Probing *The Immortals of Meluha* through the Prism of Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory

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Abstract

Motivation is a cognitive force that stimulates and energizes an individual to accomplish the goal or desire he/she wants to own. It is the energy inside every individual that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented psychological behaviours. In psychology, Motivation has branched into many well-substantiated theories, one such theory of motivation is Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory. It looks at the motivational level of an individual that drives an individual to work towards the goal. It is studied deliberately in various fields like management, classroom, workplace, and in psychology. Amish Tripathi, the modern Indian mythical writer has successfully engraved his name in the list of popular writers of the current era. The Immortals of Meluha is the first book of his "Shiva Trilogy". It proclaims the journey of a common man finally evolved as the destroyer of evil. This research paper studies the growth and achievement of the protagonist 'Shiva' through the lens of Maslow's Need Hierarchy theory and concludes with a note on the need for motivation on a larger basis that will enhance the individual to prove who they are.

Keywords: Leadership; Motivation; Need Hierarchy; Self-actualisation.

Introduction

Amish Tripathi is a much-feted contemporary Indian mythical writer. He is the beacon light and panacea for all the modern writers who are fed up with the cold welcome of mythical revival among readers. Amish propagated the powerful messages of Indian epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata in an innovative and pleasing manner that captured the readers' attention effectively. His "Shiva Trilogy" with millions of copies sold within a few months of its publication in 2010, is an exemplary start of his writing career after 14 years of his monotonous banking profession. It rejuvenated

his writing skills and stirred up his other literary pieces like Ram Chandra Series, Dharma- Decoding the Epics for a Meaningful Life, Immortal India, and Suhaldev- The King Who Saved India. His Ram Chandra Series successfully concluded with the recent publication of its fourth book War of Lanka (2022). The spiritual guru and author Deepak Chopra praises his literary expertise as "Amish's books, archetypal and stirring, unfold the deepest recesses of the soul as well as our collective consciousness." (qtd. in Tripathi III). The Aim and objective of the study is to avail Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory of motivation in Amish Tripathi's The Immortals of Meluha by a close reading of the text examining the presence of each hierarchical stage of Maslow in an elaborate manner. The study also extends by discussing the limitations of the select theory and emphasizes the crucial role of motivation that elevates a person to the fullest of what he can do and what he can become.

Motivation in Psychology

The Cambridge Dictionary defines the term 'motivation' as "enthusiasm for doing something" (Motivation). Every facet of human conduct depends on the process of motivation. The motivational condition affects the decision-making process of an individual by working on the way the target is approached and attained. It acts as a driving force within the human mind that encompasses the desire to pursue the goal. Numerous theorists of psychology approached motivation from different perspectives and propounded various theories notably, Herzberg's Motivation Hygiene Theory, McClelland's Need Theory, and Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory. Maslow in his book Motivation and Personality (1954) describes motivational stages by framing the hierarchy of needs that underlies all human behaviours enriched with the intrinsic growth of human cognition.

Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory

American clinical psychologist, Abraham Harold Maslow is a pioneer in constructing the foundation of 'humanistic psychology' of the 20th Century. His explication of the theory of hierarchy of needs in his paper A Theory of Human Motivation in 1943 presents the fundamental needs of humans motivated one after another towards the highest level of self-actualization. Maslow is upset with the expositions of pessimistic perspectives presented in theories like psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud and the Behavioural Theory of B.F.Skinner. To contradict this, Maslow expounds on the optimistic notions of an individual by emphasising the admirable qualities of human nature. His interest falls on human potential and

mental health. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is divided into two broad categories; Deficiency needs (D-needs) and Growth needs (G-needs). Deficiency needs are the lower-level demands to prevent negative emotions or outcomes. Growth needs occupy the tip of the pyramid with requirements that result from a desire to promote personally. The pyramid of Maslow involves five stage models of motivational needs such as; physiological needs, safety needs, love or belonging needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization. The first four are the basic lower-level needs categorised as Deficiency needs and the top-level of the pyramid is the Growth need. According to Maslow, All these Needs are activated and ascended in a hierarchical manner and it is easy to motivate a person by knowing his position in this hierarchy. "Needs lower down in the hierarchy must be satisfied before individuals can attend to needs higher up." (qtd in McLeod).

Maslow's theory doesn't stop with the fields in particular; it applies to various branches like education, workplace, nursing, and business. In accordance with Maslow, only by fulfilling the lower level needs an individual can move up to the next level. This level-up happens only when the motivational process is impelled within an individual. The accomplishment of one level satisfies the person and encourages him/her to ponder about the next level. "Once the core needs at a given level are satisfied, the next level in the hierarchy will emerge more strongly and become a driver of behaviours and thoughts." (qtd. in Channell). If in case, the person is a leader of a community or society, his/her cognitive growth also marks the progression of his crew, as his decision also motivates and comforts his/her group. "Your aim as a manager or leader should be to fulfill all the needs of your people, as this is the secret sauce for motivation and high performance." (qtd in Channell). In The Immortals of Meluha the growth and achievement of the character 'Shiva', the Tibetan tribal leader of the community called 'Gunas', and his satisfaction of each need intentionally uplifts his community to access each need at their best. This is clear with Gunas' belief in Shiva as a good leader, "They spoke in one voice. 'Your decision is our decision.'" (6).

Physiological Needs

According to Maslow, Physiological Needs also known as Survival Needs are the basic and metabolic needs in the hierarchy. "The needs that are usually taken as the starting point for motivation theory are the so-called physiological drives." (qtd. in Fadiman 15). As a clinical psychologist, Maslow has undergone two lines of research to demonstrate this Need. First is the concept of homeostasis and the next is the food preferential

choices. Homeostasis describes the body's innate attempts to keep the bloodstream in a steady condition of normalcy. The preferential choices cannot be listed out as they are based on specificity. The first stage focuses on basic needs such as the need for oxygen, food, sleep, water, and sensory satisfaction. In The Immortals of Meluha Shiva's Village is near the holy lake with good air, water and food facilities. The co-tribes fight continuously with them to conquer the place of good resources and basic needs required for living. "The huts in Shiva's village were luxurious compared to others in their land. A grown man could stand upright in them. The shelter could withstand the harsh mountain winds for nearly three years before surrendering to the elements." (4). The incident when Shiva misses his homeland when immigrates to the city of 'Meluha' proves his homeland is cosy and content. "Sleep was stealthily creeping in on him. But not as strongly as at home. He missed the rough cold floor of his hut. He missed the shrill winds of Mount Kailash, which broke through the most determined efforts to ignore them. He missed the comforting stench of his tiger skin." (18). Maslow explains this stage as the most important need of all. When this stage is unsatisfactory, the individual cannot divert his mind from this. Maslow explains it through the extreme need for food and 'hunger'. If a person is hungry he/she cannot think of other needs of love and esteem. "He or she dreams food, remembers food, thinks about food, emotes only about food, perceives only food, and wants only food." (qtd. in Fadiman 16-17). Shiva and Gunas successfully attain the first stage of Maslow however, they are insecure. Fear of unexpected danger at any time drives them to the next stage of safety and security.

Safety and Security Needs

Maslow elucidates this stage as "... safety needs (security; stability; dependency; protection; freedom from fear, anxiety, and chaos; need for structure, order, law, and limits; strength in the protector; and so on)." (qtd. in Fadiman 18). The state of uncertainty, threat, and lack of protection and security within a society or country will produce anxiety and depression among its citizens. Gunas felt insecure in their land because of their continuous fight with co-tribes called 'Prakratis'. Numerous lives were lost in every single battle. "The Gunas, despite being used to the brutality of regular battle, were shell-shocked by the viciousness of the attack on the women and children." (6). According to Maslow, 'safety and security' can be experienced only when society is peaceful. Maslow states that people who live in a good, orderly and stable society will feel secure enough from attacks and chaos. The need for safety drives Shiva and his community towards the city of 'Meluha' by accepting the immigrant invitation from

Meluhans. "Destiny? Chance of a better life?" (9). Shiva as a good leader guides his troops toward the Meluhan empire, with hope and security for him and his people. The Gunas respected his words as Shiva is a good leader of them all the time. "The Gunas were clear about their tradition. This respect for the chief was not just based on convention, it is also on Shiva's character. He had led the Gunas to their greatest military victories through his genius and sheer personal bravery." (6). Gunas after moving to the Meluhan empire felt more satisfied with both the physiological and safety needs. The Meluhan Empire is more advanced than their homeland, which Amish entitles as the 'Land of Pure Life' (Tripathi 25). After having obtained security and safety, the next Need emerges.

Love and Belonging

Maslow expounds that the satisfaction of safety needs boosts one to the next stage of love and belongingness. Once they are secured they never feel low on self-progression and strive for love and relationships. They are truly free of any safety needs that formerly served as active motivators. He is satiated and not hungry and also safe enough to come out of an endangered situation at this stage. In accordance with Maslow, the love needs include extending and receiving affection. The loss of friends and partners will make a person unhappy and eventually drive him to gain them again with new relationships and care. Shiva after feeling safe with himself and his community in the city of Meluha, experiences the feeling of love and being loved, on seeing the woman named 'Sati' in Meluha. His mind moves to the next need of love and belongingness. "Shiva stared at her like a parched piece of earth mesmerised by a passing rain cloud." (49). He starts loving her deeply and striving hard to receive the love back from her. His efforts then fall on impressing her and his contemplation over safety diminishes. "He had to meet her. He would pursue her to the end of the world if required. He would fight the entire human race to have her. His journey in this life was incomplete without her. His heart knew it. His soul knew it." (127).

Amish's Shiva experiences a sudden breakthrough from an ordinary tribe to an extraordinary saviour in the city of Meluha. He is represented by the title 'Neelkanth' and Meluhans accept him as their saviour. This is because of the magical blue throat obtained by Shiva, which is believed by Meluhans as the sign held by the destroyer of evil. "Ayurvati just pointed at Shiva's neck. Nandi looked up. The neck shone an eerie iridescent blue. With a cry that sounded like that of a long-caged animal just released from captivity, Nandi collapsed on his knees. 'My Lord! You Have come!

The Neelkanth has come!'" (24). Shiva felt discomfort because of the sudden worship of Meluhans towards him. He starts expecting a soul who treats him equally as a common man. There, Shiva develops a fruitful friendship with a scientist of Meluha called Brahaspati, Their friendship is loyal and unique. "Shiva noticed that Brahaspati was not submissive or excessively deferential on discovering that he was the Neelkanth. Just like Parvateshwar, Brahaspati called Shiva by his name and not 'My Lord'." (131). Brahaspati expressed true friendship with Shiva regardless of his fame and respect as Neelkanth. "'I'll do it for you,' whispered Brahaspati, emotions clouding his judgment. 'You will not lose her, my friend.'" (231). To Maslow "Attaining such a place will matter more than anything else in the world and he or she may even forget that once, when hunger was foremost, love seemed unreal, unnecessary, and unimportant. Now the pangs of loneliness, ostracism, rejection, friendlessness, and rootlessness are preeminent." (qtd. in Fadiman 20). The consummation of good friendship and the fondness towards his beloved stirs him to move to the next hierarchy.

Esteem Needs

Shiva received love back from Sati in the form of respect. This represents the Esteem he received from his love. "Emotions that had been dormant in her for too long rippled through her being as she saw Shiva's admiration. When she couldn't bear it any longer, she shut her eyes." (237). Maslow explains Esteem needs as "… desire for a stable, firmly based, usually high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others." (qtd. in Fadiman 21). He divides these needs into two subservient sets. Foremost is the aspiration for strength, achievement, confidence, and mastery. Subsequent is the impulse towards reputation; that is respect from other people, status, fame, recognition, dignity, and glory. Fulfilment of this need will bring self-confidence within the individual. The term 'respect' here, is not merely the magical or exaggerated praising of an individual, it is rather the 'esteem' that is deserved by him/ her through enriched competence and skill. Shiva proves himself a good leader leading the Meluhans in the right way and he also respects his true love, hence he deserves it. "The most stable and therefore most healthy self-esteem is based on deserved respect from others rather than on external fame or celebrity and unwarranted adulation." (qtd. in Fadiman 22). As Horney rightly puts it, "One's Real Self rather than out of the idealized pseudo-self." (qtd. in Fadiman 22). King Daksha of Meluha respects Shiva for his service as a righteous leader, "'Thank you, my Lord. Thank you for fighting for us. We know now that we have put our faith in the right

man.'" (278). "'Therein lies your humility, my Lord,' said Daksha. 'You truly are a worthy Neelkanth. In fact, you are a worthy Mahadev!'" (279). Parvateshwar, the head of the Meluhan armed forces, at first disrespects Shiva as the anonymous immigrant tribe. Later Shiva earns his respect, capturing him with his skill and virtuousness. "Parvateshwar smiled and folded his hands into a Namaste... He was beginning to respect Shiva. Earning Parvateshwar's esteem was a long journey that Shiva had only just begun." (244-245). Accomplishing this stage, Shiva navigates toward the peak of the hierarchy called 'Self-actualisation'.

Self-Actualisation Needs

Maslow believed that everyone has an innate drive to be their best selves. "What a man can be, he must be," (qtd in Cherry). The term 'Self-Actualisation' was first coined by Kurt Goldstein in 1939. To Maslow self-actualisation is, "... tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one idiosyncratically is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming." (qtd. in Fadiman 22). In The Immortals of Meluha, Shiva starts realising his potential as Neelkanth and takes the burden of Meluhan as his own. "We are good people,' raged Shiva. 'We are not scared chicken who should turn and flee! Those terrorists should be on the run. They should be the ones feeling the wrath of the Suryavanshis!'" (249). Here, Shiva represents 'We' as 'Meluhans', this proves his realization of what his responsibility is and comes up with the best exposure for himself. "'I am the Neelkanth!'. All the soldiers looked up mesmerised at the destroyer of evil. They were overjoyed to see him truly accept his destiny... Pure energy coursed through the huddled mass that stood in front of Shiva, straightening their spines and inspiring their souls." (250). Shiva doesn't merely accept the title 'Neelkanth' but he starts believing that, he is potential enough to be the Neelkanth.

Limitations

Maslow's theory of motivation is often appreciated for its uncomplicated understanding and usage. "... these needs are considered to be innate, universal, and will tend to powerfully influence the behaviours of the majority of human beings, it becomes a model that is both useful and applicable to an enormous range of settings." (Winter). In addition to that, there are also certain limitations to be noted within his postulation. Annie Marie Vivienne in the article entitled Why Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is Wrong presents the view of the social neuroscience researcher Matthew Lieberman's critical comment on Maslow's Hierarchy. "Matthew Lieber-

man argues that Maslow got it wrong. Food, shelter, and warmth are not the foundation of our human needs." (Vivienne). Lieberman in his book Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect claims social connections as the most basic necessity for existence. To him, a newborn baby cannot possibly acquire food, language, and creative abilities by himself/herself like the animals rather it relies on others for its existence. Similarly, the Artists reach the phase of self-actualisation without the disturbance of contemplation about other needs. This explains that it is not necessary to fulfill each need to realise the potential of the self. Based on the priority and situation the hierarchy may change from person to person. Maslow is also criticised for ethnocentric bias, as his study is based on only Americans. "The needs hierarchy is based on US cultural values which are basically individualistic. Outside the USA, this theory has found little support." (Dave). It is a theoretical study rather than empirical; hence it marks the lack of logic. It may also be the result of Maslow's personal experience of the lack of certain needs of hierarchy. He as the son of a Jewish family struggled a lot in facing the effects of racism and has fewer friends and surroundings. Having no companions to share and care for, he spent a lot of time in libraries reading books. Critics often comment on this as the reason behind the formulation of his hierarchy of Needs and everyone doesn't need to experience the same, as their upbringing and environment differ. This claims that there is no rigid sequence of progression rather it is based on the preference and importance of an individual. Even in The Immortals of Meluha, Shiva and Bhadra's friendship marks the beginning of the fiction that expresses the presence of love and belonging before all other Needs. Shiva is also respected by Gunas before he reaches the Need for self-esteem. These up-and-down reversals in the proposed hierarchy remain the prime limitation of the theory. Even though Maslow's theory of motivation is criticised and commented on for its dearth, it still has a place for its brilliant segregation of Needs.

Conclusion

Motivation is the primary drive needed for every individual to progress in his/her life. Less motivation proves that the person is feeling low about himself. Motivation increases the degree of efficiency and fosters a willingness to succeed. As Swami Vivekananda rightly says "Every work has got to pass through hundreds of difficulties before succeeding. Those that persevere will see the light, sooner or later." (Swami). Maslow's Need Hierarchy theory postulates the level of motivation escalating at each stage of the Need Hierarchy. Dr.A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in his Wings of Fire states "Abraham Maslow was the first person to moot the new psychology of self-actualisation at a conceptual level." (Kalam 172). The paper elucidates and proves the existence of each stage of Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory in the select text through the growth and achievement of the protagonist Shiva and highlights the power of motivation. Thus, Motivation can bring out the potentiality and self-actualisation of an individual that can turn an ordinary person into an extraordinary figure in the society.

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