

### ***A Study of Ecofeminism in A River Sutra by Gita Mehta***

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#### **Abstract:**

The ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary term which mingles literature and environment. The environment issues are more widely and broadly written in the literature. Ecocriticism focuses on the same issues which developed in the literature in relation with nature. This term is not only present the environmental issues but provide the reasonable answer to the environment issues. In the ecocriticism the nature plays important role, the nature is pure and original so it is applied to the race, gender and class to study. The ecology of nature requires a safe environment to keep the balance in the ecosystem. The feminist study intermingles with ecology and connects the dots with women suppression with nature's degradation. The feminism thinking and viewpoints are asserted from female point of view in the concern ecofeminism. It is also questioning the male dominated society as well as the egalitarian view of human being. The aim of the current paper is to investigate the features ecofeminism in A Rivers Sutra by Gita Mehta.

**Keywords:** - feminism, ecocriticism, ecofeminism, ecology, liberal ecofeminism etc...

Gita Mehta is from the Odia family, the 'Odia' name refers with many of the classical names like Odia, Odri, Utkaliya, Kalingi and Uri. The early education she completes in India and graduation from Mumbai University. Later she takes her education at United Kingdom in the University of Cambridge. The choice of her subject at UK makes her carrier due to that she gets her own view point to see literature and life. She completed her Master in English literature. Cambridge natured her to write the national issues. The skill of language to provide such an amazing fiction inculcate in her through her education. The political narration developed in her because her childhood that is the same period when her father actively participates in the freedom fighter movements.

The participation of her father's in freedom movements does not allow taking care of their child. They are almost in the jail due to British activity so he sends them to the

boarding school. So, from Geeta's childhood she is away from the house. Then the same thing happens with each person that if he is away from the house, he misses his native's land. Gita though physically away from the house but gets the continuous update about the freedom movement of India. The Mythological background name 'Gita' reflects the life or Karma of human being. In her film making the Bangladesh Revolution and Dateline Bangladesh are made available for Indian and abroad. Her both the films are well critically acclaimed in the India as well as other countries. The years of 1970 to 1971 she works for the television network NBC in US as a war correspondent. There is a tremendous quality Gita Mehta having and that makes her as good literary person. Gita Mehta's marriage is a great thing in her life because very few people get, what they want and the same thing happen with Gita that she gets a husband from the publishing house. She marries with a Sony Mehta, who is an editor-in-chief at known Alfred A. Knopf publishing house.

Gita Mehta covered on the TV news about of Indo-Pakistan war and the result of that into the creation of Bangladesh. She has seen the birth of nations like Bangladesh and Pakistan. Her films are based on the very different issues that she made a movie in the life of princely state in India. As it is known fact about her for the work of film making, she completed her four film and that are about war and politics. When she makes documentary, she need a lot of data and research and Gita is a good person to manage that. When she was asked about her documentaries, she talks,

I made four films on the Bangladesh war – I was with the guerrillas, the Mukti Bahini, inside Bangladesh. Later for NBC, I covered the Indo-Pakistan war that led to the creation of Bangladesh. I also made films on the election in the former Indian princely states...I would charge into the offices of BBC and NCB and ask them, 'why don't you let Indian's make film about India?' They were astonished and let me do the films (interview).

The contribution of her father for the nation brings the name and fame for the entire family. The respect he gets from the people that he elected as the Chief Minister for the state. The other member of her family also enters in the politics and her real brother Naveen Patnaik becomes the Chief Minister for the state after her father. This is again the matter of faith that people find them as a good leader for state. With the same legacy Gita Mehta writes about the Indian nation in her fiction and non-fiction. Her father and brother serve the nation with their hard work in the politics and she serves the nation with her pen.

The ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary term which mingles literature and environment. The environment issues are more widely and broadly written in the literature. Ecocriticism focuses on the same issues which developed in the literature in relation with nature. This term is not only present the environmental issues but provide the reasonable

answer to the environment issues. In the ecocriticism the nature plays important role, the nature is pure and original so it is applied to the race, gender and class to study. The quality of nature like originality and freedom reflects in the gender, race and other social issues. The naturalness and purity like nature is not man made so when ecocriticism is studied, they guide the human made rules in the society that how they are not correct? As they are based on the biased thoughts and prejudice mind. The ecocriticism makes these wrong thoughts clear in the society, as the nature which is naturally becomes ideal for society. William Rueckert introduced the term ecocriticism in his essay '*Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*'. Nowadays the ecocriticism is adopting the larger part of studies with green studies. Joseph Meeker's *The Comedy of Survival* (1974) book connects ecocriticism to the philosophy. He takes the literature from just presentation to ideological thinking in the literature. The ideological meaning gives more value and meaning to the studies. In the study of ecocriticism as the nature plays vital role and it drags all gender and racial issues in it for the true study.

The ecofeminism is also a major dominant part of ecocriticism. Françoise d'Eaubonne's book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974) defines the concept ecofeminism and its relation with gender issues. The feminism thinking and viewpoints are asserted from female point of view in the concern ecofeminism. It is also questioning the male dominated society as well as the egalitarian view of human being. The ecofeminism in the current world divided into many small but in effective parts like social, cultural and liberal ecofeminism. The aim of the research paper is to analyse the association between women and nature in relation with politics, culture, economy and literature. Ecofeminism many a times shows the close association between the subjugation of nature and women. In the one way we can see that the nature is dominated by the humans and in the similar line women are dominated by the men, but the ecofeminism guides that the all females should be equally treated in the society with dignity.

Ecofeminism's main concern is to abolish the supremacy of all forces which manipulates the human life. The style of conquering the people will be somewhere rejected in this thinking and make all human and nature a single equivalent entity. The injustice is not only in relation with nature but as the same time in relation with women too. The researcher is not just focussing on the literary work but also on the author who plays the important role to give birth as the creator of literature. The literary work is the women's creation then it talks in relation the ecocriticism and same time ecofeminism also. Gita Mehta as a women writer about nature and put up many concerns about women plus nature in her most celebrated book *a River Sutra*. The authority of culture over nature and the dominance of male over female is represented in many of the western books, some of them are Susan Griffin's '*Women and Nature*', Carolyn Merchant's '*The Death of Nature*' and Mary Daly's '*Gyn/Ecology*'. These are books ideally brought the theory of ecofeminism in the literature for wide study in

connection with ecology and environment. In many of environmental issues women lead the nature concern issues and make the ecocriticism as the great part of literary criticism. The human health and environment issues are the elementary subject matter of many of the female writers. That help to make the environment clean and green. Many of the women in the world come together to fight against the enemy of nature to save environment and make the proper balance in it.

The ecofeminism works to reconstructed the value of society and repair the existed culture. The freedom of the women and freedom of nature from the clutches of men are the prime subject matters of the ecofeminism. When any female writer writes about nature in her works of art that means she unknowingly advocate female issues and natures problem. The culture of any nation in the country is very oppressive in relation with nature and women so women come together to fight against it. The ecofeminism always resolves the problem of nature and women, as it is observed that there is a very close connection between women and nature as they work together inside the house and outside the house. The women work in the farm as well as in the house so they know the problems that ecology faces at the farm and in house. This is the best reasons that the birth of ecofeminism keep tap on the problems of nature and women. The gender issue is not only help to give their rights to women but pampers the nature. Cultural, social and radical feminism helps to grow the ecofeminism. The culture of human being has already made the decision in relation with women that male is superior but ecofeminism breaks this psyche and create new culture of equality. The radical feminism makes the role of women so prominent that they are the creator of human race like nature. The socialist and economic thought makes women independent like nature to prover her role in the world.

Ecofeminism primarily pin point the ecology. This is the impermeable in female writing when the nature becomes subject of novel. They not only write about the ecology but provide solutions to preserve it. In a River Sutra all short stories are based on the nature and the role of nature in the human life. Gita Mehta gives the details about nature which helps to keep human being happy and peaceful. It somewhere guides the entire human race to protect the ecology and nature for your own future. The existence of human being is possible only with nature or because of nature so, they need to take of this and bloom it for next generation. The term ecology plays very dynamic role in the ecofeminism as the most important role of ecofeminism is to save and protect the nature. The female writers give details about nature in their work of art means they focuses on the issue of nature and try to save it.

This is the way nature can be saved and many female writers come forward to put nature as main subject in their writing. Gita Mehta talks about the river which purifies human life in the text a River Sutra. She connects the life of human being with the river as it will give you a long life and take care of your future generation too. It is very clear in the text that the

nature only thing that will keep the human being and humanity alive. The care of ecology always connects the life of women, where women's liberation will give more power in the world. In this similar manner even the suppression of humans goes aside and the nature could give his best for human. Dobie Ann's book '*Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism*' talks about the connection between environment and literature and bring it at the ecocriticism.

*A River Sutra* is a novel which has many short stories but all are connected by the geographical locations. The Narmada River is the main stream which connects them all together. All the stories are presented in the fiction with help of this river that is a part of nature. Ecologically the river has huge importance because the entire surrounding is based on the river. The river gives the life to entire human kind and it is a witness of past and present for all. The novel talks about the Indian culture and tradition. The stories of the fiction make a wonderful journey to reader throughout the Indian culture like music, Indian places and religion.

Narmada river is the witness of all the people's happiness and sorrow as we can see in the all-short stories. A female writer gives the main idea and theme in the fiction like desire, love, good human heart and lust. In the other way ecofeminism is presented with the character, just retired person from the government job gives details about all human traits available in the society. The sutra is the word mentions in the title represents the sacred thread connects entire humanity. Many of the critic mentioned that this is the tread connects all short stories together. Narmada river is the place to purify human and clean their sins that is vividly available in the fiction. The unidentified person narrates all tells of the novel as his only information narrator provides as, he is a retired, childless person. The unknown narrator gives the details of his visitor of his guest house with their stories introducing himself a manager of his house. These six stories narrated make the reader aware about the nature and human psyche life of mortals.

*The Monks story* is the first story he hears at Narmada River. The nature always guides human being for his selfishness due to his gluttony human try to control the nature. In the story Ashok wants to leave the human desire and make a simple life like Mahavir from Jain religion. The Mahavir God left the entire human greed and accepted a simple life. In the similar manner Ashok left his wealthy father and join the simple life. He realised that pain of others can be relived with the help, so he wanted to help all others those suffered in the life. Most of the time he realised his father is responsible for the agony and suffering of people. Ashok's life is fully dedicated to humanity and spreading nonviolence becomes the main agenda of his life. In the other way we can say that he goes back to the nature and this the ecocriticism a female author presents in the fiction.

*The Teacher's Story* is a narration to unknown person for Tariq Mia. The old Muslim mullah get very close friendship with narrator and tell him two stories. The good teacher Mohan always wants an appreciation from his family and friends for his singing but he never received that. A time comes in his life and he trains Imrat a blind boy for singing and gains respect and popularity in his life as good teacher. This happiness doesn't stay for a loner and a day Imrat killed in front of Mohan. The death of Imrat affects Mohan so much that before his suicide he gets comfort from Tariq Mia.

*The Executive's Story* is about the real love and sacrifice of human life. Nitin Bose's diary is the prime source of the story as his love for a tribal woman is pure and immortal. The tea plantation business makes Nitin's visit to far from the house and feel a strong love for a peasant woman. The love is so strong but he has not the courage to express to the female and so he writes in his diary. The love for nature and the peasant makes the story true representative of ecofeminism. The woman is ideal person which cannot be gained but earned with true love like nature. The story also depicts the abusive nature of human towards female and nature. The capitalist society treats human being as the commodities in the fiction and the natural lands are also exploited. The tea gardens are the creation of British colonies and its same way exploits the labourer.

*The Courtesan's Story* is about the life of Rahul and his wife a courtesan's daughter. In the initial search courtesan realised that her daughter is just kidnapped but that is not true and her daughter is in love with Rahul. Many days they stay together and connected with each other with love. Rahul realised his mistake and chooses a good life that turns worst, make him a victim of police's bullet. The courtesan's daughter feels so loneliness and kills herself in the text.

*The Musician's Story* updates reader about the strong musical families in India. The Musician wants his daughter get marry with a good boy because she is not that beautiful. The knowledge about raga makes the most famous person in the entire vicinity. A handsome boy agrees to marry the girl in learning the knowledge of raga. This selfish boy learns all from master and rejected to marry Musician's daughter as soon as he learns all raga. The selfish nature of human and natural music makes the story a famous in the fiction.

*The Minstrel's Story* is the second story described by Tariq Mia to narrator. Naga baba's community offers their life to Lord Shiva and stays away from normal human places. They feel the spiritual power can be acquired in the loneliness. A Naga baba rescue a girl named Uma from one place and sell her at prostitution area. This is the picture of people from the society who give away their daughter to brothel on the name of Shiva as an offering to God says professor V.V. Shankar. The Naga baba is the good professor involved in the studies of superstition that he wants to eradicate from the roots. The description of nature and

the reality of people is very well narrated by the author Gita Mehta. Autor also depicts the natural life of Naga baba's, they collect grass to make bed and kitchen in the open air gives best quality food. The goat milk is so fresh to all Naga baba like nature, the purity of water bath and clean water gives the best memories of nature. This makes the daughter of minstrel best lover of Narmada. This is the picture of ecology and the conscious nature of writer to depict it in relation with ecofeminism reflects in the story.

All short stories make a very valid point about the exploitation of the women relate with nature. The courtesan's daughter at the end of story killed herself instead of staying in the man-made society she accepts the nature of death as a freedom. In the other story the peasant woman was the part of mother earth and so much connected to life of nature. The demand of equal treatment to male and female in another important issue depicted in almost all the short stories. The stories reveal the selfish nature of human being as the today's building is standing on the best gardens. The big wooden jungles are cut down to make the town and places to stay for the labourers. The awareness to save the nature is depicted in such scenes in the small stories. In '*The Courtesan's Story*' we can see that, "Oh, friends, how Shahbag has changed in my lifetime. Where there used to be gardens now, we have factories.

Our gracious old buildings have been torn down to be replaced by concrete boxes named after politicians. The woods that once ringed the city have been cut down for shanty towns of labour colonies. Even the boulevards around our haveli have been overrun so that our view is now only of a bazaar, and we must keep the windows to the west closed because of the smell from the open gutter". (167) Shiva Vandana's book '*Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*' talk about the 'maldevelopment' in relation with ecofeminism in the Asian countries. The ecofeminism strongly points out, man is the only entity exploits nature and women for their selfishness and creates imbalance in the world. This is the observation in the stories that the thief wants to lead the good as he stays in the jungle for many days. This nature is only guiding him for the good life and brings out the best person the world. The characters from all stories are born near the river Narmada and get dissolve in the river as it accepts them with their sins. The emersion of their in the Narmada cleans the soul of each human being. This is the best part of nature which cleans human from their sins. The research paper focuses on the ecocriticism and ecofeminism in the novel and studies its implication and application in the fiction. The entire fiction gives the picture of nourishing qualities of nature and female.

*A River Sutra* is the best example of ecofeminism and its natures the ecology and feminism simultaneously. The writing qualities of Gita Mehta makes it the best example of ecofeminism as the women can help the nature to protect and same time put forward the problem's women in the fiction.

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