

IMMORTAL INDIA

Amish is a 1974-born, IIM (Kolkata)-educated banker-turned-author. The success of his debut book, *The Immortals of Meluha* (Book 1 of the Shiva Trilogy), encouraged him to give up his career in financial services to focus on writing. Besides being an author, he is also an Indian-government diplomat, a host for TV documentaries, and a film producer.

Amish is passionate about history, mythology and philosophy, finding beauty and meaning in all world religions. His books have sold more than six million copies and have been translated into over twenty languages. His Shiva Trilogy is the fastest-selling and his Ram Chandra Series the second fastest-selling book series in Indian publishing history. You can connect with Amish here:

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‘Amish has a fine eye for detail and a compelling narrative style.’

– **Dr Shashi Tharoor**

(Member of Parliament and Author)

‘[Amish has] a deeply thoughtful mind with an unusual, original and fascinating view of the past.’

– **Shekhar Gupta**

(Senior Journalist and Columnist)

‘To understand the New India, you need to read Amish.’

– **Swapan Dasgupta**

(Member of Parliament and Senior Journalist)

‘Through all of Amish’s books flows a current of liberal, progressive ideology: about gender, about caste, about discrimination of any kind... He is the only Indian bestselling writer with true philosophical depth - his books are all backed by tremendous research and deep thought.’

– **Sandipan Deb**

(Senior Journalist and Editorial Director, Swarajya)

‘Amish’s influence goes beyond his books, his books go beyond literature, his literature is steeped in philosophy, which is anchored in bhakti, which powers his love for India.’

– **Gautam Chikermane**

(Senior Journalist and Author)

‘Amish is a literary phenomenon.’

– **Anil Dharker**

(Senior Journalist and Author)

IMMORTAL INDIA

YOUNG COUNTRY, TIMELESS CIVILISATION

Articles and Speeches by
AMISH



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This book is produced from independently certified FSC® paper to ensure responsible forest management.

To Bhavna Roy

My sister,
A gyan yogi, a philosopher,
A proud inheritor of Indian wisdom,
A seeker of knowledge from around the world,
One who has often lit my path,
And more importantly, walked with me

Om Namah Shivāya

The universe bows to Lord Shiva.
I bow to Lord Shiva.

Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gariyasi

Mother and Motherland are superior to heaven

—Lord Ram, in the Ramayan

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements xix

Introduction To Immortal India xxiii

RELIGION & MYTHOLOGY

LORD SHIVA: THE GOD OF CONTRADICTIONS 3

Being contradictory is His way. And therein lies the secret of the immense devotion He generates.

PLAYING IT BY THE RULES; LORD RAM'S PATH 7

Our task is not to judge our Gods. Our task is to learn from them. What can we learn from the story of Lord Ram?

HAPPILY RELIGIOUS & LIBERAL 11

Religious extremism will only be defeated by religious liberalism, not by ivory-tower, secular homilies from our elite.

INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE 15

It cannot be said that all religions are the same; we need to respect differences instead.

LIVING MYTHOLOGY 19

India is one of the few ancient cultures whose living mythology has endured with its soul intact. How did this happen?

UNBRIDLED SHAKTI 22

We can change the way society views women today, by reinterpreting deeply-held religious beliefs, rather than attacking those beliefs.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD	25
<i>God is a role model, He dwells among us; and our task is to learn.</i>	
RECASTING MYTHOLOGY	29
<i>I believe that our Gods existed. I believe that they were our ancestors. I believe their blood flows in our veins.</i>	
THE MASCULINE/FEMININE WAY & OTHER QUESTIONS	35
<i>A Masculine or Feminine way of life has nothing to do with men and women. It's about a way of life.</i>	
HOW THE SHIVA TRILOGY ENDED & OTHER QUESTIONS	52
<i>Maybe, sometime in the future, I'll release that alternative ending...</i>	

SOCIAL ISSUES

LGBT RIGHTS & SECTION 377	63
<i>It may appear astonishing today that ancient India had a liberal attitude towards non-mainstream sexual practices.</i>	
ON RELIGIOUS CONVERSIONS	67
<i>In all honesty, while there may be material gains from religious proselytisation, spiritually, it is almost always negative.</i>	
RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN INDIA	72
<i>Is India really a cauldron of religious violence? Not really. The data makes it very clear.</i>	

- ARGUING AMICABLY** **76**
Discusses the current trend of trial by media, the need to approach issues with a calm mind and for investigations to be concluded before pronouncing judgement.
- BANE OF CASTEISM** **80**
The present birth-based caste system is a blot on India and completely at odds with our ancient culture.
- CORRUPTION FAULT LINES** **84**
Were we inherently corrupt in the past? No. Are we inherently corrupt today? No. We are simply re-aligning our goal posts in times of change.
- REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT & THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE** **88**
The purpose of an election is to elect a government that is capable of governing. Not to create a mini-embodiment of every possible viewpoint in the country.
- ONE THING AT A TIME** **94**
The change in approach towards the concept of Time: of a competitive banker and a happy author.
- THE AGE OF MONEY** **96**
The most efficient currency of societal change today is money, and not violence. Some accept the rules of the age and prosper; others don't and suffer.
- THE ANCIENT INDIAN APPROACH TO CHARITY & INCLUSIVENESS** **101**
In the Indic approach, it is believed that the recipient of charity is actually doing a karmic favour to the person who gives charity.

THE VOICE OF THE RELIGIOUS LIBERALS 109

The tradition of modernising and localising myths has been an on-going process because in India, religiosity and liberalism always went hand in hand.

HISTORY

THE MYTH OF THE ARYAN INVASION THEORY 119

The Aryan Invasion Theory is a great piece of fiction concocted by Europeans.

YOUNG, INDIAN & INSOLENT 123

A rebellious and insolent India would be a precursor to a great India!

BRITISH BOMBAY, AAMCHI MUMBAI 127

The people of aamchi Mumbai have, to a large extent, cleaned up the karmic muck that the British had accumulated in these seven islands.

DIVIDE AND RULE LAWS IN MODERN INDIA 131

Explores the laws that still divide India today as the post-independence early Indian elite continued colonial British policies.

FORGIVE...DON'T FORGET HISTORY 135

How should a country deal with a painful past? Through denial or hatred? Or could there be a third option?

STATES VS CENTRE 139

Will India work better through centralisation or decentralisation?

MAY SHAKTI BE WITH YOU! 144

The youth of today are the children of the liberalisation era. They will make India proud one day.

VEDIC LEARNING 151

Our Vedic heritage belongs to everyone in the Indian subcontinent. We should celebrate and learn from it.

WAJID ALI SHAH: THE VIRTUOSO 155

Let us remember and honour this great son of India who kept a significant aspect of our culture alive at a terribly difficult time.

WHERE THE SPEECH IS WITHOUT FEAR... 159

Freedom of expression is, frankly, the most Indian of values; one that was betrayed by the First Amendment of 1951.

A CALM REBELLION 163

Oftentimes it's useful to keep calm and carefully pick the issues that require our rebellion and anger.

MUSINGS

WHY I WRITE 171

A personal account of my journey into authorship.

SCIENCE, SPIRITUALITY & MY SON, NEEL 177

When my son Neel helped me understand the spiritual significance of one of the fundamental forces of interaction in the universe.

THE THREE WISE WOMEN

179

*A description of three incidents that deeply impacted me.
Needless to say, all of them involved the women in my life.*

A PATRIOTIC MANIFESTO

183

*Why swadharma is as important as Rajya Dharma; why
personal purpose is as important as constructive patriotism.*

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This is my first non-fiction book. It is, essentially, a collection of my thoughts on various subjects, crystallised through articles that I wrote, speeches that I made, and debates that I participated in.

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India, my country, and the land of my karma. I am defined to a great degree by my Indian heritage. My thoughts, my values, my way of life, are moulded by the culture and the heritage of my land.

Neel, my son, my blessing. And in some aspects, my teacher; as I explain in an article in this book.

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And last, but certainly not the least, you, the reader. Thank you for all the support you have given to my fiction books. I am now inflicting my first non-fiction book upon you! I hope to receive your continued support and love.

INTRODUCTION TO IMMORTAL INDIA

Allama Iqbal had character flaws and made errors of judgement. Not least of which was his sectarian espousal of Pakistan, which played a role in poisoning communal relations in pre-independent India. But that does not take away from the fact that he was a sublime poet. And among his more brilliant lines were these:

*Yunan-o-Misr-o-Roma sab mit gaye jahan se
Ab tak magar hai baki naam-o-nishan hamara,
Kuchh baat hai ke hasti mit'ti nahin hamari
Sadiyon raha hai dushman daur-e-zaman hamara*

(Greek, Egyptians and Romans have all vanished
from this world,

But we are still here,

There must be something special in us

That we have not been erased from existence,

For the whole world has been against us for centuries)

Iqbal was right. The ancient Greek, Egyptian and Roman cultures are museum pieces today, their knowledge and philosophies appropriated by a Judeo-Christian Western world. The ancient cultures of the Central, South and North Americans, Celts, Nordics, Mesopotamians and many others are largely extinct. But ancient Indian culture, despite repeated massive attacks, both violent and intellectual, simply and stubbornly refuses to die. Perhaps, it's testimony to the fact that Indian culture

was engineered at the outset with equal doses of wisdom and flexibility to navigate changing times and still retain its identity.

Indian culture today—our practices, rituals, heroes, stories, philosophies, food habits and world view—is still largely based on millennia-old concepts, coming down from Vedic times and the Dharmic principles of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. It has been further enriched by the confluence of many influences over the last two millennia. Islam and Christianity may have come from the west, but they have been woven into the warp and weft of the culture of the Indian subcontinent very intricately. Through our history, we provided refuge to the oppressed from around the world; and therefore it is no surprise that Zoroastrianism and Judaism, among others, found a secure home here. We have rarely been nihilistic; we have almost always been accretive. Look at Sikhism, based as it is on our ancient Dharmic philosophies, infused with new reforms.

In this book, through my articles and speeches, I have tried to answer Iqbal's question. What is it that makes India special? What is it about our ancient culture that still animates how we live today? What can we learn from our ancestors? And equally importantly, in what way can we be critical of our ancestors?

Through all these questions and answers, I try to explain modern issues facing India, the way I see it. For we are a relatively young country at seventy years. But our nation has the soul of an age-old civilisation.

For most of human history, when our ancestors conducted the show, India was among the most powerful, wealthy, liberal and innovative lands on earth. We have had a few bad centuries. It happens. Many corruptions also seeped in, like the heinous caste system. It's time for us to learn from our ancestors, put our shoulder to the wheel, reform what needs reforming, build what needs building and make this country worthy of its history once again.

Having said all this, while I am conscious of the long road that we still have to travel as a country, and the need to question many things in India today, it does not take away from the fact that I am extremely proud to be Indian. There is no other place in the world I'd rather live. There's no other place in the world where I would like to die. And even in my next life, I'd like to be born right here once again.

Jai Hind. Glory to Mother India.

Religion & Mythology

LORD SHIVA: THE GOD OF CONTRADICTIONS

Lord Shiva was described by one of my younger readers as the Dude of the Gods. One may wonder, what makes Him so popular with the modern man and woman? He is, after all, an ascetic in a tiger skin skirt, who smears himself with ash, drinks bhang with His ghoulish friends in His free time, and dances in cremation ghats. Does this sound like a 'cool' God? It appears contradictory, right? But being contradictory is His way. And therein lies the secret behind the immense devotion He generates.

Allow me to digress a bit and bring to your notice a long dead English author, Charles Dickens; actually, a line from his book, *A Tale of Two Cities*: It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It might well have been written to succinctly describe our present world. We live in times of complex contradictions, which furthermore, are wrapped within conundrums! In some sense, once again, it can be said that these are the best as well as the worst of times. Women have far greater rights today than they have had in, well, millennia, and yet crimes against women are unabated. Religious liberalism is being forcefully championed in a world that is connected as never before; technology and curiosity has resulted in a healthy dialogue between different faiths and yet, religious fundamentalism is tearing the world apart.

Perhaps for the first time in human history, the poor