### 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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### - Dr Shashi Tharoor

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- Shekhar Gupta

(Senior Journalist and Columnist)

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— 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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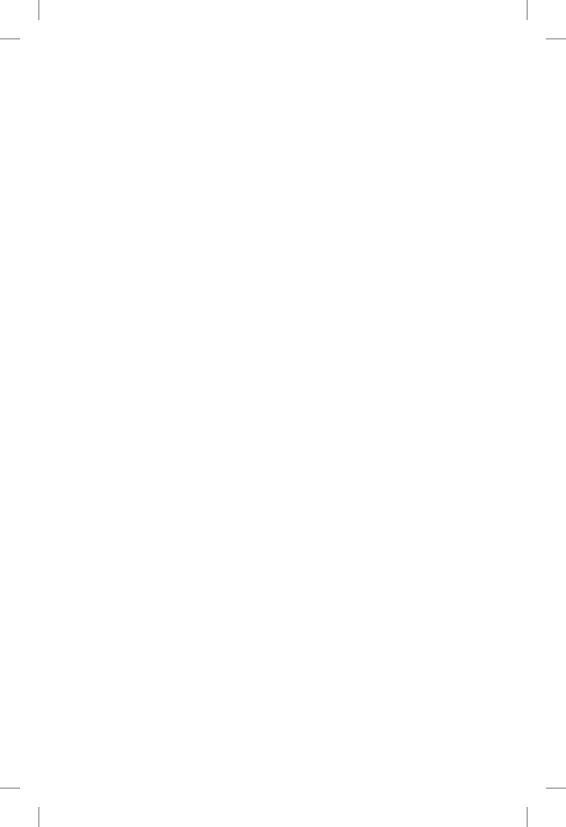
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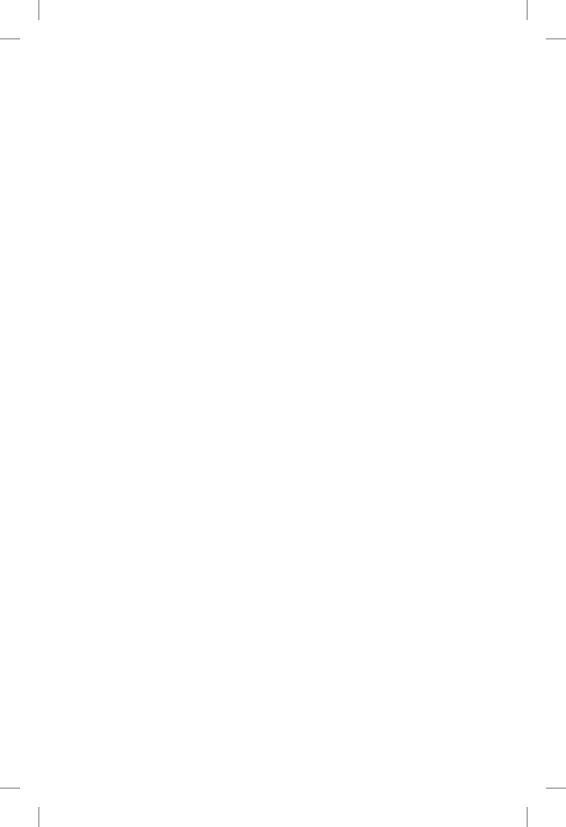
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### To Bhavna Roy

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



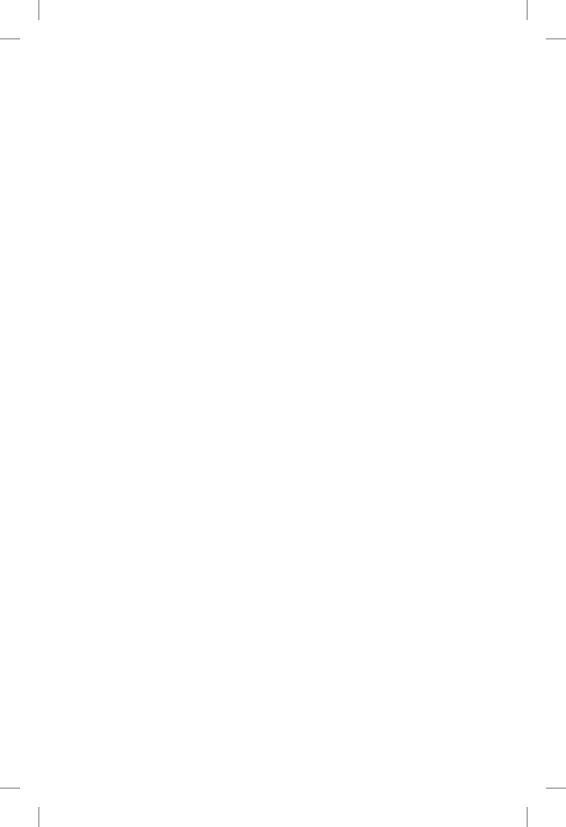
# Om Namah Shivāya The universe bows to Lord Shiva. I bow to Lord Shiva.



Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargadapi Gariyasi

Mother and Motherland are superior to heaven

—Lord Ram, in the Ramayan



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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  It cannot be said that all religions are the same; we need to respect differences instead.
LIVING MYTHOLOGY  India is one of the few ancient cultures whose living mythology has endured with its soul intact. How did this happen?
UNBRIDLED SHAKTI  We can change the way society views women today, by reinterpreting deeply-held religious beliefs, rather than

THE PURPOSE OF GOD  God is a role model, He dwells among us; and our task is to learn.			
RECASTING MYTHOLOGY  I believe that our Gods existed. I believe that they were our ancestors. I believe their blood flows in our veins.			

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### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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.

There are many who have helped cement, and at times temper, my thoughts. And there are others who have helped bring these thoughts on to public platforms. I'd like to acknowledge some of them.

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.

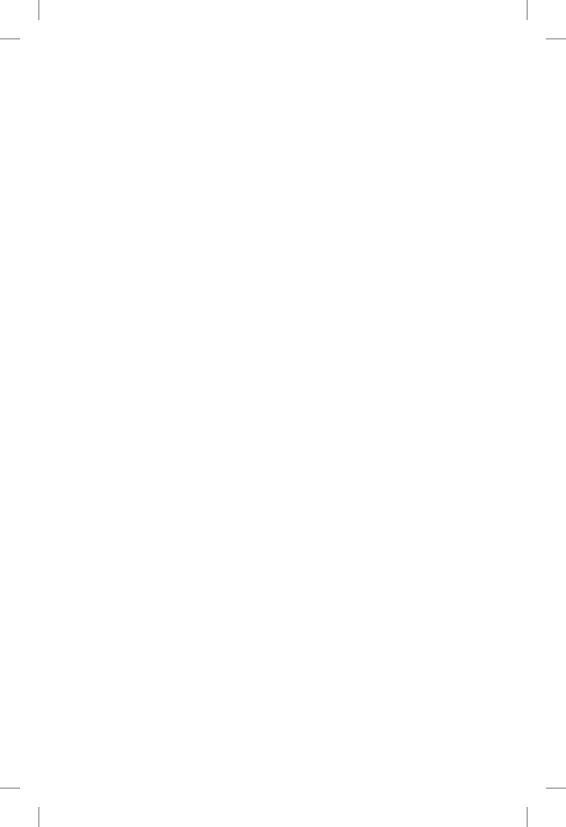
In this book, through my articles and speeches, I have tried to answer Iqbal's question. What is it that makes India special? What is it about our ancient culture that still animates how we live today? What can we learn from our ancestors? And equally importantly, in what way can we be critical of our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

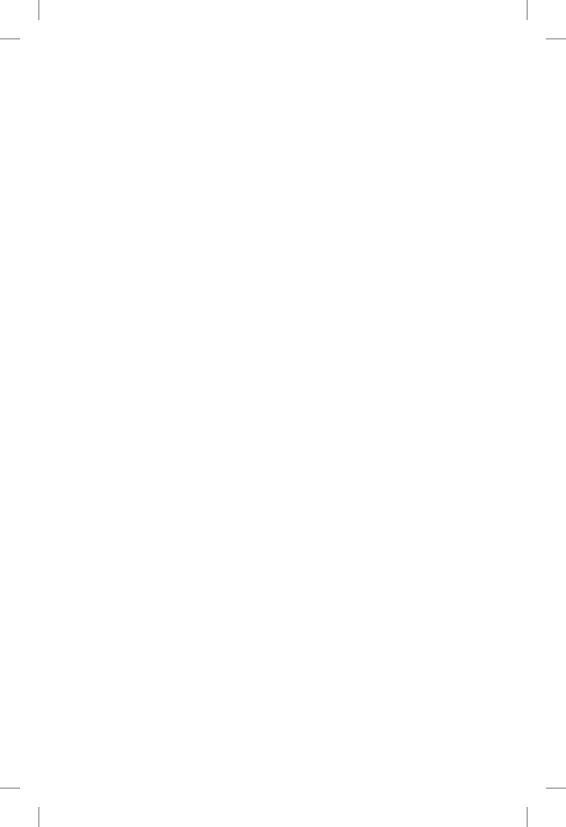
For most of human history, when our ancestors conducted the show, India was among the most powerful, wealthy, liberal and innovative lands on earth. We have had a few bad centuries. It happens. Many corruptions also seeped in, like the heinous caste system. It's time for us to learn from our ancestors, 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