

**A STUDY OF POSTMODERN NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN GITA MEHTA'S 'RAJ'****Dr. Prakash Eknath Navgire,***Assistant Professor, Department of English, Sir Vitthal Das Thackersey College of Home Science (Autonomous), SNDT Women's University, Santacruz (West) Mumbai***Abstract:**

*Gita Mehta is postmodern historical writer; she intentionally intermingles the history in her fiction. The presentation of history and the political ideologies are presented through her novels. The development of the character and story happens around proper political and historical background. The historical incidents make changes or affects the life of characters in the fiction. This is one type of intermingling historical events in the fiction. The real historical characters and events are used with the fictitious character in the novel. The facts are fictionalised in her work. The historical incidents are a prime subject of her narratives and that all are fictionalised. When she writes the fiction, she is much aware that this is the fictitious description of history and politics. She uses the intertextuality in her text because almost entire fiction talks about the historical incidents. The polyphony adequately uses in Gita Mehta's fictions. The aim of the paper is to provide the post-modern narrative technique in relation with most celebrated concept historiographic metafiction in the novel.*

**Keywords:** - postmodernism, polyphony, historiographic metafiction, intertextuality...etc.

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Gita Mehta is a renowned name in the Indian writing in English. She is born in 1943 at the freedom fighters' family. She is known in the English writing for her historical theme for fiction. Biju Patnaik is her father who served as Chief Minister for the Odisha state. She has the blood of politics in her vein. Her father was an Indian independence activist. So, she has a legacy of nationalist fighter. When she writes it real love for India reflects in each of her sentence. Most of her books about Indian culture and tradition. Many of Indian forgets about their own tradition but Gita Mehta keeps them alive in her literature. She provides the good archive to the new generation about culture and tradition of India. Gita is the guidelines for each human being how to live life. This always observes in her writing also when she gives a strong character like Jaya in *Raj*.

Gita Mehta is the witness of the Gandhi's death. She has seen the entire incident with her father, so it has the deep impact in her mind. With her experience and hard work, she contributes many fiction and non-fiction to the literary field, her works *Karma Cola* (1979), *Raj* (1989), *A River Sutra* (1993), *Snakes and Ladders: A Glimpses of Modern India* (1997) and *Eternal Ganesha: From Birth to Rebirth* (2006). Gita Mehta's creation gives her a name in Indian writing in English. At the same time, she was awarded with fourth highest civilian award the Padma Shri in 2019. The abilities of her are not restricted towards the literature but the

quality of her observation makes her a director for many movies and television documentaries. Gita Mehta produced and directed more than fourteen documentaries for the television. Her documentaries are made for UK, European and US network. Her writing occupies the subject of rich history and culture that all come from the experience of her life in the political development in her family. While intervening, she talks about the culture and tradition of India. She said,

India is a place where worlds and times are colliding with huge velocity: we are putting satellites into space, and we have bullock carts; there, that constant tension and contradiction of immense sophistication and an almost pre-medieval way of life (interview).

Gita Mehta is a famous name in historical writing in the fiction. Her novels are a mixture of fact and fiction. She very delicately handles the issue of tradition and culture in her fiction and non-fiction. The quality of history and fiction is the up to the mark as we see in the western fiction in relation with Gita Mehta. The original life like characters from history are available in her fiction that is the historiographic metafiction. She uses this technique to bring the authenticity in the fiction. When reader read it, they get to know the all-original facts in the fiction. When we see the work of Gita Mehta in relation with other female writer, she is the best in historical writing among others. The work of art is so open and transparent to the reader that reader don't find any ambiguity in the language. The other post independent writers are in the same line in writing the stories from the past. Sometimes we feel it so predictability in the writing of Mehta. The selection of the plot for the fiction is so simple in her writing that reader get the idea of entire writing. She provides the conflict in the writing with the proper resolution. It is helpful to the reader to get the idea of the writing and then the entire fiction becomes so easy to understand. The most important in the writing is the social and political picture of the society. The political background helps her to get the idea from the politics. And at the same time the history is a guiding force of her writing.

A River Sutra (1993) goes into the deeper section of the mind of human being. The character she uses are so applicable to the fiction and they go in the vein of the story line. The novel has the first-person narration and that helps to guides us to understand the story. This is a fiction that provides the communication which is so dialogic. The story is about the river Narmada. The story of the river goes in deep of the mythology and due to that it creates the picture of secularism in the fiction. The prominent character retires from the job and later he takes the government rest house to run and the stories develops with him. Hindu mythology, Sufi poetry and classical Sanskrit drama these all finds their reflection in the novel. The novel is one type of journey from the ancient to modern period for the readers. The story is the blend of Indian mythology and deep passionate love. Here the quality of writing is the old mythology is narrated with the great colours. There are many interlinked stories provided in the text and though they are interlinked but reader can't find any issue in understanding the story. The main theme in each human beings' life is to find out the real meaning of life

and the same thing the narrator does in the fiction where he meets people on the bank of Narmada ask their life experience to them and get knowledge from it.

Gita Mehta's work or arts give the details about the Indian culture and tradition is clearer for the reader but at the same time it goes into the hands of westerns as the perception of Indian culture. These types of writing create the much respect and love at international level for the Indian tradition. The important fact about her awards, when she awarded with Padma Shri, she declines the award due to some political reasons.

*Raj* (1989) is a postmodern novel in the narrative technique. The theme and concept are historical. The politics takes its place in the fiction due to that the language is lucid and informative. The characters are so important because the description is purely about princely families. So nowhere the reader feel that they are reading any very local or cheap literature. Each dialogue is a very heavy and descriptive in the fiction. There is a lyrical fluidity of language in the fiction. The East West encounter main theme of her writing in this fiction. The novel is fully about the culture and religion so the reader feel that he understood the moral values through fiction. Gita plays with the main character Jaya and makes her so strong that the reader feels so energetic after the reading. The prime focus of her writing goes to the past historical characters which are available in the text and they interfere with the fictitious characters. In the fiction reader can see that Anny Besant and Sardar Patel talk with Jaya for her contribution for the nation's growth. This is the best quality make her a prominent writer in the postmodern fiction. In her writing she narrates about the tantric and religious guru who guides the people for their prophesy. The intention of such writing is to bring such people in front of the society so no one believe on them. And this people never create any lacuna in mind of people. In the narrative technique we can see that she writes from the lonely woman's point of the entire story. She finds many ways to work on her problem and becomes a successful queen. The role of women in traditional India is so depressing that's what her father Jay Singh wants to change and due to that from the childhood of Jaya he prepares her for hunting to education. Gita criticizes with the help of east west encounter in the fiction that when Jaya's husband on the first night of marries not agree to keep any relation with his wife. She narrates the happy and helpful nature of Indian women though the characters of maidservants.

The '*Karma Cola*' (1979) this fiction makes people aware about the hypocritical activities of the Indian Guru. The language is so simple that the reader gets to know about the story in one reading. The tendency of the west that the real spiritualism lies in the east countries and they come here for the search of spiritual peace and the gurus make them fool. The narration is so clear and it is come from the story format so makes the understanding easy for the reader.

Gita Mehta's almost all work of arts are so well managed in relation with the narrative technique and because of that all writing is worldwide accepted. The language, metaphor, symbol, fictional world, ambience in the fiction, characters, theme, plot, setting, style, figurative sentences, flashback, myth, history, idioms and

phrases, regional Hindi words, satire and images are all make her writing rich and humble for the reader.

Gita Mehta's *Raj* (1989) is a historical novel. The novel depicts the royal families of pre-independence of India. Mehta divides the Indian nation into two parts one British Royal India and British India. The British Royal India includes only Britisher who rules over India. The other part British India which is the common Indians including the all Kings and the rural India. The novel *Raj* (1989) is divided into four books. Each book contains a name of city and king like, book one *Balmer*, second book *Sirpur*, third book *Maharani* and fourth book *Regent*. When the novel is divided at each book contains the information about the kind and the treatment of that king form the British Empire. The most important fact available in the fiction that each sub chapter most of the time named with the year. When the year is provided in the historical fiction it brings more authenticity in the writing. In the *Balmer* the first sub chapter starts with the 1897, now when to check the historical details about the year of 1897 in relation with Indian country, it is found on the Wikipedia and other search engine that this year is known for the famine in the entire country. This same reflects in the fiction, this realistic fact is historicised in the fiction *Raj*.

The novel begins with the proper prologue and this the very traditional style of writing novel. With the help of prologue narrator makes the background for the fiction at the same time it goes easy for the reader to understand the character and the relation of the characters with each other's. The main concept of novel is revealed in the prologue and this is where the writer connects the reader. In the novel the prologue introduces the reader the character Jay Singh, Tikka Singh and Jaya Singh. In the prologue it makes clear that they are form the royal family and gone for the hunting. At the same time the family of the king is different where male and female treated equally. Here the king requests her maharani to send the girl for the hunting. The most important sentence, which is the guidelines through the life of Jaya make in the prologue by her father Jay Singh, 'Rulers are men and men are always frightened. A man cannot govern unless he confronts his own fear (5)'. The situation makes a simple girl Jaya a queen for the Kingdoms. She learns the great lessons from her father about *rajniti*, the philosophy of monarchy. This leads her a great maharani who rules the Balmer and her husband's state. Author starts with the title 1897 the year is famous for the famine and thousands of the people dies due to drought.

The place Balmer is calls a place of Abode of Death. Actually, it is the perception of one English man who suffer a lot due to water and said the place is like death place. The reality is different and they have a good water resource. The development in the city Balmer makes the place friendlier to British people. The novel many of the places focus on the astrologer and even Mehta narrates in the first chapter about the astrologer that, 'but court astrologers are reminding their maharajahs that famine has come every twenty years since the rise of British power' (11). The truth she wants to present that the power of British is rising everywhere in the country. The novel handles the theme of departing British colonialism. This another side emergence of

the democracy in Indian country. When to see the world literature it is found that the effect of the Britisher is so deep in the thinking and ruling that it stays with Indians for many years. Another side even the description of the valour and fight been narrated in the British literature and they talk about own efforts to make other countries as human country. The thinking of the Britisher is that they are making the civilised world.

The novel more focuses on the behaviour and the treatment to Indian. When the Britisher arrives in India at that time the Princely raj exists everywhere in the country and this is the first novel which talk about the life of these kings in relation with people. The novel begins with the diamond jubilee celebration of the queen Victoria to merging all states to make one nation. In the prologue it makes clear that the families are belong to the Rajput monarchy. The king plans to take his daughter Jaya to jungle for the hunting of tigers. The king has the different mentality and he doesn't want to raise his daughter like the other women in Balmer. He even sends his girl to play polo, cricket with male friends. When he gives the lesson on *rajniti* that becomes the best knowledge we can see a king father imparting to his daughter. He talks with her about the four *Arthashastra* one *saam* it means to serve the people, *daan* means to provide the good welfare for the society, *dand* means if even anybody is wrong then give him the punishment also, *bhed* means to maintain the secrecy for the safety of kingdom. At one side the girl takes the best lesson of the religion and culture of Rajput and the other side his son Tikka is much influences with ways of foreigner. He gets the white man as his teacher and due to that he even thinks to go England. It is the beginning for the people to realise that the Royal British India is not at all interested in their problem but they want only good amount of tax on each thing.

The fiction has numerous details about the behaviour of British, when Jai Singh goes to England to meet for the tax relief but did not get the good response. The British's are more interested to make the railways and factories in India but not to provide the water to the people in the drought. This is another rule made in India that the tax collector becomes the owner of the land and the farmers are only worker. These things and rules are so unhuman and though the king realises the issue but can't help the people. If the king tries to help any of the person, then at the same time he will be out of throne and new king will be appointed. The more details of the exploitation, get the kingdom from many of the English people. The people of the Balmer realises more when they face the famine for more than three years and British takes the same tax from them. The maharani of Balmer, wife of Jay Singh takes more efforts to take the visit to the famine affected places and provides the supply as much as she can. Whenever she goes outside, she takes her daughter with her to see the picture. She interests more in the prophesy of the tantric. The visit to royal palace in England affects more to king and make more paralyse when he takes decision regarding the English ruler. When the talk initiates between the king and another king named Dingra it reaches at the point that he realises that we Indians are just puppets of British empire. We cannot see the future of us but only stick to the past stories of valour. And

reminds the king that from last many years nobody gone for the war.

The story goes ahead and the son of Jay Singh is more interested in the war and gun. So, in future he joins the British in the war against Germany. This is the First World War and Tikka actively takes part in the war with his Balmer lancers. The letter Tikka writes to his sister make the war details clear for the reader, that the war is extremely dangerous. The Germany uses gas bombs against the army and thousands of the people kills in a day. He says many of the people killed on the one day. There is only one thing for him that after the death they should get the fire not be buried. But the times comes and in the war Tikka dies fighting with enemies of England. The reality is that the war is never between the India and Germany. But the British uses the other country fighter to save their own nation. The maharani is very unhappy and curses the Britisher for the death of his son. When the Tikka dies after that within few days Jay Singh declares that the war is over. The sad Jay Singh can't stay happy for more days and he dies. The family is changes after his death, maharani becomes the sati mata herself and Jaya gets marry with Prince Pratap of Sirpur.

The marriage of Jaya is not the happy affair but she has to marry with the sword of Pratap. When he comes from the war, he is not ready to accept the Jaya as his wife because he finds her very illiterate native. Prince Pratap appoint a lady Modi to teach Jaya the English manners. Jaya herself is a very nice and cultured girl but he is not ready to accept her. The reason for this behaviour is, he stays many years abroad and so much fancy about the wester women. In Jaya's transformation many of the changes done in her nail, hairs. Even she gets the classes for correct mixture of wine. She becomes the good student and learn all the western manners. This she uses when the Prince of Wales visit Sirpur for polo match. Later her skills in the game Derby goes more polishing and today she runs the winning horse at Sirpur. Jaya not only be part of the game on the ground but now takes one step ahead in the politics also.

One of her old teacher Mrs. Roy takes her to meet Rabindranath Tagore, Motilal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu and Anny Besant. The tremendous change comes in Jaya and realises that the freedom in India is the dream of her father also. And she gets the help from the women like Besant. When she comes at her own palace, she always realises that her husband is more interested in the white women. Jaya shows the picture of Indian Kings who are mad for the woman. She tells the Maharaj of Patiala plans to abduct the daughter of Viceroy. The king of Kashmir Hari Singh pays the fortune to the marries women for blackmailing her. The Maharaj of the Indore is deposited for his involvement in the murder of prostitute. The Maharaj of Indore and Nabha fighting for the dancing girl. The fortunes changes in a good way for Jaya that her husband becomes the Maharaj of Sirpur due to the death of Victor. The life is not happy for Jaya that her husband is never interested in her. But after the seven years she gives birth to a child. The birth of child may be changing the life of Prince but this never happens and Jaya has to consummate the unhappy married life. Jaya balances the life of Maharani and a mother. She today also not forgot the lesson her father taught her. The Rajniti is within

her blood. And she uses it at her place Sirpur. Now slowly her husband becomes more drunkard and spend more of the time in the drinking state. And the situation comes when her husband dies in the airplane accident with white people.

All the people of the Sirpur comes together at her door and blames the white officers for the death her husband. But at last, nothing can happen against the Britisher and now she becomes the Maharani of the Balmer with her son. There is nobody to help her at Sirpur kingdom except the Prime Minister Sir Akbar. The one person is not sufficient to help her so the white man Captain Osborne lends his hand and helped her to run the kingdom. Captain Osborne is in love with Jaya from her childhood. The time changes and there is aghast against the British in the country everywhere. At the time of war situation in the country people fight Hindu against Muslim and many riots erupted in the country. In the riots of Hindu Muslim Jaya lost the most trusted man Minister Akbar and his son. Now at this time she requires a good knowledgeable person to run the kingdom so she calls her good old friend Arun Roy. Arun Roy is a good advocate and works for the nationalist party. One day they go for the visit at jungle and that time they come closer and have sex in the jungle. Within the few days she receives the letter from the British government that they have plan to sack or dethrone Jaya and appoint somebody else for the throne. This disturbs a lot to Jaya. And she realises that the act of information is done by the James Osborn. This scene disturbs her more and she throws the envelope in the anger due to that the frame on the wall of her own picture fall down on the ground and breaks. Later the changes come in India and Britisher plans to leave India.

The issue of merging kingdom in India goes for many days and at last Jaya agrees to give her kingdom to India. She sighs in front of the Sardar Patel and merges her kingdom in India. The word she uses is that we are not merging in India but the India is merging with Sirpur. This is the all-small kingdoms are merged with one India. She helps people to understand the concept of merging and due to that there was no riots and fights anywhere in the country. In the end of the story, she realises that Arun Roy fills form her constituency. The thought she remembers which she receives from her father about the dharma of king. At that time even, she fills the form from her constituency as an independent member. This her name Jaya as the Victory fulfils her character.

The history and politics in *Raj* is also her own version of subjective description. The own created fictitious characters and the nature of them get involved in the making process of the novel. Her novel *Raj* is a form of self-reflexive literature. When she writes such historical novel, she is totally aware about the historical fact and with the help of its narration she keeps her reader attached to the novel. This takes the reader on another track that the pre-existed knowledge of them is useful to understand the novel better. This pre-existed knowledge carries forward in her fiction is a part of intertextuality which is the prime feature of postmodern literature. There are verity of narratives forms she uses in her novel, they are history, feminism, satire,

political details, love story, issue of women's emancipation, human relationship, comic effect are available in her fiction *Raj* and this mixture of the forms is a part of postmodern literature.

Gita Mehta uses the plurality and multiculturalism in her fiction. The plurality of the society, culture, religion, tradition and human beings available in her fiction. Multiculturalism is available in *Raj*, the Hindu culture and Muslim culture, the Gandhian thought and the British and nationalist thought are available in the fiction. This multiculturalism and plurality are the part of postmodern literature. Barry Lewis put the theory of 'temporal disorder' which goes with Linda Hutcheon's 'historiographic metafiction' are very clearly available in the fiction *Raj*. The novel bases on the postcolonial issues because there is a lot of description available after the independence. The postcolonialism is one integral part of postmodern literature. The meaning of the novel and the narrative technique of the novel make it a part of poststructuralism. There are many voices available in the text at the same time the dominant voice is measured in the fiction and the Bakhtin's polyphony is available in the fiction for the analysis. This all makes the novel as a postmodern novel and the author a postmodern author. Now the same text takes for the postmodern analysis with the help of major postmodern historical term historiographic metafiction and the traits of postmodernism.

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