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# Literary Theory

Textual Application



**ATLANTIC**

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## A River and the Feminine Trope: Reading Gita Mehta's *A Riversutra* through the Lens of Spiritual Ecofeminism

Samrat Laskar

Rivers shape human history and human culture. People living by it get influenced by its course as the river runs through their lives, cutting across generations. Gita Mehta's *A Riversutra* (1993) is a fictional work in which some loosely connected short stories are narrated to us by an anonymous retired bureaucrat in the background of the river Narmada. In fact, it is the river which acts as the prime unifier between the stories. The narrative flow reminds us of the flow of a river in which different currents get mixed with each other. The stories contain diverse human emotions and passions—love of wealth, flesh, music, and nature as well as renunciation from all these worldly passions. What gives this work its distinctness, is its recurrent use of the feminine trope to foreground the river. *A Riversutra* is marked by a strong ecofeminist dimension though primarily in its spiritual form and without any apparent trace of activism. But before coming to Mehta's evocation of the Narmada and her deployment of ecofeminist tools, we must initiate ourselves with the history of ecofeminism and some of its basic tenets.

The binary between culture and nature has been going on for ages. Interestingly, both sides of the binary carry gendered association. If a culture gets associated with the masculine, nature is with the feminine. By imposing the "natural" role on women, patriarchy imposes an obvious parallel with anthropocentric culture. The logic of domination of nature by humans finds reflection in the justification of domination of the feminine by