



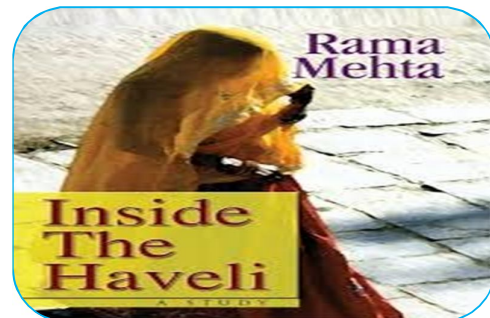
**RAMA MEHTA'S INSIDE THE HAVELI: WOMEN'S IDENTITY
AND SILENT RESISTANCE**

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ABSTRACT:

Indian English fiction has always been interested in how women live in societies that are traditional and male-dominated. Rama Mehta's Inside the Haveli (1977) is one of these books that stands out because it shows how women feel and how they deal with being trapped in a complicated way.

KEYWORDS: Indian English fiction, societies, traditional and male-dominated.

**INTRODUCTION:**

The story is about Geeta, a well-educated woman from Bombay who moves to Udaipur to marry into a strict, upper-class family. The haveli, which is her family's ancestral home, is not just a physical space; it is also a strict social order based on hierarchy, gender roles, and traditions passed down through generations.

OBJECTIVE:

This paper asserts that Mehta constructs female identity not via overt rebellion but through subtle resistance, which constitutes a strategic and patient method of negotiating power. This study employs feminist theories, particularly those of Simone de Beauvoir, Elaine Showalter, Judith Butler, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, to demonstrate that Geeta's transformation constitutes a form of agency that aligns with tradition rather than opposing it. The book contributes to the discourse on Indian feminism by depicting resistance as lived endurance, nuanced reform, and moral fortitude.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

India changed a lot after it became free, but feudal and patriarchal systems stayed strong, especially in rich families. Mehta's book uses the haveli to show how things are changing from old to new. Purdah, the hierarchy of the home, and obedience to male authority dictated women's lives. Simone de Beauvoir famously said, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir 283). Cultural conditioning is a part of this process. Geeta goes through this process directly in Inside the Haveli. She grew up in a city that was pretty free, but now she has to act like the quiet, obedient daughter-in-law. Kate Millett refers to the societal expectations imposed on Geeta as "sexual politics," a term denoting patriarchy's role as a political institution that influences personal relationships (Millett 23).

FEMINITY IN INSIDE THE HAVELI

The haveli is both a place to live and a place to work. The Haveli as a Place for Ideas and Architecture. The haveli stands for something in the whole book. It is walled off, looks inside, and has a

hierarchy in its design. It enforces tradition, silence, and conformity on an ideological level. Michel Foucault's idea of "disciplinary space" helps to make this structure clearer. Foucault posits that institutions exert control over bodies via nuanced surveillance and the imposition of norms that individuals internalize (Foucault 170). The haveli works the same way: women watch each other, and behavior is shaped by what people expect instead of clear punishment. Geeta's early experiences show what this kind of discipline looks like. She learns how to dress, talk, and behave. You can not see or do as much because of the purdah system. But the book does not show violence; it makes control seem normal instead. The haveli is a metaphor for inherited patriarchy that is strong but held together by routine instead of violence. Being shocked, feeling alone, and having an identity crisis Geeta is shocked when she first sees the haveli. She feels like she is the only one who feels this way and can not get out of her head. Her education, which used to make her proud, does not matter anymore because her family values obedience over individuality. Beauvoir asserts that in a patriarchal society, women are regarded as "the Other" (Beauvoir 16). Geeta really feels this otherness. She is an insider as a wife, but an outsider as a modern woman. This duality causes a crisis of identity. Butler's theory of gender performativity says that gender is made up of actions that happen over and over again and are shaped by social norms (Butler 33). Geeta has to be the perfect daughter-in-law in the haveli. This performance looks fake at first. But she learns how to handle it over time.

So, feeling alone is the first step in figuring out who you are. Adaptation as a Way to Work Things Out Geeta does not openly rebel; instead, she watches and changes her behavior slowly. Do not mix up this change with giving up. It illustrates what feminist scholars term negotiation within patriarchy. Chandra Talpade Mohanty cautions against perceiving Third World women merely as passive victims; she underscores their agency within specific cultural contexts (Mohanty 65). Geeta is an example of contextual agency. She does not want to tear down the haveli; she wants to make it more like a home. She earns the trust of her family and servants by being kind, patient, and careful with what she says. Instead of using power to get what she wants, she uses confrontation to build emotional authority. This is the beginning of quiet resistance.

The Concept and Implementation of Silent Resistance

Resistance in stories often seems dramatic, with characters fighting back, escaping, or rebelling. But in *Inside the Haveli*, people fight back in a quiet way.

James C. Scott's concept of "everyday forms of resistance" is pertinent in this context. Scott asserts that individuals on the periphery frequently exhibit resistance through subtle means, such as negotiation, delay, or reinterpretation, rather than overt rebellion (Scott 29). This framework goes along with what Geeta did. Some examples of silent resistance are:

- Asking if strict purdah is really necessary
- Getting people to talk to each other in a relaxed way
- Getting girls to go to school
- Keeping her mind busy and interested

Her silence is no longer forced; it is now a strategy. She uses silence to her advantage by deciding when to speak and when to be quiet. Education as a means to empower individuals and effectuate change. One of Geeta's most important contributions was making sure that girls in the haveli got an education. People change when they learn. Paulo Freire says that education makes people more aware of problems and gives them the tools to fight them (Freire 35). Freire's ideas help us understand Geeta's approach, even though he writes about something else. She empowers future generations by promoting literacy. The ideas behind confinement are against teaching girls. Knowledge takes you to new places outside of your home. Geeta starts to make things better through education without breaking up the family. This means that education starts a revolution without anyone saying anything. Emotional and Solidarity Networks for Women In the book, female solidarity is another important part of how people find out who they are. Geeta slowly gets to know the other women who live in the haveli.

These kinds of relationships make people feel better. Elaine Showalter says that women's writing often focuses on what women go through and what it means to be a woman (Showalter 131). Mehta does not just show women as rivals; she shows them as friends who have the same issues. Geeta knows that women who seem weak are actually strong because they tell their stories and show empathy. This new understanding changes the way she thinks about tradition.

Women standing together makes their identities stronger. Moderation, Marriage, and Male Characters Mehta's depiction of Ajay, Geeta's spouse, contrasts with numerous feminist narratives that depict men as perpetually oppressive. Instead, he is shown to be somewhat progressive. He values tradition, but as time goes on, he starts to support change.

This balanced picture makes it harder to see things in black and white terms like "oppressor" and "victim." It looks like patriarchy is a system, not just one person.

This level of detail goes along with Mohanty's point that we should understand things in context (Mohanty 72). Negotiation, not fighting, brings about social change.

Language, Style of Storytelling, and Tone of Voice

Mehta's writing is still clear, calm, and observant. The story does not use sensationalism. This style choice goes along with the theme of quiet resistance.

The story's calm voice shows how Geeta is slowly changing. There is a subtle way to show how strong your feelings are. The book is easy to read because the writing is simple, but it still has a lot of depth. Mehta links academic writing to real-life experience with this tone.

Identity Is a Process, Not an End Goal Inside the Haveli, there is no set identity. It does change. Geeta does not completely let go of her culture or who she is. Instead, she creates a hybrid identity that is both modern and traditional.

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity posits that identity emerges in contexts of cultural conflict (Bhabha 37). Hybridity is primarily employed in postcolonial studies, yet it elucidates Geeta's position between modernity and feudalism. Her last identity is more about finding a balance than winning. Instead of a violent overthrow, silent resistance leads to slow change. Adding to the feminist conversation in India. Inside the Haveli contributes significantly to Indian feminist literature by illustrating:

1. Fight back without showing it
2. Control in the house
3. Learning to get power
4. Emotional strength as a source of strength

The book broadens the concept of feminist resistance beyond mere opposition.

CONCLUSION:

Rama Mehta's Inside the Haveli shows that women always have to negotiate when they are in a space where men are in charge. Geeta uses silent resistance, which includes education, empathy, patience, and moral courage, to change her surroundings without leaving them behind.

The book challenges the notion that empowerment must be loud or extreme. It says that change usually starts slowly, in the way people interact with each other every day. Tradition assists women in discovering their identity, but not independently. Mehta honors the dignity of women's lived experiences and adds to Indian English feminist fiction in a lasting way by showing how silent resistance can be a powerful form of agency.

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