



Ecocriticism and Unsustainable Development: Reinterpreting Somras in The Shiva Trilogy

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Abstract

The present research work explores Amish Tripathi's Shiva trilogy through the lens of Eco-critical analysis seeking to investigate the mythological and ecological ideas that are invested in the narrative of this author. Ecocriticism is a particular approach to literary studies that deals with the relationship between life and literature, examining how people treat the environment and how the environment treats them. Shiva trilogy represents a kind of eco-mythological narrative where nature is depicted as a living organism that acts and reacts, is mistreated and returns the favor. I think that this feature of Shiva trilogy is significant because it allows getting to know the characters from the inside, understanding their relationship with the environment, and evaluating how their actions affect natural life and their own lives. In my opinion, the most critical relationship between the characters of the trilogy and nature is the one between Somras (the elixir of life) and the environment. On the one hand, it has allowed all the people of Meluha to live and achieve prosperity, and on the other, it has poisoned all the rivers and made the tribes of Branga and Nagas sick. I believe that in Shiva trilogy Amish Tripathi represents Somras as an example of sustainable development, the introduction of which led to ecological imbalance and the deterioration of the state of the environment. I also think that the author raises important ecological questions about the consequences of development and the current relationship between humans and the environment. Therefore, I have decided to analyze Shiva trilogy in terms of ecocriticism to see if there are critical ecological issues that need to be discussed in the context of the narrative. Thus, the main subject of my research is the ecological sustainability of Somras in Shiva trilogy. My research will demonstrate that Amish Tripathi's Shiva trilogy reflects some vital ecological messages and critical questions about the impact of development on the

environment and humans. I think that the author's attention to the state of affairs and nature in general is quite consistent with the ecological ideas prevalent in ancient India.

Keywords: Mythology, Eco-criticism, Somras, Environmental Ethics, Mythology and Nature

Introduction

In today's world, the issue of environmental pollution is one of the most pressing and relevant ones. As the world undergoes rapid industrialization and technological advancement, the environment is becoming contaminated day by day on an unprecedented scale. This process involves the use of vast amounts of natural resources and leads to an increase in water, air and forest pollution. Ecocriticism is one of the most important concepts for examining the relationship between humans and their impact on the natural world. Ecocriticism is used for interpreting literature and analyzing its impact on the reader's attitude to the environment. It highlights the ways in which literature has been used to address a wide range of environmental issues. Ecocritical readings emphasize the value of the environment, which has been threatened by various human activities. Eco criticism was initially introduced to the world by William Rueckert in 1978 and later developed by Cheryll Glotfelty in her work *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996). "Ecocriticism" as defined by Cheryll Glotfelty refers to the study of literature and the environment. According to M.H. Abrams, ecocriticism examines "literature's relation to the biological and physical environment with a focus on the role of the humanities in understanding the impact of human life." Ecocriticism later becomes an interdisciplinary field, where the emphasis was placed on examining humans and nature, taking into account the fact that man is intrinsically related to the environment in terms of survival (he needs air, water and food), and at the same time, the environment is impacted by man's activity. Ecocriticism examines the connections between nature and literature at two levels – literal and figurative. Eco criticism is also similar to feminism or marxism in terms of its earth-centered approach to analyzing, interpreting and writing literature. Lawrence Buell was the first to propose that nature should be actively engaged in literature rather than being passively received. Eco criticism examines the impact of natural world on literature and the ways in which it influences the reader.

Ecology and mythology are two of the most prominent themes in the *Shiva Trilogy*. The way in which mythology and ecology are intertwined in this book is particularly fascinating, especially in regards to the environmental aspects depicted in the narrative. Indian tradition has always emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between the natural world and human existence. The natural world, according to Indian tradition, is sacred. Everything in nature possesses a soul, which is why people are encouraged to treat it with respect and avoid causing it any harm. The *Shiva Trilogy* depicts the relationship between nature and humans in a manner similar to Indian tradition, where the former is sacred and the latter is required to treat it accordingly. The portrayal of mythology as part of the Indian tradition in the *Shiva Trilogy* allows Tripathi to represent the environmental issues in a new light and encourage his readers to be

more mindful of nature and the way they interact with it. The Shiva Trilogy depicts a number of environmental issues, both literal and figurative. The main theme of the book revolves around the environmental impact of Somras, the elixir of life. While Somras has been responsible for the health and prosperity of Meluha's citizens, it has also led to the pollution of the rivers and other environmental hazards. According to the eco critical perspective applied to the book, the environment in the Shiva Trilogy appears to be an entity that is affected by man and has the ability to react to his actions. The eco critical analysis of this book will be conducted by examining the impact that different elements of the natural world have on the story's plot and characters.

The Shiva Trilogy by Amish Tripathi presents us with a fascinating account of Lord Shiva's life. Lord Shiva is the protagonist of the book and, in the course of the plot, he transforms from an ordinary human into god. The Shiva Trilogy consists of three parts: The Immortals of Meluha, The Secret of the Nagas, and The Oath of the Vayuputras. Each of the three books depicts various aspects of Lord Shiva's life. The Shiva Trilogy depicts numerous issues of social, religious, philosophical, and environmental nature. The theme of the environment is especially prominent in the narrative, as the natural world and its elements play a significant role in the story. Nature is presented as the source of life, which is supported by references to the River Goddess and the tree under which Shiva meditates. Another important element of the natural world depicted in the Shiva Trilogy is the river, which is a powerful and sacred entity in Indian traditions. One of the most prominent elements of the natural world in the Shiva Trilogy is the elixir of life, known as Somras. Somras symbolizes technological advancement and has played a significant role in the development of the Meluhan society. While Somras has made Meluhan people healthy, wealthy, and powerful, it has also led to the river pollution, the development of various diseases, and the deterioration of the natural environment.

The thesis of this paper is that Somras depicted in The Shiva Trilogy is a powerful symbol of unsustainable development and pollution, which have disastrous consequences for both people and the environment. The paper will attempt to demonstrate this by discussing the various aspects of the relationship between man and nature depicted in the Shiva Trilogy. This book reveals the ways in which man impacts nature, as well as the consequences of this impact. Moreover, it demonstrates the significance of preserving the ecological balance and the catastrophic outcome that imbalances lead to. By presenting the readers with a wide range of environmental issues and emphasizing the importance of maintaining the balance between the natural world and human-made structures, The Shiva Trilogy promotes the idea of eco-friendly living.

A literature review will follow, which will highlight the key points covered by this study. Some of the central ideas of the study are as follows: the Shiva Trilogy portrays a strong relationship between humans and the environment; the environment depicted in the book reacts to humans and changes with their behavior; the natural world and its elements have a powerful impact on people's lives; the Shiva Trilogy highlights the need for maintaining an ecological balance and the

importance of preserving the environment; the Somras represented in the book has both positive and negative effects, which can be seen as the outcomes of unsustainable development.

Literature review

The papers about The Shiva Trilogy that have appeared in the scholarly journals highlight the ecological significance of the nature depicted in the book. The paper “Reclaiming The Sacred: An Ecocritical Study Of Nature In Amish Tripathi’s Shiva Trilogy” the Sacred” examines the portrayal of nature in the Shiva Trilogy under the lens of ecocriticism. The paper discusses the role of the environment in the book and reveals the significance of various environmental issues raised in the narrative. The paper states that Somras depicted in the book is a symbol of technological advancement and progress; however, it also has a number of negative effects, such as causing the rivers to dry, polluting the environment, and deforming the people of Naga. The study concludes by saying that the novel reveals the consequences of anthropocentrism, which has led to the abuse of nature in Meluha.

The comparative study “Rewriting Myth, Rethinking Nature: Intersections of Myth and Environment in Amish Tripathi’s Shiva Trilogy and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s The Palace of Illusions” examines the relationship between mythological motifs and the themes of environment and ecology. It states that the Shiva Trilogy depicts a variety of environmental issues, including both ecological balance and disharmony. According to the paper, the Shiva Trilogy shows how human actions affect the environment and emphasizes the fact that human influence leads to serious environmental consequences. It also states that, in the Shiva Trilogy, the environment acts as an agent that responds to people’s actions. The paper “Reclaiming The Sacred: An Ecocritical Study Of Nature In Amish Tripathi’s Shiva Trilogy” discusses in detail the environmental impact of Somras depicted in the Shiva Trilogy. According to this study, Somras is portrayed as both a positive and a negative force. On the one hand, it keeps people healthy and young; on the other hand, it leads to the drying of rivers, pollution, and ecological imbalance. The study also states that in the Shiva Trilogy, nature is deeply intertwined with human life and that the abuse of nature leads to disharmony in human life as well. The paper concludes by saying that the novel depicts the negative impact that the Somras has on the environment and emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with nature.

The study “Indian Mythology and Ecocriticism” investigates the themes of Indian mythology and ecocriticism. He says that the environment has a special place in Indian mythology, where it is considered sacred and sacred. According to the paper, the Indian tradition encourages people to treat nature with care and compassion rather than viewing it as a resource that can be exploited for personal gain. The themes of Indian mythology depicted in the Shiva Trilogy demonstrate the need to preserve the environment and to avoid causing harm to it. This study also notes the fact that the Shiva Trilogy highlights the impact that humans have on the environment and the importance of sustaining an ecological balance.

The study “Eco Meluha : An Eco-critical Reading of Amish Tripathi’s The Immortals of Meluha” discusses the themes of ecology and philosophy in the first book of The Shiva Trilogy . The study examines the portrayal of nature in Meluha depicted in the novel. According to the paper, the environment in Meluha is deeply intertwined with human life, and the relationship between the two is complex. Eco Meluha argues that the natural world is a meaningful part of human existence and that human life cannot continue without nature. Moreover, according to the paper, in Meluha, nature has spiritual significance and serves as a source of great power. Eco Meluha also states that literature, as one of the most important aspects of human culture, reflects the values of human society and that the portrayal of the environment in literature has a profound impact on the way people perceive and treat it.

The paper “River Narrative in Amish Tripathi’s Shiva Trilogy: An Ecocritical Study” by Gunvant Suthar provides an in-depth analysis of the environmental exploitation depicted in the Shiva Trilogy . The study discusses the way in which the river in Shiva Trilogy has been portrayed as a victim of human greed. According to the paper, the river is the central part of the landscape and the habitat for many species of animals and plants. In Shiva Trilogy , the river has been used extensively by the people of Meluha for obtaining its resources. The large-scale utilization of this natural body of water has led to desertification, ecological imbalance, and biodiversity loss. The paper notes that the exploitation of the river depicted in the Shiva Trilogy reflects the current environmental issues that are related to the water pollution and the misuse of natural resources around the world. Moreover, according to Eco Meluha , the large-scale utilization of the river has led to the imbalance in Meluha as well. The production of Somras leads to the dumping of toxic waste in the river, which in turn causes the spread of various diseases among the citizens of Branga. According to the paper, the imbalance between humans and nature depicted in the Shiva Trilogy has resulted in social and ecological consequences as well. The people of Naga are depicted as deformed and disadvantaged, which may be the outcome of their consumption of Somras.

Theoretical Framework

Analysis

The narrative of The Shiva Trilogy by Amish Tripathi depicts strong Anthropocene tendencies due to the exploitation of the natural world, especially the river Saraswati. As explained in “River Narrative in Amish Tripathi’s Shiva Trilogy: An Ecocritical Study” by Gunvant Suthar, the river is no longer considered a “shared inheritance and sacred trust,” but rather a resource for producing Somras. Meluhan scientist Brahaspati’s explanation of the process of Somras manufacturing is highly revealing. “We have giant churning machines in a massive cavern at the base of this mountain. The Saraswati waters are led in here...the water is collected in an enormous pool...we affectionately call Sagar” (138).

The process of manufacturing Somras, as explained by Brahaspati, implies that the river is funneled into giant churning machines, where it is depleted to feed technology. Brahaspati the scientist explains to Shiva that “the Saraswati has already stopped reaching the Western Sea. It

now ends its journey in an inland delta, south of Rajasthan. The desertification of the land to the south of this delta is already complete. It's a matter of time before the entire river is completely destroyed. Can you imagine the impact on Meluha? On India" (The Oath of the Vayuputras, 17-18).

The process of depletion suggests that the natural world is used for the benefit of technology without regard for ecological balance, other societies, and nonhuman nature. The impact of this is evident in the fact that the river is no longer reaching the sea, leading to desertification and the river's destruction. Reflecting the environmental challenges of the modern world, this story sharply criticizes the ecological footprint of Meluhan society, which turned the source of life, the river, into an instrument of destruction. This text raises questions about ecological ethics and humanity's responsibility to nature. The destruction of rivers and biodiversity means that water is no longer a universal resource, but a tool for personal gain. Water, the source of life, has become a means of control and destruction. This is a serious environmental issue as it reflects current problems with water and other resources. This story suggests that the exploitation of one component of an ecosystem leads to the destruction of the entire system.

The apparent perfection of Meluhan society can be seen as a reflection of the same illusion. Society is presented as developed and ideal, but it is built on unstable foundations. The Meluhan's ignorance of the impact of their actions on the environment is deliberate, with Somra production leading to environmental disasters.

The illusion of the Meluhan perfection suggests that their arrogance keeps them from seeing the truth. The destruction of the environment, especially the river, is evident in the fact that the Somras production has harmful side effects for humans, animals, and the environment. The waste produced during the process is dumped in the rivers, which leads to water pollution. The impact of pollution is evident in the fact that the water is responsible for the Branga plagues. "The water is responsible for the plagues of Branga. That's why the Branga people are always sick" (The Oath of the Vayuputras, 14).

The pollution of the rivers leads to the spread of disease and, as a result, the death of many people. The narrative shows that the exploitation of nature leads to multiple consequences that affect not only the environment but humanity as a whole.

The destruction of the Saraswati seems to be a small price to pay for the Somras, but there is one more consequence of the Somras that is even more insidious.

'Which is?'

'The plague of Branga.'

'The plague of Branga?' asked a surprised Shiva. (Tripathi 18)

The conversation implies that the Somras not only leads to the destruction of the river but also to the plague of Branga, which suggests that the impact of the exploitation of natural resources is far greater than the apparent benefits.

The most evident human impact of the Somras is the fact that the Nagas are born with deformities. The narrative reveals that the deformed Nagas are the result of the Somras consumption. "And he was told that the Nagas were born with deformities as a result of the Somras. The Somras randomly has this impact on a few babies when in the womb, if the parents have been consuming it for a long period" (Oath of the vayuputras, 14). The Nagas represent the exploited and oppressed people who pay the price for the benefits enjoyed by the wealthy Meluhan society.

"...your cells keep dividing while remaining healthy. In most people, this continued division is regulated. But in a few, some cells lose control over their division process and keep growing at an exponential pace."

- Brahaspati, The Oath of the Vayuputras, p. 16

The impact of the Somras on the Nagas is a manifestation of the exploitation of the lower classes by the upper classes. The deformed Nagas are the result of their status as the exploited labor force, without whose work the Somras would not be produced.

At the same time, the Somras can be seen as a manifestation of the ideal of technological development and perfection. The production of Somras ensures the longevity and health of the Meluhan society, making it strong and powerful. It represents the ideal of technological advancement and an advanced civilization. However, as the narrative shows, the development of technology comes at the cost of the environment and humanity. The river, the source of life, is depleted to produce the Somras, which is then used to poison the rivers and cause disease and death. The waste produced during the manufacturing process leads to water pollution, which, in turn, leads to plagues. The impact of the Somras on the Nagas shows that the exploited lower classes pay for the wealth and power of the ruling elite with their lives. The narrative strongly criticizes the current state of technological development and its impact on the environment and humanity.

Brahaspati in The Oath of the Vayuputras explains the double effect of Somras:

"Any great invention has both positive and negative effects. As long as the positive outweighs the negative, one can safely continue to use it. The Somras created our way of life and has allowed us to live longer in healthy bodies. It has enabled great men to keep contributing towards the welfare of society, longer than was ever possible in the past."

(Tripathi 12)

The text does not reject the idea of development and technological advancement but suggests that it should be balanced and should not come at the expense of the environment and humanity. Lord Shiva's awareness of Somra's harmful influence and his decision to destroy the production system of Mount Mandal imply that unbalanced development will lead to disaster. This story suggests that humanity should strive to develop within reasonable limits.

Conclusion

In the Amish Tripathi Shiva trilogy Somra is shown as magical. This helps people live much younger, healthier and longer than they normally would. For the people of Meluha Somra is not something they use. It is the basis of their civilization showing that people can create a nearly perfect society. However as the story goes on it becomes clear that this perfection comes with a problem. The story quietly says that nothing is free.

It turns out that the price of Somra is very high. The Saraswati river, which was once very important is slowly dying because of waste from making Somra. The people of Blanga are always getting sick because of this.. Then there are the Nagas, who are born with deformities because their parents used Somra for a long time. The Nagas have to live on their own from everyone else. These are not problems. These are the things that happen because of a system that helps some people but hurts others. Through the eyes of Lord Shiva we start to understand all this. With the help of Brahaspati, Lord Shiva starts to see that what Meluha calls progress is actually not that great.

The world is a place where strong people get what they want and weak people suffer. This is a fact that leads to a decision in the Shiva trilogy: destroying the place where Somra is made on Mount Mandar. This decision is not made because of anger. It is made because it is the thing to do. I think the Shiva trilogy is a story. The Amish Tripathi Shiva trilogy says that if we keep developing without thinking about the Earth and people who are struggling it will not work out well for anyone. This is still a problem today.

We live in a world where companies care more about making money than keeping the Earth clean. Our rivers are getting polluted forests are being cut down. People are being forced to leave their homes all in the name of progress. It is hard to ignore how similar this is to the story of the Shiva trilogy. The Shiva trilogy does something. It takes a story and talks, about the environmental problems we are facing today. The Shiva trilogy reminds us that we need to balance what people want and what the Earth needs. This is not an idea.

- This is an very important truth.

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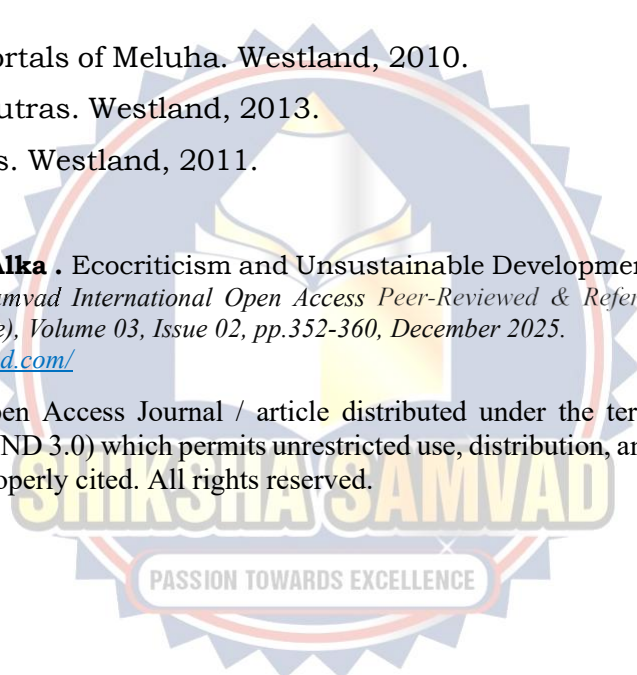
Cite this Article:

Kumari, Preeti, Singh, Dr. Alka . Ecocriticism and Unsustainable Development: Reinterpreting Somras in *The Shiva Trilogy*. *Shiksha Samvad International Open Access Peer-Reviewed & Refereed Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, ISSN: 2584-0983 (Online), Volume 03, Issue 02, pp.352-360, December 2025.

Journal URL: <https://shikshasamvad.com/>



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**Ecocriticism and Unsustainable Development:
Reinterpreting Somras in The Shiva Trilogy**

Published in 'Shiksha Samvad' Peer-Reviewed and Refereed
Research Journal and E-ISSN: 2584-0983(Online), Volume-03,
Issue-02, Month December 2025, Impact Factor-RPRI-3.87.

Dr. Neeraj Yadav
Editor-In-Chief

Dr. Lohans Kumar Kalyani
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DOI:- <https://doi.org/10.64880/shikshasamvad.v3i2.41>