



# Eco Dharma and Environmental Ethics in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

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## Abstract

*In The Shiva Trilogy, Amish Tripathi weaves a rich tapestry where mythic narrative collides with contemporary environmental concerns. This article explores how the trilogy embeds principles of Eco Dharma rooted in Indian religious-philosophical traditions and constructs a compelling environmental ethic. Through an analysis of natural imagery, character interactions with ecosystems, and mythic motifs such as Shiva's connection to the wilderness, the article argues that Tripathi invites readers to reimagine environmental responsibility through a heroic mythos. Drawing upon ecocritical theory, Indian philosophical concepts such as ahimsa, dharmic duty, and cosmic interdependence, and literary narrative strategies, the study illuminates how the trilogy enriches environmental discourse in Indian popular literature. The trilogy functions not merely as entertainment but as a vehicle for ethical reflection, suggesting that mythic imagination can foster ecological consciousness. Major key elements of the paper include, the portrayal of forests as sacred spaces, the ethical imperatives against exploitation, and the hero's spiritual connection with nature. The conclusion emphasizes that Eco Dharma, as exemplified in the trilogy, offers a potent framework for re envisioning India's ecological futures, marrying tradition with urgent environmental ethics. This melding of narrative and ethics underscores the potential of popular mythic fiction to shape cultural attitudes toward environmental stewardship.*

**Keywords:** Eco Dharma, Environmental ethics, Eco-criticism, Ahimsa, Indian mythic narrative.

## Introduction

The intersection of myth and environmental consciousness in literature offers fertile terrain for exploring how cultural narratives shape ecological sensibilities. The Shiva Trilogy by Amish Tripathi, a bestselling series reimagining Hindu mythology within a novelistic framework, presents a vibrant mythic world where natural landscapes and ethical crises intertwine. By reframing the divine figure of Shiva as a human hero who gradually becomes the Mahadev, Tripathi infuses his epic narrative

with considerations of duty (dharma), nonviolence (ahimsa), and cosmic unity. These threads intersect with what may be termed as "Eco Dharma": an environmental ethic grounded in dharmic values. This article proposes that The Shiva trilogy serves as a compelling literary platform to explore Eco Dharma, harnessing mythic structures to provoke ecological reflection and responsibility.



## Objectives

The main focus of this research paper is to:

- Explore environmental themes especially the role of the ‘Somras’ as both boon and curse.
- Ethical dilemmas in resource exploitation
- Nature vs. human progress through a mythological lens
- Ecocriticism in Indian speculative fiction

## Eco Dharma and Theoretical Framework

Eco-Dharma is a contemporary philosophical and ethical framework that integrates principles of ecology with the spiritual and moral tenets of Dharma, particularly from Indian religious and philosophical traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. “Eco” derives from the Greek word *oikos*, meaning “home” or “earth,” and in modern usage relates to ecological concerns. “Dharma” in Sanskrit denotes cosmic law, duty, righteousness, and the moral path. Thus, Eco-Dharma signifies a spiritual ecology a way of living in harmony with the Earth by aligning human actions with dharmic principles. “Eco Dharma” refers to ecological ethics derived from dharmic traditions principles such as *ahimsa* (non-harm), *satyagraha* (truth-force), and the recognition of all life as interconnected. The concept overlaps with ecocritical perspectives that advocate for nature as partner rather than resource (Glottfelty 15–26). Eco Dharma extends this by emphasizing continuity between spiritual duty and environmental care (Vidyarthi 102–19). Applying this framework to *The Shiva Trilogy* allows for a dual analysis like how characters embody dharmic imperatives in relation to the environment, and how the narrative invites readers to perceive landscapes as ethically significant. Eco-Dharma has begun to shape ecocritical theory, particularly by challenging the anthropocentric bias in western environmental ethics. Thinkers like Joanna Macy and David Loy integrate Buddhist teachings with climate activism and deep ecology. International movements like the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale include Dharma traditions in interfaith environmental discourse by providing a non-dualistic understanding of human nature relationships, offering narrative models rooted in traditional knowledge systems that emphasize sustainability and reverence. Traditional

Indian communities preserved biodiversity through sacred forests (*devaranya*), linking ecology with dharma. Certain festivals (e.g., *Vruksha Bandhan*, *Nag Panchami*) are symbolic of humans’ respectful coexistence with plants and animals. Plant-based diets, advocated in yogic and *sattvic* traditions, promote health and reduce environmental burden.

In Indian literary studies, Eco-Dharma is now a viable lens through which critics analyse texts not just for plot or character but for their ethical engagement with the natural world. Indian authors often frame environmental degradation as a legacy of colonial resource exploitation and modern capitalist development. Writers like Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, and Kiran Desai blend ecological consciousness with cultural heritage. Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* explores the ‘*Sundarbans*’ - a tidal ecology threatened by climate change through a lens of myth, tradition, and conservation. Roy’s *The God of Small Things* illustrates how modern encroachment on nature parallels moral decay and societal injustice. Indian eco-poets like Meena Alexander or Arundhati Subramaniam use spiritual imagery and nature metaphors to convey ecological balance and human responsibility.

## Forest as Sacred Spectrum

Throughout the trilogy, forests emerge not merely as backdrop but as living entities. The Himalayan forests, for instance, serve as Shiva’s sanctum a realm of reflection, ascetic discipline, and communion with nature. Tripathi writes of “the whispering pines and brooding mountains” that “hummed with primordial awareness” (Tripathi, *The Oath of the Vayuputras* 214). This sacralization aligns with the dharmic concept of *vanaprastha* and reverence for *prakriti*. Forests in the text are sites of transformation, as when Shiva’s meditations beneath ancient trees lead to clarity of purpose (Tripathi, *The Immortals of Meluha* 308). The trilogy portrays deforestation or exploitation of these spaces as moral failings Lohaputra’s mining operations are depicted as desecrating the land, producing both ecological damage and spiritual malaise (Tripathi, *The Secret of the Nagas* 156). Thus, the forest becomes a barometer of moral order, its healing or degradation reflects the status of dharmic law.



### **Characters and Ecological Intuition**

Eco-Dharma has significantly influenced modern literature, especially in Indian English fiction, mythic retellings, and eco-critical writing. Writers reinterpret traditional values to engage with today's ecological crises. Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is embedded with environmental awareness within mythic structures. Forests are sacred, rivers are personified, and natural laws are integral to cosmic order. For example, Shiva's deep communion with nature, his respect for ecosystems, and the trilogy's critique of exploitative civilizations like Meluhans reflect Eco-Dharma ideals. Climate change is not only a scientific crisis but a moral and existential one. Eco-Dharma urges care for future generations as a dharmic duty, *pithru-dharma* which encourages resilience through spiritual practice meditation, mindfulness, ecological grief processing and promotes community action inspired by collective Dharma, rather than individualistic gain. In a world facing rising sea levels, ecological displacement, and climate injustice, spiritual frameworks like Eco-Dharma can help cultivate hope, responsibility, and action.

Tripathi's characters often exhibit ecological intuition an unarticulated sensibility toward nature. Sati's sensitivity to the plight of animals, for example, guides her diplomatic decisions, while Lord Parvateshwar, as Emperor Daksha, prioritizes sustainable governance that balances urban prosperity with forest preservation (Tripathi, *The Immortals of Meluha* 412). Shiva himself, as he evolves, becomes attuned to ecological interdependence, the notion that human actions ripple through the natural world. A pivotal scene involves Shiva witnessing a single drop of sacrificial water percolating into the earth, nourishing unseen roots, a metaphor for the quiet potency of dharmic humility (Tripathi, *The Secret of the Nagas* 275). The trilogy thus stages ecological insight not as abstract theory but as embodied understanding, cultivated through spiritual discipline and compassion.

### **Mythic Motifs and Environmental Symbolism**

Mythic motifs in the trilogy carry environmental symbolism with ethical import. The Ganga River, for instance, is portrayed as a living goddess whose

purity sustains life, its contamination is both a physical hazard and a cosmic affront (Tripathi, *The Immortals of Meluha* 349). Comparisons to ancient lore Shiva's matted locks releasing a torrent that becomes Ganga underscore the interpenetration of myth, nature, and moral structure. Likewise, the motif of Mount Kailash as cosmic axis and Everest-like peak evokes notions of sacred geography, resilience, and divine proximity (Tripathi, *The Oath of the Vayuputras* 122). These mythic landscapes carry environmental weight, protecting them is tantamount to preserving the cosmic order. Symbolic resonance compels both characters and readers to acknowledge environmental sanctity as spiritually infused.

### **Ethics of Non-violence and Sustainability**

Ahimsa, as practiced by Shiva, extends beyond interpersonal nonviolence to ecological compassion. Shiva refuses to slay animals needlessly, opting instead for peaceful coexistence with creatures; the melodious deer that frequents his hermitage becomes emblematic of this ethic (Tripathi, *The Immortals of Meluha* 160). Further, the trilogy critiques militarism that disregards environmental cost Shiva's campaign against Meluhans for tyranny includes efforts to dismantle war machinery rather than weapons, symbolizing an ethic of minimal harm. The text also values sustainable technologies, e.g., the use of windmills or water systems over destructive industries (Tripathi, *The Secret of the Nagas* 334). Through such narrative choices, Tripathi models a dharma inspired sustainability that integrates nonviolence, innovation, and reverence for life.

### **Narrative Strategy and Reader Engagement**

Tripathi's storytelling invites readers to participate in Eco Dharma by framing environmental ethics within a gripping mythic thriller. The pacy narrative, rich imagery, and heroic arc of transformation make environmental themes accessible and emotionally resonant. Readers are drawn into dilemmas such as whether to conserve a forest at the cost of an assassination mission, or whether to prioritize human survival over species protection. The trilogy's bestseller status in India indicates broad engagement a sign that popular mythic fiction can be a powerful vector for ecological sensitivity.



### Eco Dharma in Contemporary Context

In the face of unfolding environmental crises in India such as deforestation, pollution, and climate shift, mythic narratives like *The Shiva Trilogy* fill a gap by offering both imaginative and ethical orientation. It can be seen that nature as sacred, not separate from human life but part of an interconnected web. In Hinduism, rivers like Ganga are goddesses, mountains like Kailash are sacred abodes, and forests are living ecosystems with spiritual significance. This fosters a biocentric or eco-centric worldview, encouraging humans to live in harmony with nature rather than in dominion over it. Eco Dharma, as evidenced here, connects cultural heritage with environmental stewardship. In the face of ecological collapse, this shift from “ownership” to “stewardship” is urgently needed. Indian policymakers and educators might draw upon such narratives to foster ecological values that resonate culturally. The trilogy’s reach into classrooms, book clubs, and mainstream conversation suggests potential for narrative based environmental pedagogy. The fusion of Dharma and ecology is shaping a new wave of cultural environmentalism.

### Conclusion

Eco-Dharma offers a powerful, spiritually grounded framework for addressing contemporary environmental issues. Its influence on literature is significant, especially in genres that blend myth, culture, and environmental consciousness. As the world grapples with ecological crises, narratives rooted in Eco-Dharma provide a unique path forward one that emphasizes respect, interconnectedness, and moral responsibility towards Earth. Tripathi’s *Shiva Trilogy* stands as more than mythic re creation it is an imaginative infrastructure for environmental ethics rooted in dharmic values. Through sacred

forests, ecological intuitions, mythic landscapes, and nonviolent sustainability, Tripathi enacts a form of Eco Dharma that merges spiritual tradition with environmental urgency. The trilogy demonstrates how popular fiction can animate ecological consciousness, suggesting that mythic imagination, and dharmic philosophy can contribute meaningfully to environmental dialogue in India and worldwide. Recognizing nature as sacred, duty bound, and interconnected helps frame stewardship not as philanthropic choice but as spiritual imperative. Future scholarship might examine the trilogy’s reception among environmental activists or its use in education. Ultimately, *The Shiva Trilogy* exemplifies how storytelling, anchored in cultural roots, can inspire ecological transformation.

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