killed the warriors. The seventh avatar is “Rama”. It is considered as the full matured human avatar of Lord Vishnu. He had taken the seventh avatar to kill Raavan. It is told that Raavan was the demons and he tortured all the people other than Srilanka. Rama used his wife as bait and killed Raavan. Some critics argue that the eighth avatar of Lord Vishnu is BalaRama and some mentions Krishna as eight avatar. Balarama is the brother of Krishna. In Sri Vaishnava lists, Balarama is placed at eight place where Buddha is removed. Krishna arrived to destroy the agony of Pancha pandavas. The next avatar of Lord Vishnu is “Buddha”. He was the man who preached the principles of Ahimsa against violence. The last avatar of Lord Vishnu is “Kalki”. It is said that Lord Shiva will take Kalki avatar at the end of Kali Yuga. It is believed that Lord Vishnu will appear in pure white horse with long blazing sword. He will be born when evil uncontrollably grow and it will indicate the beginning of Satya Yuga.

The ten avatars of Lord Vishnu are well connected with the concept of evolution. The statues, iconographies, temples, and etc prove that our ancestors had done enough research on the evolution long before because of that only they started to present the first avatar of Lord Vishnu as “Matya”. They present that the first avatar was in the form of fish. It proves that our ancestors studied well about evolution. They found that the beginning place of the organism was the ocean. So, they portrayed half human with half fish. The common similarities found in all avatars were destroying evil and rescuing the people from the demon like characters.

Lord Shiva is considered as one of the famous Hindu Gods. It is believed that he has taken numerable avatars and the nineteen are the well known avatars of Lord Shiva. The Gods have taken the avatars with purpose. It is believed that the Gods are reborn with human form to destroy evil.

The first avatar of Lord Shiva is “Piplaad”. He took the human form and reborn as the son of Dadhichi. Piplaad’s father left his house unnoticed. He came to know that his father left the house because of the effective of Shani. The Hindus believe that Lord Shani is the God who punishes the people for seven and half years. Piplaad understood that Shani would not hurt a boy who is below 16 years after a long struggle. It is said that a man has to worship Piplaad to reduce the effects of

“Shani dosha”. The second avatar of Lord Shiva is “Nandi”. Lord Shiva was reborn in the form of a bull. It is said Nandhi is the master of all human beings. Nandhi appears with four hands. One hand is holding the axe and second is holding antelope while other two hands joint together in a welcoming form.

The next avatar of Lord Shiva is “Veerabhadra”. It is believed that Veerabhadra avatar is the most fearsome avatar of Lord Shiva. He took this form when Goddess Sati jumped into the Yagna. He plucked his hair and placed on the ground. Veerabhadra and Rudra kali were born out of Lord Shiva’s hair. Veerabhadra killed the arrogant Daksha. The fourth avatar of Lord Shiva is “Bhairava”. This is considered to be another terrifying avatar of Lord Shiva. He had shown this avatar to destroy the superiority of Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu. Bhairava cut down the head of Brahma and proved his superiority over them.

“Ashwatthama” is the next avatar of Lord Shiva. He was born to Dronacharya. At the time, Dronacharya had been humiliated by the Pandavas and he had joint with Kaurava. Ashwatthama joined with Kaurava and killed the sons of Pandavas. The next avatar is “Sharabha”. Lord Shiva took the form of half bird and half lion to destroy the arrogance of Narashima who is the avatar of Lord Vishnu. The seventh avatar of Lord Shiva is “Grihapati”. In this avatar, Lord Shiva was born to Vishwanar. Grihapati came to know that he would die at the age of nine. He went to Kashi and got the blessings of Lord Shiva and overcome the death. The next avatar of Lord Shiva is “Durvasa”. It is said that Lord Shiva was born as Durvasa to maintain the disciplines in the universe.

“Hanuman” is the next avatar of Lord Shiva. It is believed that Lord Shiva took half monkey and human form to help Lord Vishnu. He helped to destroy the demon like character in the *Ramayanam*. “Rishabh” is the next avatar of Lord Shiva. This avatar is taken to kill the arrogant sons of Lord Vishnu. When Lord Vishnu was trying to avenge his sons, he understood that Lord Shiva took the avatar to teach him a lesson. The next avatar of Lord Shiva is “Yatinath”. Lord Shiva is taken this avatar to reunite Nala and Damayanti because in their previous births they were born as Aahuk and Aahuka. Unfortunately, Aahuk had been killed by a beast and Aahuka tried to kill herself after knowing the death of her husband. Lord Shiva appeared before her and gave a boon to the couple’s next life.

The twelfth avatar of Lord Shiva is “Krishna”. It is believed that he took this avatar to convey the important of Yagnas and religious rituals to the world. The next avatar of Lord Shiva is “Bhikshuvarya”. It is said that Lord Shiva took this form to save the people from the dangers. He was born as a beggar to help a poor boy. “Sureshwar” is the next avatar of Lord Shiva. He appeared in this avatar to test the devotion of Upamanyu on Lord Vishnu. Upamanyu proved himself as true and strong follower of Lord Vishnu. The fifteenth avatar of Lord Shiva is Keerat. It is believed that Lord Shiva took the form of a hunter to test Arjuna’s devotion. Lord Shiva blessed Arjuna with Pasupatiatra for his strong devotion on Him.

The next avatar of Lord Shiva is “Suntantarka”. It is believed that Lord Shiva took this avatar to marry Goddess Parvati. “Bramachari” is the next avatar of Lord Shiva. It is said that Lord Shiva took this avatar to test the devotion of Goddess Parvati. “Yakshehwar” is the next avatar of Lord Shiva. He took this avatar to destroy the arrogance of Gods who had got Amrit. The next avatar of Lord Shiva is “Avadhut”. This avatar is taken to destroy the arrogance of Lord Indra.

The people of Hinduism believe that Lord Vishnu have taken many avatars when people suffer too much in the world. If it is so, Dr. Ambedkar may be considered as one of the avatars of Lord Vishnu because Dr. Ambedkar rose against evil. He destroyed evil and fought for equality of the poor people. The seventh avatar of Lord Vishnu is considered to be the best avatar because Rama saved the people from the arrogance of Raavana. The character of Lord Raavana is described as evil because he had kidnapped Ram’s wife and killed innocents. He had been killed for kidnapping other man’s wife. According to the *Ramayana* evil raised its hand in the name of Raavan and Ram destroyed it. So, he is named as the seventh avatar of Lord Vishnu. If it is so, evil rose immensely during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the name of caste. The people were categorized by their birth status. They were categorized as: Bhramin, Khastrias, Vaishnava, Sudras and untouchables. It is said that Manu’s *smiriti* already had categorized the people into division and allotted the occupation to each groups. It is said that Manu’s *Smiriti* had been banned for its evil characteristic before 19<sup>th</sup> century but for some political reason it had been reused during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The political leaders of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries manipulated Manu’s *Smiriti* and represented it. They made the people to believe that God had divided them for the peace of the world. The political leaders on that time presented their relatives as higher and portrayed others as their inferiors. The education had been neglected to the majority of the people in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The people who had money and status in the society were allowed to get education. The poor people passed many generations without education. The political leaders of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries used the opportunity and categorized the people. The people who did not have education had been categorized as untouchables. The leaders of 20<sup>th</sup> century presented untouchables were born from Bhrama’s feet. It is the pathetic condition that the people who belong to untouchable category do not know who is Bhrama? What is his origin? Educated people convinced untouchables that Bhrama was the God who is creating the humans. The illiterate people believed literate people and blindly followed Bhrama as their God.

The high class people made use of untouchable’s illiteracy and ill treated them. Many men from untouchable category had been killed mercilessly for entering inside of the high and higher class people and many women of untouchable had been raped and killed. They tortured the innocents like Raavan and raped other men’s wives. Dr. Ambedkar took the form of Lord Vishnu to destroy evil caste system like Rama. He had been ill treated at many places like the hero of the Epics. Amish Tripathi’s Ram had been humiliated at many places. He is cursed for bringing bad



luck to their country like wise many people cursed Dr. Ambedkar for not following caste system. He tried his best to overcome the struggles and destroyed evil caste system in half. Dr. Ambedkar may be considered one of the avatars of Lord Vishnu because he destroyed evil and restored good in the society like the avatars of Lord Vishnu and Shiva. It is arguable that the avatars of Lord Vishnu destroyed evil in whole but it is not true because no one can destroy evil in the world. It always exists. Amish Tripathi interpreted the caste system in a different way. He argues that the status of a man is not to be categorized by his birth system but by his deeds and talents. The works of Amish Tripathi highly discussed about the caste system.

**Conclusion:** Therefore, Amish Tripathi's writings interpreted the avatars of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. No mythological writings present the sufferings of Lord Ram, Lord Shiva, and Hanuman. Amish Tripathi presents Lord Ram as an ordinary man. The struggles of Lord Ram and Hanuman teach the morality to the people. The Hindu people have been looking at Lord Ram and Hanuman as the Gods and it made a big gap between the Gods and people. The simple presentation of Gods like the ordinary men makes the people to believe the Gods as their ancestors. The readers of Amish Tripathi simply understand that the Gods were not the Supreme with the magical powers but they are our ancestors who lived on earth and struggled a lot like us. It induces the people to believe that the turmoil and struggles of the humans had existed long ago and it is our duty to overcome it. Some critics argue that Periyar and Dr. Ambedkar had fought for the people and removed evil caste system in half for the betterment of the poor people. They may be placed in the list of Lord Vishnu's avatars. Amish Tripathi interprets the present caste system in the best manner in his works. He exposed that the caste system that we are following are not the system exactly created by Lord Ram. The caste system had been misinterpreted by the political leader for the betterment of their people that suffered low class people.

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