

KARMA AND MOKSHA: UNRAVELLING SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS IN THE NARRATIVES OF GITA MEHTA AND ASHWIN SANGHI

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Abstract

A narrative or a story is a set of connected incidents in a sequence presented to a reader. In this study, we will be analysing the narrative style of Gita Mehta and Ashwin Sanghi with specific reference to the Theory of Karma and the concept of Moksha stated in Shrimad Bhagavad Gita by Lord Krishna, this will propose a comparative study to identify the functions of various narrative techniques used by the authors. In this paper, we will also see how the narratives have dealt with characters' actions to convey the precipice of their Karmas based on the decisions they have made in their lives and the Gunas they possess which also consciously made them take those actions, and through which the pathway of their Moksha is decided. In this study, we will examine the characters Karmas and Gunas based on the perspective of their actions and the routeway of their Moksha, described in the authors' unique narrative style.

Keywords: Narrative, Amalgamation, Spiritual Journey, Karma, Moksha.

Introduction

The Latin verb “narrare,” which means “to tell,” is the base word from which the word “Narrative” is derived. There is an adjective from which it is also related to “grants,” which means “Knowing” and “Skilled.” ‘Story’ can be used as a synonym for ‘narrative’. ‘The sequence of Events’ can also be explained as a narrative presented as a story to the reader. The presentation of real or unreal incidents told by the narrator can also called a Narrative; the difference lies in dramatically presenting it or explaining it. The sequence of incidents in a particular order is also known as the Plot. It can be short or long to describe different events in novels, short stories, biographies, historical works, travelogues, etc., to give them

proper significance through the process, stories are narrated, and poems are presented. Short stories and novels are told in the first or third person.

‘Characters’ play a vital role in the narrative. Many stories or narratives focus on one character or more than one character, but the characters get their interpretation by the readers. Readers majorly focus on the actions of the characters, and then their feelings, emotions, points of view, and mentality can be understood. If the character is presented as a developed or coming-of-age character by the writer, then they can be considered as a real person. There are different kinds of characters used by the writers in their narratives. Vital characters are those around whom the narrative revolves and trivial characters can be important to continue the story in a steady format. There is no active role in the narrative of the static character, as the name suggests they will be static in every part of the narrative. The characters who face a lot of changes in the narrative are called Dynamic character who comes after the major characters. A realistic person who evaluates the emotional problems in the narrative can be called a round character and their opposite will be the Flat character who has not much to do in the narrative just like a minor character.

The perspective or the thought of the author for which the writer presents the story can be called the ‘Point of View.’ The knowledge and the objective of the writer can be reflected in their point of view. The narrative’s point of view can be depicted in the first-person narrative to the third-person narrative. The third-person narrative’s point of view is majorly used by many writers. The names of the characters and the pronouns like ‘he’ or ‘she’ are used. Another point of view is ‘the omniscient point of view’, here, the narrative is seen from the one character’s perspective, and that person knows everything. A writer's point of view can be determined by the presentation of the characters in the narratives by the writer.

The language that is used by the author to tell a story is called ‘Style,’ which has many elements. The words chosen by the writer for the understanding of the story are called the Diction of the story. The structuring of the sentence can be simple, compound, and complex, referring to the Syntax of the narrative. One more element of style that can be used in the narrative is called Figurative language, which means using language creatively to convey a meaning that is not literal.

The idea or concept recurring throughout the narrative is called ‘Theme.’ The writer gives a message through the narratives, which can be conveyed through the themes. With the help of incidents of narratives and symbols, themes can be described. Historical incidents are

the perfect 'settings' for most of the narratives where the geographical area is very important. The setting is a place where the narrative takes place. It includes different aspects like history, culture, geography, etc. Through settings, the Plot also gets its shape.

Literature Review

GITA MEHTA

Kumar, Raj. *India in the fictional and non-fictional works of Gita Mehta*. 2017. Gurukul Kandri Vishwavidhyalaya. Ph.D. Thesis:

The present study argues that Gita Mehta looks at her country with the ambivalence of an outsider and yet she is possessive about it. She deglamorizes it but at the same time, she valorizes it for its enduring values and strong traditional base. On one hand, there is a tendency to uphold the native culture, to demystify and thereby justify it, and to describe the damage done by the prolonged period of colonization. On the other hand, she brings out the weaknesses, and issues of caste and gender discrimination boldly. It seems that while portraying present India, she simultaneously shows what she was and how she could have been.

Jain, Prerana. *Elements of spirituality in the selected works of Gita Mehta* 2016. Pacific University. Ph.D. Thesis:

The objective of this research is a thorough evaluation of the writings of Gita Mehta, it particularly examines the meaning of spirituality and how the elements of spirituality have been dealt with by her in her selected works. During the preliminary study, it has been noticed in her works, that Mehta explores that man suffers from emotional and spiritual limitations. However, despite these limitations, there is a joy of self-realization and enlightenment. This research also explores the effect and essence of spirituality through the works of Gita Mehta. There seem to be a lot of gaps, between literature and spirituality. So, this research attempted to trace how Gita Mehta has effectively used the elements of spirituality in literature.

ASHWIN SANGHI

Soni, Khyati. *Themes techniques in English thriller novels with special reference to Ashwin Sanghi and Dan Brown*. 2019. Devi Ahilya Vishwavidhyalaya. Ph.D. Thesis:

In this present comparative study, there is a comparison between the novels of Dan Brown and Ashwin Sanghi, this study provides the social, professional, and literary scenarios of the two authors who belong to two different countries. In this study, we discussed how both authors are from different countries and backgrounds and have such a similar style of writing which can be specified as imitated by Sanghi but in the Indian context, imitation can be next to impossible. This study clearly throws light on the work of both authors and also be useful for further studies by future writers in the same genre.

Sastry, Sunita. *Exploring revisitation of Myths and shifting significance of myth in selected contemporary Indian popular fiction*. Jain University. 2021. PhD Thesis:

The purpose of this study is to explore the shifting significance of myth in the revisitation of myth done by selected contemporary authors Amish Tripathi, Ashwin Sanghi, and Christopher C Doyle through the scrutiny of their selected works “The Immortals of Meluha, The Oath of Vayuputras, Chanakya’s Chant and The Mahabharat Secret”. This research aims to explore how the young authors are attempting to bring back the significance of the myth to the current globalized world. The research questions that were set to answer through the exploration are to find out whether Indian myth is pseudo-science or real science.

Mehta’s Love for India

Gita Mehta’s nonfiction book ‘Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East’ is in the form of a documentary Satire, which is in a series of different interconnected essays that includes wit, irony, and satire. Mehta narrates various incidents that came from Westerner's search for spirituality and the reality of life throughout the whole book. The major theme of the book is the West’s search for spirituality and their thinking that they won't be able to achieve spirituality in this capitalistic country they need to go to the East for the attainment of spirituality. In the West, there is no place for Spirituality, everyone is busy with economic and materialistic prosperity. Westerns think that Eastern countries are less economic and capitalistic, so, they can achieve enlightenment here. The reason behind their coming to the East is this. In this book, Mehta evaluates both Western seekers and Eastern spiritual gurus. She attracts the readers towards the flaws in both cultures and their practices and takes account of their perspectives also.

Raj is the first novel of Gita Mehta, which is a historical fiction that is the story of a woman in India, Princess Jaya, who was the daughter of Maharaja Jai Singh of Balmer, wife of Prince Pratap of Sirpur, and the mother of Arjun. The setting of the story is during the last half-century of the British Raj in India. This novel is an amalgamation of tragedy, history, and Politics. Twentieth-century India was presented by different authors from the colonizer's point of view, and this story of Jaya is that type of story with whom we can empathize. This book travels through the different narration through different places and various roles of Jaya. She uses Third-person narration throughout the whole book; she uses pronouns like 'he' and 'she' and the names of the characters to complete the narration. In this narration, Gita Mehta wants to present the effects of the British Raj on the Royal Elite class society when India was struggling for Independence. She paints an image of a very colourful poster of Indian culture with a very dignified and elevated language. She shows the life of an Indian colonial from the point of view of an Indian. In the whole narration of the book, Mehta creates a situation in which readers can interpret the historical data, but she doesn't use any sort of bitterness in the novel. Throughout the novel, she never imposes her political ideas on the readers, but she exposes her historical facts beautifully through Jaya and the time of India's struggle for Independence.

The novel A River Sutra is in the form of interlinked narratives that move with the same subject matter. The setting of the novel is on the banks of river Narmada, and several faiths and religious beliefs of Indians are connected to river Narmada. River Narmada is a goddess for Hindus, and they worship her to get peace, it's a belief that if you're very frustrated in your life, then you must visit the banks of Narmada for peace of mind and soul. If we talk about the novel's narrative technique, then there is not one narrator but different narrators for different chapters, which makes this book unique. The narrator of the story not only works as a character in the novel but also places the viewpoints of the writer in the story. In this work, the writer wants to create a suitable atmosphere through the nameless narrator who gives background to each story. Gita Mehta uses the Flashback technique differently. Every chapter focuses on one central character, and the narrative revolves around them, but the writer uses different incidents and different characters with it. Mehta describes the mindset of human beings with the help of many characters who cannot ignore the effects of religion, culture, faiths, traditions, etc, which surrender before it.

Ashwin's Style of Faction (Fact+Fiction)

As we are talking about Sanghi's style of Writing, one of the most important parts of his narrative is experimenting with the two time zones in every specific novel he wrote. In this work, *The Krishna Key* he connected the ancient story of the Mahabharat where Lord Krishna is a character and the present story where Dr. Ravi Mohan Saini is a protagonist. The major plot of *The Krishna Key* deals with the life of Dr. Ravi Mohan Saini who is a professor of History working on Mahabharata but accidentally accused in the murder of his friend Anil Varshney who told him about the major secret of Indus Valley Seals which eventually lead up to finding *The Krishna Key* which is an heirloom of Lord Krishna which is guarded by the Four descendants of Lord Krishna in the present time. The narrative technique of Sanghi in this novel is like the last sentence of the story of the ancient time zone talking about the birth and lineage of Kauravas and Pandavas but the present story starts with the last moments of the life of Anil Varshney. The writer makes such types of connections in the whole book and his other books. The writer has made an extrapolation by making the connection between ancient and present-time stories. The extrapolation is done through prolepsis, foreshadowing, or anticipation. The ancient time zone's narrative proves a prolepsis for the upcoming present time zone's narrative. The present time zone's narrative starts with the exact words. The experiment of the narrative technique as an ancient narrative paves the way for the present narrative. When Rashika Singh, a police inspector, investigates the murder of Anil Varshney with her Sub-inspector Rathore, introduced by the narrator in detail with at least two and a half pages which is an example of the narrative technique 'Pause' which comes under the study of 'Duration'. In this work, the writer used the narrative device analepsis, which is an internal analepsis, which was a happening time of the events within the first time of the first narrative.

Keepers of Kalachakra's narrative techniques involved the entanglements of the Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic ideologies. As predicted by Samuel Huntington, this work attempts to find the scientific explanations for the 'Clash of Civilizations' which is a backdrop of international terrorism on religious facts. The major part of the narrative is set in the Himalayan lands, which deals with physics. Environment, International Politics, etc. The narrative starts with a complicated discussion by an IIT professor named Vijay Sundaram, on the equivalent tendency between the Quantum theory of Physics and The Indian Vedanta. This discussion ends on the point that both theories attempt to understand the underlying

reality of the universe. This very discussion takes the reader to the novel's central theme, which is the commonality between science and spirituality. This discussion of tone is forwarded by the Sage Brahmananda who tells us about the Akashic records which are the vibrative tones of every soul in the universe and the journey of the soul. This discussion is an amalgamation of mythology, science, and philosophy and this discussion confirmed Ramayan's date with extensive research on hidden literary pieces of evidence, oceanography studies, and astronomical evidence. Several topics are discussed in the upcoming chapters of the novel related to Hindu and Buddhist theories and their symbols like Nataraj, the sound of Om, and its connection with the sound of gravitational waves, the Tibetan Book of Dead, Kalachakra Multantra, the power of Rudraksha, the myth of Shambala which is a utopian island which is supposed to be fictional, the ultimate power of Yoga and meditation and so on. This novel talks about concepts like Yamaj which is the existence of interconnected people with the Yin and Yan concept which is known for interdependency as well as the Shiv and Shakti which have been proven multiple times as a scientific invention. This work also talks about Islamic Jihad and its connection with international terrorism. There is a direct reference to Samuel P. Huntington's Clash of Civilizations where it states that religious and cultural identities are the main reason for global conflict in the post-cold War. The prospect of a clash of civilizations is becoming an all-out war between Muslims and the rest of the world. Just like the other novels of Ashwin Sanghi, the Keepers of the Kalachakra is an elite thriller that gives different references in the different fields of research and deep discussions on different areas of Knowledge with numerous references. The main narrative techniques used by Sanghi are complex, multi-layered themes, the extensive use of illustrations, meticulous study, the heavy bibliography, continuous change in the setting with an intricate narrative structure, and the inclusion of the long logical, historical, analytical, and philosophical discussions with the interdisciplinarity on the various streams of Knowledge. With the deep-rooted knowledge of the religions depicted in this novel with their functionality and theology are Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, Sanghi did a commendable job where he invites his readers to take them on a thriller-filled journey.

The narrative technique of Vault of the Vishnu is as same as the dual narrative structuring just like his other novels. The one narrative is set in ancient India and Cambodia and explores the time of the Pallava Dynasty and Khmer Empire can be said as a historical narrative. This timeline follows the life of Xuanzang, a Buddhist monk from China, and

Bodhidharma, a legendary monk and warrior believed to have introduced martial arts to China. In the historical narrative of the story, we can see the Hindu and Buddhist mythology and different ancient texts that gave references to a magical elixir that can give supernatural strength and endurance. This historical narrative also gives the background of the modern narrative and serves as a mystical treasure hunt, which leads to the clues that characters in the modern narrative must decipher. The modern narrative is filled with espionage, which is highly military action and political interests that follow the protagonist Paramjit Khurana aka Pam, a scientist with India's DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) who is appointed to investigate a dangerous Chinese super-soldier program. In further investigation, Pam stumbles upon a hidden ancient secret linked to Vishnu's legendary potion, which can change the balance of global military power. This narrative takes you in a fast-paced thriller that covers operations, kidnapping, betrayals, and intense action sequences. In this novel, there is a biggest challenge between Science and Mythology or between Fact and Fiction. The elixir of Vishnu is a potion that gives strength which is considered a magical concept and a scientific possibility that can be explored through biotechnological genetics and herbal medicines too. Another aspect of the narrative technique in this work is using the Doklam Conflict as a backdrop by the writer which can highlight the geo-political tensions between India and China, it is an assumption in this work that the Vishnu's Vault secret can change military warfare forever and make it an asset that intelligence agencies, secret organizations, and governments are trying to control it. This work presents the dilemma of using ancient knowledge and whether the discovery can be used for national defence or not. On the other hand, in the modern narrative, Pam Khurana's journey deals with the scientific journey as well as the personal loss but in the historical narrative Xuanzang and Bodhidharma's journey represents the ultimate quest for the truth and wisdom where his experiences contrasted with the modern-day espionage world where truth is often manipulated for political gains. The contrast of both journeys will add to the depth of showing how the search for knowledge whether scientific or spiritual can be transformative.

Amalgamation of Mehta and Sanghi Narrative Style

Gita Mehta and Ashwin Sanghi's intricate narrative technique amalgamates fact and fiction, history and mythology, and cultural explorations. The works of Gita Mehta have a linear but interconnected structure where the narratives can be seen from multiple angles but have

a main central theme, for example, *A River Sutra* has a multi-narrative proforma where different characters use their idea of India's spiritual landscape where they get through their journey on the spiritual awakening through the character's journey on their creation of Karma and the journey through the moksha, as well as Raj, has a third-person omniscient narration which gives readers a vivid description of Colonial India through Jaya's perspective through which the journey of Jaya from the princess to sergeant created an extensive Karma which further leads to the journey to enlightenment. Sanghi on the other hand, follows a multi-layered, dual-narrative structure captivating past and present time zones, his novels such as *The Krishna Key* and *Vault of Vishnu* make a parallel narrative technique where the ancient time zone events are inter-connected to the modern time zone using devices like extrapolation, foreshadowing, and analepsis to bridge the two timelines. In *The Krishna Key* where the protagonist who was accused of the murder gets away with it and comes across a lot of secrets related to the Indus Valley Seals which help him in his journey of creating Karma according to his Gunas and goes on to the journey of Moksha on the other hand, In *Vault of Vishnu*, the protagonist, Pam Khurana DRDO scientist came across an ancient elixir of Vishnu which can be stated as a possibility of a mythological and political conflict which can be catered as functionality of Karma and their journey through Moksha. In the context of themes, Mehta follows Spirituality, Colonialism, and cultural conflicts whereas her narratives are observational, reflective, and documentary-like as seen in *Karma Cola*, which critiqued Western Capitalism with Eastern Spiritualism. On the other hand, Sanghi blends history, mythology, Science, and Geo-politics whereas his narratives are thriller-driven, research-intensive and conspiracy-laden where mythology meets modern, political, and military narratives, for example, *Keepers of the Kalachakra* explores the Science-Spirituality meet while *Vault of Vishnu* links ancient potion to modern military espionage. In *Keepers of the Kalachakra*, the protagonist Vijay Sundra goes on to the exploration of distinctive mythological aspects where he comes across the possibility of the actions that lead up to their Karmas and make their journey extensive to Moksha. Based on narrative style, Mehta uses flashbacks, third-person omniscience, and multi-character perspectives to show a social landscape, she doesn't impose her political thoughts but exposes the flaws in both Eastern and Western cultures. On the other hand, Sanghi uses historical extrapolation, analepsis, detailed exposition, and heavy research-backed references to amalgamate mythology with modern-day narratives. The novels of Sanghi, depend, on the "Pause" technique, where he takes a deliberate deviation to explain mythological and scientific concepts. For example, the heavy discussion on the quantum-

Vedanta connections in *Keepers of the Kalachakra*. Based on tone, Mehta's work is analytical, introspective, and ironic where she presents her narrative with a close eye on cultural contrasts and human psychology maintaining a proper poetic style i.e. *A River Sutra* on the contrast, Sanghi's tone is fast-paced, thrilling and deeply investigative which keeps the readers engaged through cliffhangers, suspense, and intellectual discourse and referencing ancient texts, scientific theories, and espionage tactics.

Conclusion

Gita Mehta and Ashwin Sanghi, are the two storytellers who are navigating the big landscape of the Indian Narratives and use very different tools yet they have a common goal that is to help us understand India's rich and complex soul. Two storytellers navigating the vast landscape of Indian narratives. Mehta, with the help of her beautiful narratives and sharp insights, exposes the real face of the society which reflects their traditions, their struggles, and their modernity. She tells us to question ourselves about what we think we know and to connect with our inner philosophical ideas that go through our Indian identity. Mehta's stories are not like thrillers but they are about the silent power of observation and the weight of history and how it shapes ourselves in the present.

Sanghi, on the other hand, has a very strong storytelling that weaves intricate plots, an amalgamation of the ancient myths and their present-day conspiracies into the grasping of action, intrigue, and surprise. He delves us into the world where their hidden connections are yet to be discovered and where history is a mystery that needs to be solved. His stories are less about looking inward and more about exploring the world around us, about uncovering the secrets that lie just beneath the surface.

Even though they have different approaches, both Mehta and Sanghi make a major contribution to understanding India. They both delve into the deep well of Indian Mythology, history, and philosophy and bring ancient narratives and traditions to life for contemporary readers. Both the writers fight for the complexities of what it means to be an Indian and the tensions between tradition and modernity, the effects of Colonialism, and the difficulties of a world that's changing faster than ever. Importantly, Mehta and Sanghi in their way tell us about the unique ways that India is not a simple thing, it's a collection of numerous perspectives, narratives, and experiences that together create an ever-evolving culture. So, both writers are like two sides of the same coin each defining a different light

of India which shines on a different face of India's multifaceted identity, helping us to appreciate the ancient and dynamic civilization in all this glorious complexity.

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