

Conflicts Between Nature and Man as Socio-Cultural Being in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

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Abstract

Shiva trilogy series by Amish Tripathi constitutes a powerful critique of the ethical sordidness and hypocrisy of the Indian society through many themes, impressively in his works. Eco is short of ecology, which is concerned with the relationships between living organisms in their natural environment as well as their relationships with that environment. We could define that when it come to religion it is faith and when it come to science it is empirical evidence. In an essay, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," William Rueckert defines ecocriticism as "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world". In this context the possible relations between literature and nature are examined in terms of ecological concepts.

Most ecological work shares a common motivation, that is, the awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet's basic life support system. This awareness brings in us a desire to contribute to environmental restoration, and it is also a representative of literature. The term 'nature' is to express the standard of human values, the identification of the good with that which is 'natural' or 'according to nature'. The issues of environment pollution are addressed in this paper. The plot is set in 1900 BC but the situations which the author portrays are also the replica of the present state.

Keywords: Amish Tripathi, *Shiva Trilogy*, Ecology, Environmental Criticism, Culture, Science, Destruction of Somras.

The word *nature* comes via Old French from the Latin *natura* '(meaning conditions of birth, quality, character, natural order, and world). In Sanskrit it is called Prakrits from which the physical and mental universe evolved under the influence of Purusha. In the imaginative

literature of the eighteenth century nature meant the presentation and construction of the actual characters of people corresponding to reality. Since pre-Christian or the Vedic times nature has always been accorded the status of the Great Mother. In Christianity there is the implication that nature is created for human beings who are her' children. In the Vedas it is mentioned that there is a harmony between human beings and nature.

Interest in the study of nature writing and in reading literature with a focus on "green" issues grew through the 1980's and by the early 1990's ecocriticism has emerged as a recognizable discipline within the literature departments of the American Universities. Kathleen R. Wallace writes in *Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism* (2001) that beyond nature writing the contributors share the belief that ecocriticism offers a critical perspective that can enliven any literary and theoretical field. Environment need not only refer to —natural or —wilderness areas; environment also includes cultivated and built landscapes, and cultural interactions with those natural elements.

The culture of nations is governed by Laws of Nature which structure and administer people and nations. All the elements of the life and their inter-relationships leading to evolution are ruled by Natural Law. Rig Veda has dwelt upon various components of the ecosystem and their importance. "Rivers occasion widespread destruction if their coasts are damaged or destroyed and therefore trees standing on the coasts should not be cut off or uprooted". Vedic culture and Vedic scriptures reveal a clear concept about the earth's ecosystems and the necessity for maintaining their balance.

Atharva Veda has also warned not to dirty and add toxic substances into water bodies as it may lead to spread of diseases "he who dirties or spoils ponds, lakes, rivers, etc"., This is very relevant in the context of pollution of rivers and lakes and the resulting ecological diseases which the modern civilization is experiencing. The modern human civilization armed by the industrial weapon, made arrogant of his scientific knowledge and compelled by the ever increasing greed for material achievement is systematically encroaching into the living rights of all other life forms on earth by using, misusing, exploiting and over-exploiting the finite and scarce natural resources of earth.

This study aims at an analysis of the novel *Shiva Trilogy* so as to highlight Tripathi's portrayal of the environment in Tibet and Meluha which is the land of pure life. Shiva the tribal Leader of Gunas is the great admirer of nature and for him nature is the Almighty. He does not believe the symbolic gods and idol worship. Shiva and his tribal Gunas feel "oneness" with nature and they live at the foot of Mount Kailash, Tibet near Mansarovar Lake. Shiva and his tribal Gunas reach the outskirts of Srinagar in the valley of Kashmir after marching continuously for four weeks from their homeland Tibet. He is completely mesmerized by the snow capped

mountains, green meadows, deep valleys, winding rivers, huge lakes and the magnificent architecture in the Meluhan Empire. He is completely mesmerized to see the natural landscape of Kashmir:

The mighty Jhelum River, a roaring tigress in the mountain, slowed down to the beat of a languorous cow as she entered the valley. She caressed the heavenly land of Kashmir, meandering her way into the immense Dal Lake. Further down, she broke away from the lake, continuing her journey to the sea. The vast valley was covered by a lush green canvas of grass. On it was painted the masterpiece that was Kashmir. Rows upon rows of flowers arrayed all of God's colors, their brilliance broken only by the soaring Chinar trees, offering a majestic, yet warm Kashmir welcome. The melodious singing of the birds calmed the exhausted ears of Shiva's tribe, accustomed only to the rude howling of icy mountain winds. (10)

Shiva keenly observes the Meluhan tradition, culture, heritage, dress code and strict hygienic standard which promote nature. The powerful and stormy Jhelum River is known for its reverberant roar as it strikes down the lower Himalayas, but once it reaches the magnificent flat plains, it starts to flow smoothly. Waterway is one of the main public transport systems for Meluhans. Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi and Beas are five rivers that flow through the rich plain of Punjab. "Punjab literally means the land of the five rivers" (34). Amish Tripathi's description of the beauty of nature through Shiva and other characters obviously reveals his love for nature and eco consciousness.

The King Daksha who had been as an emperor of the Meluha. Meluhans are Suryavanshis; all it means is that we follow the solar calendar. We are the followers of the "path of the sun" (40). Like the Sun, they give benefits to others and they never expect anything from others. The Sun is an object of nature and it provides life to all the creatures. Nature offers its resources to man without expecting anything from him. The portrayal of Sun's help to the world reveals the eco consciousness of the writer.

Amish Tripathi has shown concern for the environment pollution and its effects. Environment pollution is one of the primary causes of diseases, health issues, etc. The issues of environmental pollution have been raised in the text. Ecocriticism regards nature as an autonomous, active entity of its own and so can be used as an important tool in interpreting literary texts that represent the relationship of human beings to their natural environment. As man moved from science to modern technology nature became the "Other". All that is not man came to be called as nature.

The manufacturing of various goods and health supplements produce lots of waste which is thrown in the water bodies. The contamination of water with harmful products causes serious

diseases like cancer, tuberculosis, plague, etc. Modern man must re-establish his broken link with nature and with life. He must again learn to invoke the energy and to recognize, as did the ancients in India centuries ago, that we can take from the earth and atmosphere only so much as one put back into them. It is true that any society urban or rural, industrial or scientifically advanced disposes of different kinds of waste products in the environment which affect the ecology or ecosystem. These pollutants have adverse effects on flora and fauna. Environment pollution is a continuous process that degrades the ecosystem. Industrial activities are the major source of air, water and soil pollution.

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. The universe is always trying to maintain the balance between good and evil. We must construct certain this that good is not enjoyed greatly. The universe will re-balance itself by creating evil to counteract good. The purpose of evil is to it balance against the Good. Always good leads to Evil. Many times the Good we create, leads to Evil that will destroy us.

Tripathi addresses this as a serious problem in *Shiva Trilogy*. Meluhans take Somras which makes them strong, healthy and young. Somras is the divine drink which leads to immortality. In the beginning Somras was good, because it was consumed a very small quantity. Somras reacts with the oxidants and absorbs them. Then, it expels the oxidants from the body in the form of sweat or urine. Therefore, no oxidants are left in the body because of Somras. But this Sweat and urine released from the body even after a person has drunk the Somras for years remains toxic. So you have to eject it from body and make sure that it does not affect anyone else. Because of this the Meluhan society is very hygiene conscious. The people of Meluha bathe twice a day. They wash clothes every day. There is ‘Great Public Bath’ for everyone. There are no special rooms for the aristocrats in the Public Bath. ‘All the ablutions are done in special rooms and underground drains then safely carry the waste out of the city’ (135). The waste is thrown in the river that flows through Swadeep or the land of Chandravanshis due to which they are inflicted with deadly diseases.

When Shiva asked to Kali about the Somras, he asked whether any Vayuputras approached them and about the evil creation. The Naga King Vasuki had approached them a few centuries ago. They gave a hint about the Somras and how it defeats the human beings life. Kali said to Shiva that, “They suddenly appeared out of nowhere, lugging huge hordes of gold, and offered to pay us an annual compensation. King Vasuki, rightly, refused to accept the compensation without an explanation” (Vayuputras 14).

Brahaspati, who gave a clear explanation about the evil drink to Shiva. He says,

We Meluhans choose to believe that the Saraswathi is dying because of some devious Chandravanshis conspiracy... It is also used to churn the crushed branches of the Sanjeevani tree. I have conducted many experiments to see if water from any other source can be used. (Vayuputras17).

The rivers serve as a dumping place for chemical plants, textile mills, distillers, hospitals and others. The waste which is thrown in the rivers is often toxic and non-biodegradable. This contaminated water when consumed by living beings causes diseases like cholera, hepatitis, dysentery, etc. Amish Tripathi raises this issue in the novel, *Saraswathi River is under threat*. It is slowly depleting as the Meluhans are using a lot of water and throwing toxic remains of Somras into the river. The Somras is a boon but it is also curse; it gives strength and vitality to Meluhans on the one hand but is causing diseases in the Chandravanshis and increasing the Naga population on the other.

If we think logically about the manufacturing and processing of Somras, we can understand how it transforms into something harmful. Somras which is manufactured in a secret location called Mount Mandar. 'The Somras powder is manufactured there and then distributed throughout the Meluhan Empire' (Meluha 107). The solution is also founded by the trained Brahmins who are seen as an administrator for the pollution.

There is advancement in technology, but it is leading to destruction. Development and destruction are the two sides of the same coin. Meluhan society though advanced yet is creating troubles for other societies. One strata of society have to suffer because of the other half. The water of Saraswathi River is an important ingredient for making Somras along with branches of Sanjeevani tree. But the manufacturing of Somras requires a lot of water.

When Somras was being made for just a few thousand, the amount of Saraswathi water used didn't matter. But when we started mass producing Somras for eight million people, the dynamics changed. The waters started getting depleted slowly by the giant manufacturing facility at Mount Mandar... It's a matter of time before the entire river is completely destroyed (Tripathi 17-18).

The Chandravanshis are the people who had the knowledge of Somras but did not take any special action for the production and by getting benefits from it. They were not able to come up in their life to prove themselves as powerful as Suryavanshis. Because they do not have enough Somras drink to consume. Their only source is Saraswathi River, because other river water does not work out for the manufacturing Somras drink. So they wanted to destroy it.

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. It is time now to stop its use, before the power of its Evil destroys us all. It has already caused tremendous damage, from the killing of the Saraswathi River to birth deformities to the diseases that plague some of our kingdom. For the sake of our descendants, for the sake of our world, we cannot use the Somras anymore". (Vayuputras119)

Shiva, who has been a saviour, tries to stop the usage of Somras. That "There would be one possible solution. The destruction of Mount Mandar. Without Mount Mandar, there would be no Somras. And with the Somras gone, all these problems would disappear too" (Vayuputras 24). The events in the narrative parodies people everywhere. The upper class people do not care even if their enjoyment brings destruction in the life of the common people. This attitude leads to anger and so helpless people are bound to protest just like Nagas and Brangas in the novel. The narrative suggests that the commoners could also make a better society including the oppressor as well as the oppressed people in the society.

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