

PERSPECTIVE

Ecocidal aspects of the environment in the Shiva trilogy: A perspective

Saroj Bala*, Rajiv R. Dwivedi

Abstract

Ecology and sustainability of the environment and the philosophy of conservation are essential parts of the mythology. Amish has raised this issue through his novels based on Hindu mythology. The paper attempts to highlight the ecocidal aspects of the environment and degradation caused by the elixir called Somras produced for attaining eternal youth and longevity in the *Shiva Trilogy* by Amish Tripathi. It focuses on how literature reflects people's crucial relation to nature, eventually leading to sustainable development. One of the grey sides of the so-called development is the fact that modern societies dispose of different types of pollutants in the air and water discarded by industries that harm flora and fauna. The paper aims to explore this critical problem with an ecocritical perspective, raised in the text through the concept of Somras in the region of the Sapt Sindhu in the *Shiva Trilogy*.

Keywords: Somras, Environment, Evil, Production, Consumption, Ecocide, Ecocriticism.

Introduction

The paper attempts to analyze environmental pollution, which is the burning problem of our time, with the help of ecocriticism in the context of the evil of Somras discussed in the *Shiva Trilogy*. Ecocriticism is the study of literature and ecology from an interdisciplinary point of view, where scholars/critics analyze/examine texts for environmental concerns. It is a new way of analyzing and interpreting literary texts, bringing new dimensions to literature and theoretical studies. It is a new platform for researchers to explore literature that connects the environment with literature. The ecocritical movement started in the late 19th century in the United States and spread gradually in other parts of the world. It began in the United Kingdom in the early nineties as Green Studies. The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) patronized researchers' and scholars' work in this field which was considered

marginalized. Different titles were given to this area of study like green culture, eco-poetics, and environmental literary criticism with fields like green studies, ecology, sustainable design, social ecology, biopolitics, environmental history, and environmentalism. Therefore, ecocriticism is a platform for literary and cultural scholars to investigate the global ecological crisis through the intersection of literature, culture, and the physical environment. It is the implementation of ecological principles and the study of literary works with a theoretical approach in the context of nature, culture, and the supernatural in nature. It explores the environment's expressions in literary texts and theoretical discourse for further analysis. In Indian writing in English, many authors have focused on the theme of ecocriticism in their works in different ways and expressed great concern for nature and natural objects. Environmental imagery has been used to express their characters' thoughts, desires, shortcomings, and conditions. Well-known Indian writer R.K. Narayan created the imaginative world of Malgudi, where village life is immersed in nature. The authors like Amitav Ghosh, R. K. Narayan, Manohar Malgonkar, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, and Anita Desai have also expressed their concerns about the environment. In fact, environmental well-being has always been a significant part of the human psyche, especially our ancient Indian eco-theological motifs focused on resources related to the environment so sacralization of the objects of nature has been a very common thing. Consequently, masses worshipped the Sun, the Moon, planets, rivers, plants, etc. as deities.

¹Department of Humanities, Delhi Technological University, New Delhi, Delhi, India

***Corresponding Author:** Saroj Bala, Department of Humanities, Delhi Technological University, New Delhi, Delhi, India, E-Mail: sarobala@dtu.ac.in

How to cite this article: Bala S, Dwivedi RR. (2023). Ecocidal aspects of the environment in the Shiva trilogy: A perspective. *The Scientific Temper*, 14(1):1-7

Doi: 10.58414/SCIENTIFICTEMPER.2023.14.1.01

Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None.

Our current environmental challenges are largely due to contemporary ways of thinking and lifestyle where nature and humans are opposite to each other. The hostility towards nature results in experiments that harm the natural cycle and lead to natural catastrophes. According to Indian tradition, the entire universe is a significant expression of the divine order in which the earth is like a goddess who nourishes and sustains all creatures, and rivers are considered sacred and worshipped. Moreover, the issues of overconsumption, pollution, or desertification are not specified in the ancient texts which denotes the absence of such calamities in those days. This healthy ecological ideology saved our environment from exploitation but with the passage of time, foreign influences deteriorated the situation, and misuse of nature started in full swing. Today we are facing pollution of all kinds and the world is facing climate change and ecocide due to global warming caused by many factors. Recently environmental consciousness has become popular in India and the West. Consequently, ecocriticism has proliferated into a highly diverse field consisting of a wide variety of literary genres and cultural and literary theories influenced by the social and natural sciences. In other words, ecocriticism is the study of literature and ecology from an interdisciplinary point of view, where scholars/critics analyze/examine texts for environmental concerns. Other than scientists and nature lovers, contemporary literature is also raising these environmental concerns with prominence. In the *Shiva Trilogy*, the myth of Shiva is used as a metaphor for a present-day society where the degradation of the environment is increasing every moment despite the measures taken by the government and private organizations. Ritika Paul (2017) observes in her paper about the Amish's first book, *The Immortals of Meluha*:

"AMISH TRIPATHI RAISES THIS ISSUE IN THE NOVEL. SARASWATI 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" (Paul, 2017, P. 426).

Amish has documented the ecological implications of the divine drink called Somras produced by the Meluhan kingdom by using Saraswati water. The eternal youth and longevity given by the elixir Somras not only spoil the environment but also stands for the political power of Meluha. It becomes a habit for them to consume it without any concern for the environment. The paper aims to prove the relevance of saving the environment for the greater good of humankind by discussing the issue of Somras production from the larger perspective of ecocriticism.

Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm (1996) explore the relationship between literature and the physical environment in their *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in*

Literary Ecology and discuss literary ecology that reflects and influences our interactions with the natural world. Nayar (2010) starts the chapter on ecocriticism by saying "We live in a world increasingly lost to pollution, contamination, and industry-sponsored bio-disaster. It is now a truism to say that mankind is efficiently committing ecocide, making the planet inhospitable for the life of any kind" (Nayar, 2010, P. 328-329). He further argues that

"ECOCRITICISM BELIEVES THAT LITERARY, VISUAL, AND OTHER REPRESENTATIONS OF NATURE ARE VERY MUCH TO DO WITH AN AGE'S VIEWS AND TREATMENT OF NATURE. FURTHER, IT SEEKS LINKS BETWEEN LITERARY STUDIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM, BETWEEN HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE. IT APPROPRIATES THE RHETORIC OF ENVIRONMENTALISM WHILE LOOKING AT THE EFFECTS SUCH DISCOURSES HAVE ON THE CULTURE" (Nayar, 2010, P. 330).

In the Indian culture, respect for nature and the environment is embedded so the birds, animals, trees, and geographical entities are worshipped and preserved. For example, Lord Vishnu took the form of a fish in his Matsya avatar. He took the form of a boar (Varaha avatar) in yet another avatar. As the most environmentally conscious religion Hinduism conserves the environment by saving trees and other objects of nature. Nature in Jainism is very unique as it focuses on five main elements of nature; *Prithvi* (land, soil, stones, etc), *Jal* (Water resources including clouds), *Agni* (Fire), *Vayu* (Air), and *Aakash* (Sky) as living creatures/living beings. These five types of elements form five kinds of beings: vegetation, trees and plants, fungi, and animals. This concept of Jainism restricts its followers from harming any creature and eventually leads to limited consumption and help in protecting the environment. There is a hierarchy of needs in Christianity. It starts with light, created first, then sky and water, dry land, vegetation and plants, sea creatures, land creatures, and finally, humankind. Humankind as a part of creation is dependent on all of the rest of creation, light is not enough for humans, just dry land, just vegetation, plants, or just sea are not enough, and just land animals are not enough. All of these are required for sustenance. The underlying premise behind humans' stewardship over Eden is that humans depend on the whole ecosystem for survival. Roger Gottlieb (2006) states that "What a particular religion says and what that religion's followers actually do are two different things," and that is why "most people, most of the time, go along with whatever is being done by everyone else and so with little concern beyond their family, neighborhood, or village" (Gottlieb, 2006, P. 9). In the Hindu religion, most of the practices are associated with the environment/nature. From worship to common daily habits and activities, human and physical

nature are interlinked. Objects of nature/deities are also associated with human nature and physical nature in some way or the other. The Hindu God Shiva is considered the greatest environmentalist of the universe as he lived close to nature and avoided the material world of artificial comforts. His philosophy of life and lifestyle exemplify deep respect for physical and human nature. The hero of the *Shiva Trilogy* also fights for the safety and well-being of people and nature by crusading against the power-wielders who are obsessed with greed and selfishness. His character is based on the mythological character of Lord Shiva. Still, the portrayal is quite different for accommodating current issues like environmental protection, discrimination based on physical features and superstitions, parenting problems, issues of immortality and longevity, and equal rights of citizens.

Gottlieb (2006) observes in the abstract of his article *Introduction: Religion and ecology-What is the connection and why does it matter* in the oxford handbook of religion and ecology, "Theologians from every religious tradition—along with dozens of non-denominational spiritual writers—have confronted religions' attitudes toward nature and complicity in the environmental crisis. This confrontation has given rise to vital new theologies based on the recovery of marginalized elements of tradition, profound criticisms of the past, and new visions of God, the sacred, the earth, and human beings" (Gottlieb, 2006, P.16).

The contemporization of current problems in literature gets the attention of the critics and general readers as the issues and solutions professed in the works of Amish Tripathi pertaining to the environment are readily identifiable with the modern-day phenomena of the same. He addresses environmental concerns, terrorism, and ethnonationalism in the fictitious story of Shiva's adventures. The citizens of Meluha consume Somras, a medicinal drink that ensures disease-free eternal youth and longevity, which they perceive will also lead to immortality. These immortal citizens of Meluha do not realize that its overconsumption and production are causing environmental hazards in the form of deformities, diseases, and unusual deaths among non-consumers of Somras. The suffering of the Branga people, the depletion of the river Saraswati and physical deformities in children who are stigmatized as Nagas are directly associated with the consumption of the Somras. Shiva, the Neelkanth who is regarded as the legendary savior, discovers that the terrorism of Nagas, the ill health of Branga children, and attacks of Chandravanshis are related to the attachment of Meluhans to the evil of Somras. Eventually, he decides to fight with the forces who favor this evil so that the Sapt Sindhu region can be saved from the impending doom of ecological disaster.

The two rival kingdoms Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis consider each other evil due to their differences in culture, principles, and ownership of Somras production facilities.

The legend about the emergence of Neelkanth as a savior who will obliterate evil is common to both kingdoms. Shiva's disillusionment after winning the war over Chandravanshis breaks his heart as he understands that they are not evil and they are also waiting for the Neelkanth to arrive and save them from the evil Suryavanshis. Gradually Shiva realizes that his task is not only to recognize the evil but to get people to give up their attachment to the evil. The central concern of this power struggle is the Somras which is the cause of the insecurity of Chandravanshis. Daksha's elixir of immortality, Somras turns out to be evil as its overuse leads to environmental pollution, diseases, and a low birth rate in Meluha. Lord Bhrigu, the great Maharishi, does not realize the evil of Somras and supports the Meluhan king, Daksha in its manufacturing. He calls Somras the greatest invention of their time for the magical/medicinal properties in providing youthfulness minus diseases and longevity leading to immortality. He also provides divine weapons to destroy the convoy of Shiva, whom he suspects to be a fraud Neelkanth and a barbarian. Like Suryavanshis, Nagas are also very comfortable in their cultural setup as they don't allow anyone to enter Panchawati where they reside in seclusion in the lap of nature. They help by providing medicines prepared with herbs to people in distress from different regions of Branga, Swadeepans, and Meluhans. Chandravanshis/Swadeepans feel that their principles give liberty and opportunity to everyone to enjoy the fruits of labor and pleasure. On the other hand, Suryavanshis claim to live life according to the laws made by lord Rama for a peaceful society based on truth, honor, and Dharma. The pride in the rule of law prevailing in Meluha is deeply ingrained in the psyche of the citizens, whose pride in having Saraswati water and Somras is unmistakable. Although overconsumption of the drink has turned it into an evil that needs to be destroyed, their attachment to this is rather surprising. The discourse of ecocide prevalent across the globe in the present time is detailed by the use of Somras which produces toxic wastes but Meluhans take this drink as it reacts with the oxidants and absorbs them thereby making them youthful and disease free as a result.

"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 THE BODY AND MAKE SURE THAT IT DOES NOT AFFECT ANYONE ELSE." (Amish, 2010, P.137)

This toxic waste is released into the river, which flows through other regions of the Sapt Sindhu causing deadly diseases in Branga and Swadeep by consumption of polluted water. Even Meluhans have Naga babies with physical deformities due to the intake of the Somras. Although they take baths twice daily and wash clothes daily, they cannot

save themselves from its harmful effects. Suryavanshis are unaware of the long-term harmful effects of Somras, but they are careful about their daily hygiene. Chandrvanshis attacked Suryavanshis so that they can get hold of more Somras by having Saraswati water which is the essential ingredient in the manufacturing of the Somras. The evil designs of king Daksha for overpowering Swadeep make matters even worse as he blames Chandrvanshis for the attack on mount Mandar where the main manufacturing unit of Somras existed. Despite having two Naga children in his own family King Daksha doesn't plan to stop the consumption of Somras as for him, his own welfare and political power are much more significant than the environmental issues. He accepts the death of citizens and the annihilation of his capital Devgiri but does not try to stop the production of the Somras. One party's insecurity propels the other to the brink of erasure to prove its superiority. The basic human ambition is to win over others and this basic instinct is reflected in the *Shiva Trilogy* through the cultural clash between Meluha and other states of the Sapt Sindhu region which causes disputes among them. Saraswati water required in the manufacturing of Somras is the reason for the enmity between Swadeep and Meluha. River Saraswati flows through Meluha so all Meluhans are able to consume Somras but in Swadeep only a few privileged people can consume the nectar of immortality. Meluhan authorities are not aware of the harmful effects of the toxic wastes released by the consumption of the Somras so they take no action in this regard.

After the arrival of Neelkanth, Daksha tries to get hold of the weaker provinces of the Sapt Sindhu, and 'The rise of ethnonationalism in Meluha is a cultural and social impact of Somras. Therefore, Shiva's struggle against the Somras is multidimensional as it involves opposition to the social, cultural, and political forces generated by Somras.' (Paul Sandip 2020, p. 3). For Swadeepans, the Meluhans and their ways are evil, and vice versa. Capt. Nandi explains to Shiva that.

"THE CHANDRAVANSHIS ARE CORRUPT AND DISGUSTING PEOPLE. NO MORALS, NO ETHICS. THEY ARE THE SOURCE OF ALL OUR PROBLEMS." (Amish, 2010, P. 102).

The Cultural imperialism of the Suryavanshi Kingdom of Meluha over small regions of the Sapt Sindhu is also due to the superiority of having means of production and distribution of Somras. It mirrors contemporary society where powerful nations overpower the weaker nations and impose their culture. In order to find the legendary savior, king Daksha sends emissaries to different regions which are outside the territory of Meluha. In this search for the savior (Neelkanth), he invites tribals living on the periphery of his kingdom as the prophecy claims that the savior will be from outside Meluha. The protagonist Shiva is a simple tribal chief of the Guna tribe living on the banks of Mansarovar Lake

far away from Meluha. He is a worried leader who wants to protect his tribesmen from the attacks of Yakhya, the leader of another tribe who wants to win over the prime land next to lake Mansarovar. Shiva receives an offer to migrate to the neighboring kingdom Meluha which he accepts for the sake of the safety and security of his tribe. The power politics played over the use of this elixir is also a cause for concern for Shiva as Chandrvanshis attack Suryavanshis so that they can get hold of more Somras by having Saraswati water which is the essential ingredient in the manufacturing of the Somras. The evil designs of king Daksha for overpowering Swadeep make matters even worse as he blames Chandrvanshis for the attack on mount Mandar where the main manufacturing unit of Somras existed.

Materials and Methods

The critical analysis of the three texts of the *Shiva Trilogy*:

1. THE IMMORTALS OF MELUHA (ISBN 978- 93-80658-74-2)
2. THE SECRET OF THE NAGAS (ISBN 978-93- 8065-879-7)
3. THE OATH OF THE VAYUPUTRAS (ISBN 9789382618348)

The methodology for the present study consists of a close reading of the text for a reinterpretation of environmental issues. The theory of ecocriticism is applied to analyze the text, characters, and ideologies. The methodology adopted in the paper involves a comprehensive study of the ecocritical ramifications of the environment in the text which is simultaneously placed within the sociocultural and environmental contexts to understand the ecocritical perspective of the author. Along with textual analysis of the main text, parallels are drawn from the contemporary degradation of the environment due to various factors. Since it is a qualitative study, data was not collected and analyzed.

Results

Ecocriticism engages with the cause of the ecosystem and expressions of the theory are manifested in fine arts, literature, and media. Buell (1995) defines ecocriticism in his book *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* as "the environment-oriented study of literature and the arts more generally, and to the theories that underlie such critical practice" (Buell, 1995, P.138). The theory gives an admonitory caution to humankind that the misuse of natural resources over time will lead to an ecological disaster in the near future. The basic human ambition is to win over others and this basic instinct is reflected in the *Shiva Trilogy* through the cultural clash between Meluha and other states of the Sapt Sindhu region which causes disputes among them. Saraswati water which is required in the manufacturing of Somras, is the real issue between Swadeep and Meluha. River Saraswati flows through Meluha so all Meluhans are able to consume Somras but in Swadeep, only a few privileged people can consume it. Meluhan authorities are not aware of the harmful effects of the toxic wastes released by the

consumption of the Somras so they take no action in this regard. One party's insecurity propels the other to the brink of erasure to prove its superiority.

After the arrival of Neelkanth, Daksha tries to get hold of the weaker provinces of the Sapt Sindhu, and 'The rise of ethnonationalism in Meluha is a cultural and social impact of Somras. Therefore, Shiva's struggle against the Somras is multidimensional as it involves opposition to the social, cultural, and political forces generated by Somras.' (Paul Sandip 2020, P. 3). For Swadeepans, the Meluhans and their ways are evil, and vice versa. Capt. Nandi explains to Shiva that:

"THE CHANDRAVANSHIS ARE CORRUPT AND DISGUSTING PEOPLE. NO MORALS, NO ETHICS. THEY ARE THE SOURCE OF ALL OUR PROBLEMS." (Amish, 2010, P. 102).

The Chandravanshis stay at the periphery and continuously try to penetrate the boundary to invade the powerful Meluhan kingdom for the acquisition of medicine, Somras, and other things. According to Meluhans, Chandravanshis have low standards only because they do not have the domination over Somras production facility and they don't follow the Meluhan rules and codes. In modern society also people are not leaving their bad habits of misusing natural sources, cutting trees, and releasing effluents in the rivers. Notwithstanding the general apathy of the people regarding the environment Ecological critics are giving alarms time and again for the impending doom in the form of natural disasters but a healthy environment seems to be a distant dream. Coronavirus has alerted and reminded us to be environment friendly but people, in general, become oblivious of the lessons learnt in the past. In this context, Gupta (2021) claims that "When nature is viewed as a profane entity consisting merely of a stockpile of resources that are meant for human exploitation, humans will be demotivated from properly caring for the earth and acting for its long-term flourishing" (Gupta, 2021, P. 9). Further, he argues, that "In addition to providing eco-theological concepts from textual frameworks, Hindu thought also contains some practical strategies to combat the ecological crises. For instance, through his ethical and socio-economic thought, Gandhi provided the basis for a model of environmental ethics that offers certain pragmatic solutions for the earth's ecological problems" (Gupta, 2021, P.12).

The global environmental movements leading to the emergence of theoretical perspectives such as ecocriticism help us understand the gravity of the situation in our current time. According to Nayar (2009), "Ecocriticism focuses on the material contexts of industrialization, development, pollution, and ecocide while developing a frame for reading" (Nayar, 2009, P. 329). The close connection between literature and place draws a healthy environmental consciousness

which brings a revolutionary change in the thought process of the readers and critics.

Karthic & Immanuel (2018) argue in their paper on *Deformed bodies and Posthuman Alterity: A Foucauldian Critique of Social Constructions in The Immortals of Meluha by Amish*: "We perceive the novel as a satire on the contemporary institutions and social constructions" (Karthic & Immanuel, 2018, P. 207).

Despite Naga's grudges against people who hated them for their physical deformities, they try to save lives by supplying medicines. Sati was also provided medicine by Ganesh secretly when she was expecting. Brangas were also obliged by them to help in saving their children's lives.

"Bhagirath looked at the scene once again, and this was when the real inference dawned on him. He was stunned. The only children crying were the ones who did not have blood in their mouths. Their limbs twisted in painful agony as if a hideous force squeezed their tiny bodies. The moment some of the peacock blood was poured into a baby's mouth, the child quietened down" (Amish, 2011, P. 86).

Not only diseases but the sacrifice of innocent animals/peacocks were also caused by the Somras. The toxic water produced by the Somras and consumed by Brangas causes peculiar ailments which could be reduced by peacock blood only. Shiva, the protagonist, is informed about the evil of Somras:

"When Somras was being made for just a few thousand, the amount of Saraswati water used didn't matter. But the dynamics changed when we started mass-producing Somras for eight million people. The waters started getting depleted slowly by the giant manufacturing facility at Mount Mander. 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" (Amish, 2013, P.17). When Shiva discovers Somras as evil and puts a proclamation in different cities of Sapt Sindhu ordering to stop the use of Somras, Daksha is furious and gets it removed from his territory for protecting his honor. He is helped by the chief of the Vasudev, Gopal for his mission to eradicate the evil of Somras. Vasudev takes Shiva to the land of Vayuputras for acquiring divine weapons to terrorize his adversaries in the war against the use of Somras. The legendary tribe of Vayuputras trains a member as Neelkanth so that when evil arises, he can save people from evil as the savior. Although Shiva gets Pashupatastra on the condition that he will only terrorize the enemy with it and never use it, after Sati's death, Shiva loses control and annihilates Devgiri with it. People associated with the preparation of the Somras are spared as the drink might become useful sometime in the future. The mastermind against Shiva's life, sage Bhrigu is spared as he is the reservoir of knowledge and wisdom.

Discussion

The new horizons in environmental consciousness and potential areas of sustainable energy/ development can be demonstrated by engaging with issues of global warming, deforestation, animal rights, water conservation, climate change, etc., along with different aspects of social ecology. The contemporary relevance of environmental issues has driven Amish to discuss them through mythology. The polemic discourse on the basis of the principles of Meluhan and Swadeepan lifestyles leads to terrorism and frequent attacks. The issue of the utmost importance is the plight of people suffering from the deadly afflictions caused by the use of Somras. Instead of realizing their mistake in creating environmental problems by manufacturing Somras, Meluhans force people of other regions to suffer in ignorance. So far as their own hygiene is concerned, they are alert.

"ALL MELUHANS ARE TAUGHT ABOUT TWO THINGS FROM A YOUNG AGE- WATER AND HYGIENE. WATER IS THE CLEANEST ABSORBER OF THE EFFLUENTS THAT THE SOMRAS GENERATES AND EXCRETES AS TOXINS." (Amish, 2010, P. 137-138).

Overuse of Somras causes deformities in Meluhan parents' children, but Daksha and his advisor Lord Bhrgu are not ready to accept this as evil. The deformed children called Nagas are sent to Panchawati, which is located in the South of Narmada. Brangas and Nagas face the harmful effects of Somras. As Swadeepans have a limited supply of Saraswati water only members of the royal family can afford to consume Somras. They change the course of the river which causes enmity with Meluha who face scarcity of Saraswati water for preparing the Somras. Ritika Paul (2017), states in her paper on Amish that "Amish Tripathi through this novel tries to address the social reality of contemporary society. He recasts the Shiva myth to represent the malicious designs of people in power and how their selfish desire leads to destruction and devastation" (Ritika Paul, 2017, P. 427). Meluhans' youthful longevity comes at the price of diseases and deaths of Branga people as the toxic wastes produced in the preparation of Somras are thrown into the river. Broswimmer (2020) observes that due to "The horrifying scope and cumulative effects of the human-induced crisis of mass extinction and habitat" the manufacture of Somras becomes an ecocidal practice (Broswimmer, 2020, P. 2-3) Environmental conditions shape the lifestyle and physiology of the citizens of a particular area which gets reflected in the Meluhan kingdom and other regions. Brangas and Swadeepans unknowingly consume the poisonous by-products thrown by the Meluhans through river water. Even Meluhan themselves suffer by giving birth to Naga children who are sent to Panchawati, a land where no one

else is allowed to enter. The overconsumption of the Somras causes the physical deformities but the kingdom is not ready to accept the reality of its harmful aftereffects. The immortality of the Meluhans comes at the cost of negative side effects tolerated by others but no one is ready to stop the consumption of the drink for its medicinal properties. Environment-friendly people like Vayuputras and Parihans are in contrast to the people of Meluha who are blissfully unaware of their crime. Even after knowing the truth King Daksha remains adamant and prepares his army against Shiva who is determined to eliminate the evil of Somras. Amish has contextualized the ecological destruction of the Saraswati River "as a method of group destruction, drawing a link between ecocide and genocide (Lindgren, 2017, P. 2). In this context, it is worthwhile to bring up the reference to the recent pandemic, which in a way is the consequence of human intervention with nature and natural resources. This kind of violation of nature in the twenty-first century is being aggravated by the greed of the insensible and insensitive people causing the depletion of natural resources. Lata Mishra adds.

"THE CONCLUDING NOVEL, *THE OATH OF THE VAYUPUTRAS*, ARGUES AND TO A GREAT EXTENT CONVINCES THAT THE CULTURE OF THE NATION, THAT IGNORES THE LAWS OF NATURE, VIOLATES IT, WHILE THE ONE THAT FOLLOWS THE LAWS OF NATURE LEADS ITS NATION TOWARDS ENLIGHTENMENT. FOR A FULFILLING, HARMONIOUS, AND PROGRESSIVE LIFE, ONE IS REQUIRED TO LIVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAWS OF NATURE OR DHARMA" (Mishra, 2013, P. 20).

Initially, Shiva is the only person who could see the terrible negative effects and environmental pollution caused by the Somras, later he is joined by a huge army of supporters from different regions of Sapt Sindhu. He had seen the plight of Branga parents who used peacock blood to save their children's lives and outgrowths on the bodies of Nagas and other side effects of Somras that caused havoc. He shares this with the citizens of Mrittikavati who come in droves to have a glimpse of their Neelkanth, "Thousands of children are born in 'Maika' with painful cancers that eat up their bodies. Millions of Swadeepans are dying of plague brought on by the waste of the Somras". (Amish, 2013, P. 292). Shiva convinces people regarding the politics over the consumption of Somras which has led to the depletion of Saraswati, diseases in Swadeep, and physical deformities in Nagas. Barring a few, most of the provinces go with their savior in fighting against evil. The ultimate result is the destruction of the perfect empire that wanted to rule the whole of India. Amish's ideology of contextualizing mythology for discussing the problems of the present time has made him successful in the genre of popular fiction. His

concern for Mother Earth and the utmost importance shown for the environment has made him a critical thinker who is rooted in Indian culture and traditions. Through logic and reasoning, he has historicized the mythology for the greater purpose of environmental protection. His choice of the myth of Shiva as a superhuman entity who leads the supporters of good over evil proves the worth of righteousness.

Conclusion

Thus, we see that the ecocidal effects of Somras led to a tug of war between Daksha and Shiva which signifies the eventual justification and balancing of the consumption of the Somras that is, the elixir. The morality of need is juxtaposed against the morality of greed with respect to the consumption of the said elixir bringing out the ecocidal aspect of the environment as the Somras is prepared with the water of the river Saraswati which has depleted. The struggle of Shiva for the humanitarian cause of saving the environment makes him a hero of a tribal leader from outside Meluha. Actually, this struggle is multidimensional as it involves opposition from social, cultural, and political forces of the Sapt Sindhu region. Eventually, Shiva's victory over the forces favoring the evil of the Somras leads to his godhood and he becomes a God for the people of Sapt Sindhu who were otherwise divided by different ideologies, principles, and physical distance. His victory is the victory of the Good over the evil and ecocidal aspects of the Meluhan obsession, which are destroyed for humankind's greater good.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the Vice Chancellor, of Delhi Technological University, Delhi, for the moral support and critical suggestions received during the preparation of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest among authors for the present work. We also declare that all academic and ethical guidelines have been followed in this study.

References

- Amish (2010). *The Immortals of Meluha*, New Delhi, India Westland Ltd.
- Amish (2011). *The Secret of the Nagas*, New Delhi, India: Westland Ltd.
- Amish (2013). *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, New Delhi, India: Westland Ltd.
- Broschimmer, Franz J (2002). *Ecocide: A Short History of the Mass Extinction of Species*, Pluto Press.
- Buell, Lawrence (1995). *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard.
- Buell, Lawrence (1986). *Theoretical Premises in New England Literary Culture. From Revolution through Renaissance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Doi:10.1017/CB09780511570384.001
- Glotfelty, Cheryl, and Harold Fromm (1996). *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, University of Georgia Press.
- Gottlieb, R. S. (2006). (Ed.) *Introduction: Religion and ecology- What is the connection and why does it matter* in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, OUP.
- Gupta, Akshay (2021). *An Intra-Hindu Comparative Analysis of Chaitanya Vaishnavism's Eco-Theological motifs*, *Journal of Dharma Studies*, 4:5-27.
<http://doi.org/10.1007/s42240-021-00098-y>
- Karthic, R. & S. Garret Raja Immanuel (2018). *Deformed bodies and Posthuman Alterity: A Foucauldian Critique of Social Constructions in The Immortals of Meluha by Amish*. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, Vol.6. Issue-3, pp. 205-208.
- Lindgren, Tim (2017). *Ecocide, Genocide, and the disregard of Alternative Life-Systems*, *The International Journal of Human Rights*, pp 1-25, DOI:10.1080/13642987.2017.1397631 <http://doi.org/10.1080/13642987.2017.1397631>
- Mishra, Lata (2013). *Ethical Wisdom and Philosophical Judgment in Amish Tripathi's The Oath of the Vayuputras*. *Linguistics and Literature Studies*. 1(1),20-31.
DOI: 10.13189/lls.2013.010104
- Nayar, Pramod K (2010). *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory: From Structuralism to Ecocriticism*, Pearson.
- Paul, Ritika (2017). *Shiva for all times: A Study of Amish Tripathi's The Immortals of Meluha* in *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, Vol.5. Issue 1, pp. 425-428.
- Paul, Sandip (2020). *Twentieth -first Century Imagination in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy*. *Dialog*, Issue no-36, Autumn, pp.1-18.