

Tracing Out the Ecological Impact in Amish Tripathi’s *the Oath of the Vayuputras*

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The term apocalypse has become the oft-quoted word in social media. Lethal impact made by man on nature and other natural calamities have sown fear within all mortals. Infinite blessings bestowed by nature on man outweighs the hazardous sewage dumped by humans. But the seething wrath of nature could engulf all its resources and make this planet unfit to live. These terrible predictions have led to the origin of a theory named “Ecocriticism.” The term ecocriticism was coined in 1970. It became a movement in 1990s. Under the leadership of Scott Slovic, an association (ASLE) i.e Association for the study of Literature and Environment was formed in 1992. It is an inter disciplinary theory where both the literature and environment get analysed in scientific perspective.

An evil foreboding about the end of the world gives ample space for the writers to weave their story line. A pre-destined catastrophe sets a horror background on which the writers could pen their fantasy world. In these fictions, the protagonist’s role is to eliminate the hazardous elements that strikes the harmony between man and nature. Taking this popular ideology in hand, Amish has written this Shiva Trilogy that centres around the production of Somras and its lethal impact on nature. Applying this upcoming theory in mythology and deconstructing the stereotyped Shivapurana is not an easy task. In this paper, I have tried to trace out the ecological impact in Amish Tripathi’s “The Oath of the Vayuputras.”

The first two books of this trilogy do not let out what the true evil is? Shivaremaines puzzled, as he does not know the significance behind his birth. He often questions himself whether this eerie iridescent blue colour in his throat could make him worthy enough to be a long-awaited legend – Neelkanth. The unfathomable faith within all Meluhans thrills him to the core. Only Brahaspati and

Vasudev Pandits played a prominent role in guiding Siva in his adverse circumstances. Through their aid, Siva thought of discerning the task, he is supposed to accomplish. This quizzical question gets answered in the final part titled, "The Oath of the Vayuputras." Only here the ecological aspects peeps in. Everyone expects this hidden secret to be in the form of a book. But the hidden secret of Nagas turns out to be a person named Brahaspati. Only through him Siva learns that the true evil is none other than the elixir – Somras.

All the unsolved mysteries and crisis gets nullified in the final part. The reason behind the depletion of water in Saraswati River, plague in Branga, the deformed physique of Nagas and the bomb blast in Mount Mandar, all this havoc converges in the production of Somras. Amish Tripathi has utilised the first two books to exhibit the clues and traces which gives a vague outline on the consequence of consuming this elixir. The Nagas who gets picturized as pure evil in the initial stage actually turn out to be the most righteous person in the concluding part. As the evil effect of Somras outweighs the positivity, Shiva was determined to destroy Devagiri with his Pasupatastra.

Just like the coin with two sides, Somras also has dual role. It extends the lifespan of people who consume it and keeps them healthy. This magical fluid has been a life saver for Sati, Parvateshwar and many. Somras played a crucial role in saving the life of Sati from the Agnibaan. He says, Look Ayurvati, I don't think anyone truly understands everything about the Somras. I know you know that. What you don't know is that the Somras repaired a frostbitten toe that I had lived with all my life. It also repaired my dislocated shoulder. (The Immortals of Meluha - 283)

By rapidly splitting up the human cells Somras could keep the humans younger and healthier for a long time. This amazing anti-oxidant is not a free lunch. To produce this elixir, humans should pay a hefty price which demands the life of many innocents. Creation of all mortal beings turns out to be evil in course of time. Somras, an epitome of perfect invention has its own defects. Brahaspati, the Meluhan scientist played a key role in decoding the evil effects of Somras. Only after having a lengthy conversation with Brahaspati, Shiva comprehends the actual crisis.

Shiva remembered Lord Manu's words. Good and Evil are two sides of the same coin

The Neelkanth's eyes widened. The key question isn't What is Evil? The key question is: „ When does Good become Evil? When does the coin flip? (The Oath of the Vayuputras - 6)

A true leader is good at creating a dynasty that would keep their subjects happy for several millennia. But at times, their predictions may go wrong as decades pass by. Ram, an ardent follower of law wanted Somras to be administered to every common man. By doing this, he has broken the stereotyped standards in which only the Brahmins consumed this elixir. Taking the drastic increase in the number of consumers into account, surplus amount of Somras gets produced. As the production augments, it gets hard to dump the toxic waste that emerged out of it. This gets revealed in the wordings of Brahaspati who explains it to Shiva. He says, "Later Lord Ram decreed that the benefits of the Somras should be available to all. Why should Brahmins have special privileges? Thereafter, the Somras was administered to the entire populace, resulting in huge progress in society as a whole." (The Oath of the Vayuputras – 12)

Deeds performed for the benefit of others, turns out to be evil after a few centuries. This bitter truth about Somras dawns through the Vayuputra council. They volunteered to help them by offering hordes of gold as an annual compensation which Kali refused after ascending the throne. It is something like plundering their peaceful life and offering sleeping pills to blur the scar.

To fulfil the capitalists' greed, abundant natural resources are snatched for their personal profit. As the profit augments in their casket, the toxic wastes get dumped in less populated areas. These toxic wastes make adverse consequences in the life of many have-nots. In the book of "Ecological criticism for our times", Murali Sivaramakrishnan has described the river Ganges and its current

state using the following words, “The greatest and the most revered river in India is the Ganges. It is the mythical purifier – but the most pollute driver.”(270)To explain this current scenario, Amish has bought in Brangas who are the victims of Somras toxic waste which gets dumped in Tsango.

The depletion of water in Saraswati River is just a microcosm in representing the contamination of natural resources. Deforestation, illegal mining, usage of non-renewable resources, and over population contaminates the environmental resources gifted by God. Treating the nature as a mere source of living remains as a root cause for ecological imbalance. In the paper titled “Introduction: Continuities and Interdependence: Literature, Nature and Critical Inquiry – Ecological Criticism for Our Times” Murali Sivarama krishnan has revealed the ways in which the humans are exploiting the natural resources. He says, “The wretched idea of nature as a mere source and resource for the human being submerged the idea of sacred nature and any one “wild” enough to sense anything intrinsically valuable in non-human nature was of course “unnatural.”(5) Every organism on earth has its own intrinsic value. As the human greed takes a dominating hand, they fail to perceive the havoc wrought upon nature. To comprehend the actual crisis, one needs abroad vision to safeguard the mother earth from the impending disaster. Roger McGough has clearly sketched the human impact on nature through his poem “Give and Take.”The poem lines are as follows,

I give you clean air

You give me poisonous gas. I give you mountains

You give me quarries. I give your pure snow You give me acid rain.

I give you spring fountains

You give me toxic canals.(192)

To perceive the real crisis, Shiva seeks the help of Brahaspati and other Vasudev Pandits. In his attempt to nullify Somras, he utilises the Pasupatiatra with which he plans to demolish Devagiri. His motive is not just to terminate the Somras production but to avenge the death of Sati. Shiva’s personal grievance further augments his wrath to abolish the elixir. Thus, even the legends’ personal loss aids them to fulfil their life purpose. As the destruction of evil cannot be done single-handedly, Shiva allied with Nagas and Brangas. Further his sons, Ganesh and Kartik played a key role in strengthening the ally. His divine spiritual energy and his sharp intellect aided him to discriminate good and evil in all his faltering step. In the same way, bringing back the immaculate beauty of nature is not an overnight process. One needs multiple enthusiastic hands to strenuously work and wipe off the effluvium accumulated for generations together.

In ancient times, humans worshiped the mother nature and preserved it in all ways. Later the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation turns these pantheists into mongers to hover after money and power. The bomb blast in Mount Mandar is not a solution to the crisis, as the Meluhans have one more Somras production factory built underground. There, the Somras gets manufactured using the dead skin cells of humans which could be easily gathered from the drainage canals of public bath. Sati gets to know this from Daksha who revealed the presence of another Somras manufacturing facility built under Bhrigu’s command. He says, “Another Somras manufacturing facility exists. Maharishi Bhrigu ordered me to build it secretly many years ago. It was a back-up for Mount Mandar.” (The Secret of the Nagas – 127) This information startles Sati.

Thus, one gets to know that destroying this evil from its root is not an easy task. To destroy this evil, Shiva laboured day and night and even lost Sati in the process of this struggle. Thus, to set right everything, nature might plunder the comforts it has bestowed on us. As the natural resources are free of cost, humans fail to comprehend the importance of it. The worth of these resources is known only after contaminating it to the core. Shiva who gets perceived as a barbarian in the beginning decodes the mystery by unlocking the side effects of Somras. In his every step, he derives

energy by clutching at traditional roots and made his ideologies pragmatic by adding a touch of modernity to befit the current scenario. To put in a nutshell, Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy is not just a fantasy myth but it explores the inevitable crisis faced by our planet at present. As the things are getting out of hand, its high time for us to preserve the nature and make it a befitting place for our posterity.

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