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MYSTICISM AND CULTURAL ENCOUNTER IN GITA
MEHTA'S *A RIVER SUTRA*

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ABSTRACT:

Gita Mehta's second novel, "A River Sutra" (1993), is increasingly significant and profoundly focused work. The novel is woven around India's sacred river the Narmada. The arrangement of stories can be taken as modified Sutras. The vitality of the novel is framed through the profound veins of Indian culture and folklore. The writing in general is contemplation on the nation's common humanist tradition. Classical Sanskrit Drama, Hindu folklore, Sufi verses, Indian classical music and significantly more have been reflected and emphasized in the work. Despite the fact that the novel creates many India, it is the perpetual India that holds the enthusiasm of the writer as well as the readers. The Narmada represents the culture of unity and the topic of the novel is incorporation of different religions and philosophies with the geography of the river. As a result of the detailing of the substances of ancient Indian culture, "A River Sutra" is a modern Indian work which alludes to the issues looked by the modern India.

Keywords: Indian, Culture, River, Story, Narmada, Love, Place, Human, Novel, Hindu.

Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra* is a significant endeavour by a complete modern Indian to make her retribution with the Hindu culture from which she has arisen. The novel spotlights on movements towards Indian Culture, its decent variety and different viewpoints related with Indian religions, folklore, and so on. The narrator of the story comes across different

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individuals and thereby different stories. The narratives are limited by three components – love, death and the Narmada River.

A River Sutra shows up as a simple story of the narrator and protagonist who imagines that renunciation is about physical withdrawal from the world by living in some confined spot. However, it is unquestionably not a reality. The novel is an exposition of Indian Metaphysics. The word utilized in the title, Sutra, implies a principle. Here the principles of life are instructed by the Narmada. The river has lot to instruct about human life, about this world and the other world, and about what life is and what it ought to have been. Gita Mehta guzzled all its embodiment and altogether talks about its pertinence so as to comprehend the inner self. India has taken profound underlying foundations of its culture from its glorious past. It comprises myriad languages, religions and arts and some of the significant aspects of the lives of the Indians. Gita Mehta draws out the genuine essence of Indian culture and legacy through her skilfully structured stories. Indian culture is something that is regularly changing and still has a vital task to carry out in moulding the nation's personality.

In *A River Sutra* all of the characters get their resolution from the Narmada River. The significance of the river is composed into the traditions of the religions and its role in the society is discernible. The river assumes a role cleansing many, providing a spot to suicide, a spot for resurrection, and a spot for extreme devotion. The river itself is a Goddess and individuals regard it in that capacity.

With *A River Sutra* the focus shifts towards Indian Culture, its decent variety and different viewpoints related with Indian religions, folklore and so on. The narrator encounters with various individuals and thereby different stories. If we study different stories separately, we realise that these stories are not linked with each other and thus the novel appears loosely knit. Even though, a common theme of love runs in between the lines of the text. Moreover, the tales are bounded by three components: love, death and the Narmada River. To a common reader *A River Sutra* may show up as a straightforward story of the narrator and protagonist who feels that renunciation is about physical withdrawal from the world by living in some disconnected spot. However, it is unquestionably not a reality. The tale is a piece of Indian Metaphysics. From one more point, the novel is a clarification and delineation of Indian culture explicitly intended for the western readers. Consequently, sometimes it has been illustrated by critic as a pseudo philosophical endeavour to deal with a sublime theme. To put it plainly, the novel is an endeavour of an Indo-Anglo-American author to reveal her cultural legacy and in this way to claim cultural identity.

There are six stories in the novel: The Monk's story, The Musician's story, The Executive's story, The Courtesan's story, The Naga Baba's story and the Minstrel's story. These accounts present clear pictures of Hindu and Jain monks, courtesans and minstrels, diamond merchants and tea executives, Muslim priests, music teachers, tribal folk beliefs, and the anthropologists. Such blend of various angles is kept firmly associated by the presence of the Narmada, the theme of love and by the narrator. We discover emphasis of Classical Sanskrit Drama and Hindu folklore. One theme that continues repeating in the novel is of the raga of Indian classical music. Another repetitive theme is that of Shiva-Parvati and the birth of The Narmada. There are rehashed references to Kamadev, God of Love and secrets of human heart. In spite of the fact that the novel takes the substance from ancient Indian tradition,

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ideology and folklore, it is modern work of fiction. Majority of the critics have responded to *A River Sutra* positively. The style of narration has been obtained from the ancient Indian tradition of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana the complexity of story within a story of these epics is absent in *A River Sutra*. However, the subtle manner in which the theme of love associates the stories delivers intricacy to the novel. It is also a study of the nature of life and its enigmas.

To a casual reader, *A River Sutra* is a delightful piece of colourful stories running like a river in the process of narration. At the initial exposure of the novel, readers came across with the narrator-bureaucrat who wants to renounce the world. It drives a general assumption that the novel is about a resigned Administrative officer who is willing to live secluded life on the bank of the Narmada. But, with the progression of the stories one by one, the novel accelerates and uncovers distinctive aspects: it turns to be the story of the Narmada, the emblem of our culture; of Shiva's penance and birth of The Narmada; elucidation of tribal tradition; and of a man going around trying to comprehend the significance of life. Indeed, even the narrator toward the end understands that nothing but involvement can lead to detachment. The author likewise attempts to see the nature of human wants like Nirvana, love, peace, riches, dedication and immortality. In this manner, the novel turns into an investigation of life and life's philosophy. It very well may be deciphered on a bigger canvas: it tends to be perused as treatise on Indian ideas of animism, materialism and spirituality, as a work depicting fanciful India, and as a content propounding the oral convention of narrating. Practically every one of the characters in various stories meets for either reason on the banks of The Narmada River for renunciation, peacefulness and deal with life and death.

Conclusion:

The tale is packed with ancient convictions and superstitions: the legend of the tribal hero and the bee sting; the tribal belief in the goddess who can cure the possessed and a superstitious belief that a man can become mad if he walks out into the jungle during the eclipse of the moon. It is interesting to study Nitin Bose's endeavour in to the jungle in a dark night of eclipse and Rima, a tribal from Assam tea garden casting a black magic spell on him. What is all the more impossible fantasy is that the priest of the remote region of Assam thinks about the Narmada's ability to cure the insane and the possessed. The character of the civil servant is by all accounts steady as he doesn't question about these stories and beliefs nor seem to believe in them. Another superstition is that grave green oval stone found in the river is Shiv-lingam. Professor Shankar who will not have faith in the godliness of the river may have some scientific or archaeological clarification of this marvel. Unfortunately he never made this inquiry.

Thus, in *A River Sutra*, Gita Mehta draws vigorously structure her social legacy, folklore, history, and geology so as to incite the reader to consider her motherland from the eyes of a migrant. Such content typifies the nostalgic structure of the immigrant writer and tries to subdue the tension between the 'home' and 'not home'.

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REPRESENTATION OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN INDIAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Tribal India finds representation in the works of quite a few novelists of repute. Arun Joshi, Mahasweta Devi, Gopinath Mohanty, Kamala Markandaya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Gita Mehta and Ruskin Bond have made noteworthy contributions in this regard. Various aspects of the tribal world- their culture, rituals, lifestyle, traditional values, socio-economic norms, representation of women, their fears, and particular identities which distinguish them from others find mention in their fictional world. In Arun Joshi's novel the physical beauty of the tribal woman has been upheld- in its raw, primitive aspect. Mahasweta Devi, on the other hand refuses to commodify the tribal woman. Kamala Markandaya's novels deal with social issues, racial encounter, and problems of women. This paper addresses the way in which tribal women have been represented in Indian literature.

Keywords: Tribal, Women, Literature, Indian, Representation, Arun Joshi, Kamala Markandaya, Mahasweta Devi.

Tribal India finds representation in the works of quite a few Indian writers of repute. The writings of Arun Joshi, Mahasweta Devi, Gopinath Mohanty, Kamala Markandaya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Gita Mehta and Ruskin Bond stand testimony to this fact. Various aspects of the tribal world- their culture, rituals, lifestyle, traditional values, socio-economic norms,

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