

A perspective study of the dynamics of ayurvedic benevolence and mytho-science in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy

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Abstract

In the ancient India, men are blessed with the bountiful bliss of good health and sound mind where yoga and ayurveda has its own prominent significance. It is analysed that people thrived for longer years with more elasticity in their living. The *Puranic Veda* and *Upanishads* have elaborated the notable existence of Ayurveda and yogic culture as a theory. Hindu mythology is rich in its heritage of sharing in abundance the application of Ayurvedic science for a healthy lifestyle. The utilization of 'sanjeevani leaves' for reviving the life of Lakshman in the great epic the *Ramayana* still creates an aura in the field of contemporary scientific observations. In the Indian mythological reading, 'nature' has a significantly remarkable position. They worship nature as a motherly archetype, bestowing respect and care for the natural world and in return Mother Nature offers shelter, food, good health and innumerable other benefits. The ecocritical theory of the current horrid practices of the anthropocene men on the divergent natural world is contrasted by the earlier eco-worshipping people. The Indian popular writer and mythologist Amish Tripathi has touched on such themes of nature and physical sciences in his writings. The author has altered stories from the Hindu mythology and has re-narrated them with modern elements. The book series *Shiva Trilogy*, has accounted the lifestyle of Shiva, a humble tribal man from the Land of Mansarovar Lake in Tibet along with Parvati and her kinsmen the Meluhans. The novel depicts the story of Somras, the ethereal drink of long life. The Meluhans are notable for their visible practices of ayurveda, medicinal sciences and yogic habits and their cherishing reliance on nature. The paper attempts to articulate the specific practices of ayurvedic relevance and physical sciences through the lens of mytho-science in understanding the concept of 'scientific components' behind myth.

Keywords: Ayurveda, mytho-science, archetype, mother nature, Somras.

Ayurveda is the simplistic historical root of medicine. Its essence is developed in the Indian history and is still felt in the contemporary India. India is a country with rich diversities of cultures and traditions. The most unique feature is its sumptuous wealthy heritage. Ayurveda as a 'vedic science' mainly evolved in the Asian continent, countries especially as India and Nepal. The Oxford dictionary defines Ayurveda as "the traditional Hindu system of medicine (incorporated in Atharva Veda, the last of the four Vedas), which is based on the idea of balance in bodily systems and uses diet, herbal treatment, and yogic breathing." The Sanskrit meaning of Ayurveda defines 'Ayu' as life and 'Veda' as science; basically, it is the science or knowledge of life. The customs and rituals that

a human being adheres to are responsible for the particular living style of that person. Ayurveda serves as a source of medicine with the herbal components to cure the unhealthy being. It not only soothes the physical organs but also pacify the mind. It focuses on health and hygiene of the human self. The enriching Vedas have depicted the importance of Ayurvedic science and its implications for the benefit of the human body and soul. Ayurveda helps in regaining the balance between the mind and the body along with the environment.

Mythical science is the perspective which analyses the scientific benevolence in myth. Myths are oral traditional tales of a respective tradition or culture. These oral traditions have later developed into written forms such as

mythological scriptures. Myth has in it the science of the mind, the body and also the soul of the human self. The Hindu mythological tales are known for its references to test tubes babies, application of plastic surgeries, quantum physics and so on. The scientists of the earlier times in India have derived the effective theories on mathematics, astronomy and chemical science for the wellbeing of the humans. Vedic astrology emerged much earlier to other rational science. It is formulated that Indian scientists and theorists such as Aryabhata, Bhaskara, Varahamira and other scientists of the North India established mathematical logics and theorems on quantum physics with the help of the Vedic Astrology. This emphasises the fact that Indian mythology is scientifically rich in its medicinal and other research aptitudes.

Amish Tripathi is an eminent mythologist and contemporary Indian novelists. His novels are highly researched novels on the Indian mythology. The author has re-imagined the imagination of the Hindu divines. He has 'altered' the traditional mythological narratives and twisted the stories with a contemporary touch. The magical occurring of the mythical happenings is answered and resolved in his novels. The book series titled *Shiva Trilogy* encompasses the other novels as such *The Immortals of Meluha*, *The Secret of the Nagas* and *The Oath of the Vayuputras*. The author has re-narrated the story of Shiva and Sati, and has deconstructed their imagination. He has portrayed Shiva and Sati along with other deities as such Kali, Ganesh and Kartik as human beings with superior qualities. They are experts in the field of war artistry and are extraordinarily knowledgeable. The select novels highlight the use of Ayurvedic science and yoga in maintaining the healthy body of its people. The research paper aims at focussing the aspects of Ayurvedic benevolence and its importance through the lens of scientific projections in *Shiva Trilogy*. It will focus on Ayurveda as a scientific medicinal tool to cure human beings and to bestow them with the longevity of lives with references to Tripathi's select novels.

The select novels encompass the story of the Meluhans. The Meluhans are the people of Meluha ruled by the emperor Daksha. They are known for their Ayurvedic practices and hospital facility. The story focuses to the times of 1900BC India. The geographical depiction

of Meluha is similar to the Indus Valley civilization of India. The protagonist Shiva is a humble tribal man from Tibet, the Land of Mansarovar Lake. He is known for his expertise skills in war arts. Shiva is a profound dancer, moreover he is known for his wits. Shiva belonged to the Guna tribe in Tibet and is deeply devoted to safeguard his fellow mates. His excellence in war tactics and smart victories has reached the ears of the Meluhan emperor Daksha. Daksha called upon Shiva to the homeland of Meluha to fight against the Chandravanshis, their rival enemies. Moreover, he also wanted Shiva to protect the folks of the empire against the Nagas. The Meluhan King has declared the Nagas as the evil. The Nagas are the secluded section of people who were disgraced by all for their appearance. The Nagas are physically deformed and different than others since their birth. The twisted truth is revealed by Shiva that is not the Nagas who are evil. The land of Meluhais the manufacturing ground of Somras. It is the drink for long life procured by the Meluhans. Along with the bliss of bestowing a person with long life it has its horrid repercussion. The Nagas are devoid of a normal life due to Somras.

The land of Meluha shares the myth of Somras. The Shiva mythology reveals that at the time of conflict between the Devas (gods) and Asuras (demons) for nectar and poison of the divine snake Vasuki there was the churning of the 'ocean of milk'. The Devas as the winners were to drink nectar and Asuras were to drink poison. Soon after drinking poison the Asuras began to collapse due to asphyxiation. But one Asura Rahu conspired to drink nectar in the guise of a god. When this was known to the gods Rahu's head was slited by the gods to make him fail immortality. But the poison (halahala) that was still flowing was consumed by Lord Shiva with the advice of Brahma. As this was known to Parvati, she was alarmed and gripped her husband's neck with both hands to stop the poison before its entry into his stomach. Parvati saved Shiva in her form as Mahavidya Tara (Great Wisdom goddesses) and Adishakti in a Tantric manifestation. From that incident Shiva's throat became blue due to the reaction of 'halahala' and is known as 'Neelkanth'. In fact, taking these mythical perceptions in his imagination Amish Tripathi has experimentally fictionalised the myth of Lord

Shiva and his bluish neck in the drinking of Somras by the Meluhans. In the presentation of myth Tripathi has comprehended the therapeutic effect of Somras, a kind of clinical potion and scientifically a poison for the long life of the Meluhans.

In the novel, it is the Meluhans who consumes the Somras. Somras acts as an Ayurvedic tool in presenting a person with long life. It is 'energy' which keeps a living organism alive. Energy acts as the prime resource that helps in activating all the inner organisms. "When we walk, talk, think, in fact when we do anything that can be called being alive, we use energy." (Tripathi 135). The energy that activates a human body is provided by food. The food stores energy within it and when it is acquired by a human, it acquires the energy. It is this stocked energy of the food that helps in proper functioning of the human being.

Food -----→ Provides Energy-----→ Releases Toxic Oxidants

A fresh fruit often rots and becomes rancid. "this is because it has been "oxidised" or the oxidants have reacted with it to make it rot." (Tripathi 136). The metals such as the irons corrodes due to this similar 'oxidising process'. The human body rusts from inside due to oxygen which releases the toxic oxidants, which leads in the ageing of the body. "We rust from the inside and hence age and eventually die" (Tripathi 136). It is the oxygen which blesses a person with live leads to its death. That is why the human body cannot store oxygen. The outmost crucial unit of living, which is oxygen, only lasts for a few moments. The mortal being stores every edible entity that is required to provide energy to the body. Components such as water, sugar, salt, it is the oxygen which a human being does not store. The body stores water so that it do not die immediately of dehydration. It stores food in the form of proteins and fats so that the person can survive even in extreme starvation.

The body tries to store everything that you need from the outside world in order to survive. It stores enough food to survive for a few days without it. It stocks up on

That's also why we feel weak when we don't eat. However, you don't get energy merely by eating. Something inside the body has to draw the energy so that we can put it to good use." (Tripathi 136)

The food that is consumed by the living organisms is converted into energy by the air inhaled by the humans. The oxygen reacts with the food and releases energy from it. It is the reason why a human body dies without the presence of oxygen in the body. "If we don't get oxygen, our body would be starved of energy and we would die" (Tripathi 136). The oxygen which releases energy from food helps in keeping a person alive, moreover it is also the factor that causes ageing to them. When the oxygen reacts with the food it releases energy from it, and simultaneously releases free radicals called 'oxidants' which are toxic in the process.

water so that a few days of thirst will not kill you. (Tripathi 137)

Whereas, oxygen despite its outmost necessity for a body to survive, the body does not store oxygen, as it is similar to poison after producing the oxidants from food, and thus it is truly dangerous to store oxygen.

The blissful heavenly drink somras manufactured by the Meluhans for its people has an essential purpose in reacting against these oxidants produced by the human body and discards it in the form of sweat or urine. It is for its function of performing the role of 'anti-oxidant' and bestowing the one who consumes it with long life is assumed as the blissful heavenly drink or potion. The Meluhans are strict in maintaining their hygiene standards. The perspiration released by the body in the form of sweat or urine are poisonous toxins. It is the water which is the cleanest absorber of all the effluents which is released by the somras as toxins. Along with the intake of Somras, the Meluhans intakes gallons of water to keep themselves healthy.

In the process of manufacturing this Ayurvedic medicine of the Meluhans,

essential herbal ingredients are required. Sanjeevani leaves are the main components required to procure the drink of immutability. The land of Meluha has giant plantations of sanjeevani trees to serve the purpose. In the process of manufacture a lot of heat is generated. Thus, to calm the generated heat the water from the river saraswati is utilised. Moreover, also the crushed branches of the Sanjeevani tree required to be churned only with the specified water from the river Saraswati. It is the only river from which the water can be used in balancing the composition of the solution 'somras', the use of any other river water would lead to a failure.

Apart from the use of somras, the Meluhans are seen using other herbal medicine for curing illness. During that time of 1900BC, the Meluhans are experts in the field of Ayurveda. They practiced the use of somras as an 'anti-oxidant' which is responsible for deducing the ageing process of the human. The Meluhan doctor Ayurvati is seen sincerely observing the role of offering service for the patients. Meluha had hospitals called 'Ayuralay' with advance technical units. The use of Ayurvedic science is indeed used by them to cure burnt skinned people. In the Indian epic *The Ramayana*, the leaves of the sanjeevani tree is used to cure Laxman who is injured in the battle of Lanka Kand against the evil Ravana. In the select novel, the mythological tree is addressed as the sole component to produce the somras.

It is recorded that ancient India is rich in its culture of using herbs with medicinal benefits. *Selaginella bryopteris* is considered as a candidate to the mythical herb sanjeevani tree. It is a lithophytic plant which especially grows on rocks or mountains. This plant is active in the field of Ayurvedic science and is native to India. Although the botanical identity of the sanjeevani tree is unclear yet *Selaginella bryopteris* is suggested as the sanjeevani of the contemporary India for its

effective properties in curing illness. It is known to cure patients with coma, stroke and many other severe illnesses. The Meluhans are observed using sanjeevani in their Ayuralays and also to manufacture the somras.

Neem or *azadirachta indica* is known for its antibiotics properties. The Meluhans often treated their war victims with the use of neem. It is known for curing diseases especially pertaining to dermatology, orthopaedics and the pediatric science. "Having applied the Ayurvedic paste and covered it with the medicinal neem leaf, the doctor bandaged the wound with a cotton cloth." (Tripathi 21). The extracts of the neem leaves include someldenim, nimbin, nimbenene, 6-desacetylnimbinene which are rich with antibiotics resources. The wife of Shiva, Sati is treated with neem paste by Ayurvati when she is wounded with the fire arrow. Ayurvati treated Sati with the medicinal paste. Ayurvati quotes "I have to put on record how the Somras can cure an agnibaan wound. I will present this at the medicinal council as soon as I return to Devagiri" (Tripathi 273). Thus, it is analysed that somras is the outmost effective component which could cure severe wounds.

In the conclusion it can be analysed that the Meluhans are rich in their Ayurvedic resources. The appliances of the Ayurvedic treatment in the select novels formulate the fact that Ayurveda is much rich than other sources of treatment or therapies offering no negative or side effect to the patient. Indeed in the contemporary reality Ayurveda has reached the summit of effective cure. The mythical Ayurvedic medicines such as the sanjeevani leaves are analysed. Thus, through the select novels, the Ayurvedic benevolence and the mythical science can be articulated. Behind, the mythical property of any herbal medicine there are hidden scientific chemistry which works under the veil of magic.

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