

CAN HUMANS TAKE MEDICINES TO BECOME IMMORTAL? A REVIEW OF
AMISH TRIPATHI'S SHIVA TRILOGY

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ABSTRACT:

Humans longed for immortality and it is explicitly evident in Literature. Besides Scientists and Philosophers—who share the enormous discussion topics on Immortality—Literary writers often base their work of art on the topic of Immortality. Indian writer Amish Tripathi does exactly the same. With his '*Shiva Trilogy*', he has created history—his trilogy is the fastest selling book series in India. He is famous for recreating Indian Mythology—so far, he has written six novels. While reconstructing Indian myths, he makes use various Ancient Indian concepts portrayed in Myths—the major of them is the use of Divine Drink Somras. Upon drinking Somras, humans attain near-immortality. Amish Tripathi sets the Somras as the base around which he narrates the entire story in his Shiva Trilogy. This research article scrutinizes the depiction of Somras as Life giving Medicine and various problems a society faces if humans become immortal.

Keywords: Divine Drink, Immortality, Medicine, Mythology, Somras.

Indian Writing in English has always had references from Indian Mythology. But, the writers, barring a few, rarely could capture the attention of the audience, particularly Indian youths. Amish Tripathi has done a fabulous job inculcating a sense of reading habits among—otherwise not so interested in reading mythology—Indian youths. The beauty of creation lies in its simplicity—as the great scientist Albert Einstein puts “If you cannot explain it simply, you don't understand well enough”. Amish Tripathi is the master of such simple creation and his series of books is the proof of that.

Drink of the Gods: Somras

Amish Tripathi in his '*Shiva Trilogy*' uses a divine drink named Somras—"which when consumed, reacts with the oxidants, absorbs them and then expels them from body as sweat or urine.... because of that the persons never age" (135) as the Good created by human. According to Meluhans, the use of the Somras is for the benefit of their society—their warriors are youthful despite being old in age, the kings and ministers live as long as they please.

“Because you have now the most marvelous youth, and youth is the one thing worth having” (28) states Oscar Wilde in his fascinating book on immortality—*The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Almost everyone on the planet fantasies, at least once, about defeating death and living an Immortal life and Amish Tripathi's characters are no different. Daksha, the emperor of Meluha describes the benefits of Somras, “Taking Somras at defined times not only postpones our death considerably, but it also allows us to lives as if we are in the prime of our youth---mentally and physically” (81).

The Meluhan scientist Brahaspati elucidates the preparation of Somras “Manufacturing Somras requires various ingredients that are not easily available...the Sanjeevani tree ...water from Saraswathi River because water from other sources does not work” (136). The crushed branches of Sanjeevani trees have to be mixed with water from Saraswati River to make paste and in turn Somras powder which upon consuming helps Maluhan remain youthful until they die—and the author validates it further because no character dies naturally in Meluha. The paste from live Sanjeevani tree is even more powerful and it helps to cure organ damage as it helps Parvateshwar, the general of Meluhan army. But the paste should be applied within the prescribed hours, otherwise it is not fruitful.

Meluhans are so secretive about the process of preparing Somras because they believe once the concept is disclosed to Ayothya, which is their nonboring kingdom, they will also mass-produce and attain immortality. The Meluhans think they are above others because they are the only people in India to lead a disease-free life. With the help of Somras, Meluha is considered as near perfect empire, and envied by all other empire alike, except perhaps by the Nagas.

The benefits of being Immortal:

“Some pirates achieved immortality by great deeds of cruelty or derring-do. Some achieved immortality by amassing great wealth. But the captain had long ago decided that he would, on the whole, prefer to achieve immortality by not dying” (365,)

As Terry Pratchett, (1983) stated in his fantasy novel of the captain, humans love immortality—and only by not dying. It gives the parent country an edge over other countries in terms of Economy and Warfare.

Meluha is economically independent majorly because Somras. Meluhans are organized they can work more hours than any normal human could work. They are disease free. The country distributes wealth equally for everyone. This makes Meluha economically stable. It is possible, only because of Somras.

It is highly obvious that Meluhan soldiers—primarily due to the availability of Somras—are feared despite being comparative less in number than all the armies. The second reason for their success in Warfare is their captain Parvateshwar, who is believed to have been living more than 150 years, only because Somras could postpone his death. If not for Somras, Meluha would have lost its brave captain, and his deputies would not match his calibre. He is almost dead in one of the battles before Somras saved his life.

Not only captain Parvateshwar, almost all the intelligent people as youthful as any young person would be. This shows when a country has an option to its people immortal it can outshine other countries just by the everlasting existence of their intelligent and strong people, as it happens with Meluha.

Problems of Humans becoming Immortal:

“How often the process of construction starts with destruction” exclaimed Cynan Jones in 2019 book *Stillicide*. Meluha—to quote Nandi, “I call it Heaven. It is the richest and most powerful

empire in India. Indeed, the richest and most powerful in the world” (2)—boasts of being the greatest and wealthiest empire. They could construct such an empire only because of Somras, but it all starts with the destruction of vast area of forest and of Saraswati river, whose water is the resource for the livelihood of most of Meluha’s neighbouring countries.

Despite being completely aware of these large-scale destruction, Meluhan emperor Daksha’s eternal greed for delaying his death and becoming the emperor of India is undying. British author J. K. Rowling (2011) in her celebrated book Harry Potter and Sorcerer’s Stone stated “As much money and life as you could want! The two things most human beings would choose above all - the trouble is, humans do have a knack of choosing precisely those things that are worst for them” (265). Daksha has enough money because he is the King of an empire, all he needs to do is rule as any intelligent kind could rule. But he longs for life more than any normal human could get on planet without understanding that postponement of death is contradicting reality. “Utopia is that which is a contradiction with reality” believed the famous French-Algerian philosopher Albert Camus. Meluhans and Daksha think their kingdom is closure to Utopia—name that is used for imaginative perfect countries in literary works (Fifteenth century English Social philosopher Thomas More was the first one to use the term) but contrary to their notion, there are plenty of problems Meluhans create because of taking the divine drink Somras for attaining Immortality.

Apart from destroying nature, the Meluhans greed for using Somras to extend their lifespan puts some of the women at risk while childbirth. It happens in a number of ways—mother dies before giving birth, the child is still born or born with deformities; such children are considered as Nagas and they are not allowed live in Meluha. It all happens only because Meluhans overdose Somras to attain Immortality. Somras keeps the body creating healthy cells in order make human Immortal and sometimes the overdoes of it makes cells to grow extra organs in human body to make babies deformed. But it is slow process. “Evil is never in a rush. It creeps up slowly. It doesn’t hide, but confronts you in broad daylight. It gives decades of warnings, even centuries at times. Time is never the problem when you battle Evil. The problem is the will to fight it.” (5), reasons Meluhan Scientist Brahaspati. Amish Tripathi clearly convey through this that any medicine that tries disturb the balance of nature comes with a lot side effects but in a dead slow process.

Conclusion:

“Immortality is a ridiculous illusion, an empty word, a butterfly net chasing the wind” wrote Czech writer in his 1990 novel writing off any possibility of humans becoming Immortal, leave alone disturbing the balance of nature. Amish Tripathi almost sails on the same boat. He conveys that anything that disturbs nature can temporarily be good but eventually become the greatest evil. Somras is considered to the greatest good ever existed by a group of people, but it turns out to be the greatest evil by others. Therefore, humans trying to postpone death and becoming immortal will actually lead to destruction of human race.

So, can humans be immortal? May not be possible for the physical body of humans. But of course, they can become immortal. To quote the great American martial artist Bruce Lee ‘The key to immortality is first living a life worth remembering’.

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