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**"Living Through Karma and Searching for Moksha: Insights from Gita Mehta's *Karma Cola* and Ashwin Sanghi's *The Krishna Key*"**

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**Article Received:** 23/01/2025

**Article Accepted:** 25/02/2025

**Published Online:** 26/02/2025

**DOI:**10.47311/IJOES.2025.7.02.292

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**Abstract:**

In this study, we will see what Karma is and the process of creating different Karma through decisions taken by the characters that can lead up to the route of Moksha in Gita Mehta and Ashwin Sanghi's works. Through analyzing Gita Mehta's work "Karma Cola," we can see that Karma in the title refers to "Eastern Spiritualism,," and Cola refers to "Western Capitalism,," and the comparative study between the Easterners and Westerners is the prominent theme of this work. On the contrary, in Ashwin Sanghi's work "The Krishna Key," the protagonist Professor Ravi Mohan Saini, who is a Historian supposedly the descendent of Lord Krishna accused of the murder of his friend Anil Varshney, who was managing to break the script of Indus Valley Seals and from clearing his name for being an accused murderer. This paper explores how he made different decisions throughout this amazing journey and analyses his decisions that led to creating different Karma through his Gunas.

**Keywords:**Karma, Moksha, Bhagavad Gita, Spiritualism, Capitalism

**Introduction:**

Karma is the true essence of Shrimad Bhagwad Gita. According to the theory of karma, an individual's present problems are the result of their past actions. Shrimad Bhagwad Gita mentions three types of Yoga: Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Jnana Yoga. Lord Krishna told Arjuna about these three Yogas as the three pathways to achieve Moksha. As one of the major paths to attain Moksha is Karma Yoga, we can see that rightfully in this Bhagwad Gita verse: -

श्रीभगवानुवाच |

संन्यासः कर्मयोगश्च निःश्रेयसकरावुभौ |

तयोस्तु कर्मसंन्यासात्कर्मयोगो विशिष्यते || 2||

**The Supreme Lord said: Both the path of *karma sanyās* (renunciation of actions) and *karm yog* (working in devotion) lead to the supreme goal. But *karm yog* is superior to *karm sanyās*.**

**-Bhagavad Gita Chapter 5, Verse 2.**

Karma Yoga is the path of doing actions that will connect with oneself. Transforming our actions to create good karma is the main way to design a structure for our Karma Yoga. Karma Yoga is mainly the condition of the body and the soul to create a story with memories, and one's ability to come up with the individual's outcome is equal to infinity.

According to the Bhagavad Gita, there are four types of karma: Sanchita karma, Prarabdha karma, Kriyamana karma, and Aagami karma. Sanchita karma is the karma of the soul's past life in this cycle of birth and rebirth, which does not resolve in the past life and affects our present life. Until or unless the Sanchita karma of the soul vanishes by doing the good karma, the soul will take rebirth again and again. Prarabdha karma is the karma of the soul, which is the part of Sanchita Karma that affects our present life. It is influenced by our past life of the soul, and we experience its consequences. Aagami Karma is the karma that is the result of your present life actions and added to your Sanchita Karma. Kriyamana karma is instant karma or present life karma that will affect your daily life. Kriyamana karma will be rectified if we keep up with the good deeds in our present life. It is rightfully depicted in this Bhagwat Gita verse:

**कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन |**

**मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि || 47 ||**

**“You have a right to perform your prescribed duties but are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction.”**

**-Bhagavad Gita Chapter 2, Verse 47.**

The main function of the Karma Yoga is to do Nishkama Karma. Nishkama Karma means doing something without worrying about the fruit of our actions. In other words, doing deeds but without thinking about the outcome of their actions. Thus, the path of Karma Yoga is the path of doing Nishkama karma. By doing Nishkama Karma,, we get to know about the Gunas of the soul,, which can help in the path to Moksha. In this verse of the Bhagwad Gita, truthfully stated:

**श्रीभगवानुवाच |प्रकाशं च प्रवृत्तिं च मोहमेव च पाण्डव**

**न द्वेष्टि सम्प्रवृत्तानि न निवृत्तानि काङ्क्षति || 22||**

**उदासीनवदासीनो गुणैर्यो न विचाल्यते |**

**गुणा वर्तन्त इत्येवं योऽवतिष्ठति नेङ्गते || 23||**

**The Supreme Divine Personality said: O Arjun, the persons who are transcendental to the three *gunas* neither hate illumination (which is born of *sattva*), nor activity (which is born of *rajas*), nor even delusion (which is born of *tamas*), when these are abundantly present, nor do they long for them when they are absent. They remain neutral to the modes of nature and are not disturbed by them. Knowing it is only the *gunas* that act, they stay established in the self without wavering.**

**-Bhagavad Gita Chapter 14, Verse 22&23.**

Chapter eighteen of the Bhagavad Gita talks about Moksha. Verses twenty-three to thirty-three talk about the categorization of Gunas to attain Moksha. Lord Krishna explains in all of these verses how we can attain Moksha according to the quality of our actions. Lord explains the actions of an individual that can be influenced by our Gunas. The deeds are done without any expectation of any fruit, which is the mode of goodness, i.e., Sattva Gunas. The deeds are based on achieving something for the sake of doing something in the mode of passion, i.e., Rajas Gunas. The deeds are done based on hurting others and not considering that their actions will hurt the individual. They are in the mode of ignorance, i.e., Tamas Gunas.

People who do deeds in the mode of goodness have a pure mindset, but those people who can't do deeds in the mode of passion and ignorance won't be able to get away with the cycle of birth and rebirth. Those who perform actions in the mode of goodness attain a state of purity of mind, while those who perform actions in the modes of passion or ignorance become entangled in the cycle of birth and death. If someone can follow these teachings by the Lord Krishna, they will be free from this cycle of birth and rebirth and can easily attain Moksha.

**Literature Review:**

**Theory of Karma:**

**Baruah, Sima. *Critical Analysis of the Concept of Karma in the Bhagavad Gita*. Gauhati University. 2021. PhD thesis:**

This study discussed the very purpose of the Bhagavad Gita, which is to teach one how to face the battle which everyone encounters at some point in life. It reminds Humanity that we should not run away from the problems of life but face them boldly. One should meet the challenges of life with the spirit of Karma yoga.

**Ganatra, Jyoti. *Kriya Yoga and Karma Yoga: A comparative study*. University of Mumbai. 2020. PhD Thesis:**

This study discusses the comparative study of Kriya Yoga and Karma Yoga in which it explains that an individual cannot live without acting i.e. Karma and Kriya an individual cannot decide whether to act or not but instead he has free will to choose how to perform it. Thus, one should act in such a way that it does not bind him and make him continue the life and death cycle again.

**Gita Mehta:**

**Nagajothi, R. *East-West encounter in the novels of Gita Mehta*. 2020 Madurai Kamaraj University. Ph.D. thesis:**

This critical study contributes uniquely to the domain of literature especially to the field of novels and short stories by Gita Mehta providing analytical material. This study contributes its mite to redress the imbalance. The east-west encounter or confrontation or the clash between tradition and modernity is the impulse behind the works of acclaimed migrant writers. It is sociological as it analyses the assaults of social and societal norms on women and men in the works of Gita Mehta.

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**Kumar, Raj. *India in the fictional and non-fictional works of Gita Mehta*. 2017.Gurukul Kandri Vishwavidyalaya. 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. 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.

**Ashwin Sanghi:**

**Soni, Khyati. *Themes techniques in English thriller novels with special reference to Ashwin Sanghi and Dan Brown*. 2019.Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya. 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. This study throws light on the work of both authors and also be useful for further studies by future writers in the same genre.

***Castle and Crisis in Ashwin Sanghi's The Krishna Key: vol.1 No.2 January 2017 e-ISSN:2456-5571: Article:***

This paper looks into the features of time and space in a postmodern Indian English novel. This study has picked out a few of the time-space indicators from the novel *The Krishna Key* by Ashwin Sanghi to explore them. According to Bakhtin's literary theory of chronotype as he discussed in his essay, forms of time and chronotype in the novel in his essay collections, the dialogical imagination. The concepts discussed in this study are the chronotype of the castle and crisis/threshold.

**Eastern Spiritualism & Western Capitalism:**

Gita Mehta's debut novel and first nonfiction work is *Karma Cola: Marketing the Mystic East*. This satire on the documentary version comprises essays that are somewhat connected to one another. These essays majorly include some of the writer's ironic and wittiest thinking. *Karma Cola* is an exploration of the history of thousands of years ago, including Westerners coming to the Eastern world to find a way to achieve Nirvana. In the brief introduction, the writer discussed the ecclesiastical relationship between the West and the East. This work contains Twelve Chapters. The first and Second Chapters, *Reinventing the Wheel* and *Karma Crackers*, respectively, focus on the Indian philosophy of Karma. The major theme of karma is that your good and bad deeds from your previous life can greatly affect your present birth.

Chapter Third, Named *Be Bop*, explores Indian philosophy, where the spiritual and the teachings of Karma are explained, which are poles apart from the West. On the other hand, Westerners lose themselves financially, mentally, and physically for the mere idea of Karma to gain Moksha.

The Fourth to Seventh chapters, named *Tricks and Treats*, *What You See Is What You Are*, *Behind the Urine Curtains*, and *Forked Tongues*, respectively, talk about the spiritual exploitation by Hippies from the Western side and pseudo-gurus from the Eastern side. Pseudo-gurus just want monetary gains, and the Hippies want enlightenment in any unforeseen condition or price.

The Eighth chapter, Vox Pox, tells us about an ecclesiastical void between Westerners' and Eastenders' thinking. The Ninth Chapter, The Odds and the Gods, explores the ancient Indian history of abuse, which can lead to a culture of different antisocial activities and illegal drug business.

The tenth chapter, named Sex and the Single Gurus, explores the roles of Sexuality, which is a major conundrum of Eastern spiritualism and Western Capitalism, which plays a role as a way to achieve spirituality from Eastern pseudo-gurus by Western Hippies. The eleventh chapter, named Cowboys and Indians, explores the pathway to attain Moksha through Sexuality, which is a very dark and corrupt way used by Pseudo-gurus. The Twelfth Chapter, named Being Hindu means Never Having to Say You're Sorry, explains the real essence of Indian philosophy or Eastern spirituality, which states that procedures seem to be harsh for Westerners. In the concluding chapter named Om, which is where the Art is, the writer is hopeful that these ecclesiastical gaps will be filled in the coming future if both Western and Eastern cultures adopt the right ways to achieve Nirvana.

The setting of the book is India, which is a prominent place for spiritual enlightenment in the whole universe. The narrative style of the writer Gita Mehta gives us a glimpse into how she was deeply engrossed in both cultures as she spent a significant amount of time in both cultures. She analyzed both the cultures, their notions, beliefs, etc. She used the term "Spiritual Tourism" in the introduction of the book; this term depicts the attitude of the Westerners towards the Indian philosophy because the whole world seems to be traveling to India for their spiritual enlargement. For them, India is a magical place where just paying a visit can make them achieve the ultimate goal of like i.e., Moksha, Liberation, Salvation or Nirvana. She used Karma, which is the true essence of the Bhagwad Gita, which plays a genuine role in Indian philosophy. In her work, she depicts that in this cycle of birth or rebirth, a soul experiences some positive aspects or negative aspects, which eventually end up being the outcome of their actions or Karma.

#### **Unlocking the Seals:**

The main theme of the novel "The Krishna Key" revolves around four murders. Dr. Ravi Mohan Saini is the protagonist and accused of those murders and explores the secrets of the Vedic Age and the Mahabharata. He is a professor at St Stephen's College in New Delhi, whose life's work is to prove that Lord Krishna is a historical character, not a mythological character. His friend Anil Varshney has given him a secret seal for safekeeping and told him that it's part of the set of Four and would sit as a base plate, which was locked away, and if something happened to him, he would be the second person in charge of that secret. That seal is the key to the secret that Lord Krishna has left for future generations to figure out, and that key is called "the Krishna key." The next day, Anil Varshney gets murdered, and Saini is convicted for that murder because he is the last person who saw him and his fingerprints were found from the place of the murder. With the help of his doctoral student, Priya Ratnani, he manages to escape from this.

There are one hundred and eight chapters in the novel, which is an archetype for the One Hundred and Eight Avatars of Lord Krishna. Two time zones are discussed in the novel.

First is the part where Lord Krishna lived 5000 years ago, where Lord Krishna is the narrator of that story himself. This time zone precedes the present time zone where there is a rich boy, Taarik Vakil, who thinks of himself as the much-awaited incarnation of Lord Vishnu, i.e., Kalki and end up became a serial killer. In the second part of the story, Saini, in an attempt to clear his name from being a convicted murderer, comes across the darkest areas of Indian Mythology and gets to know about Taarak Vakil, a serial killer who considers himself Kalki. Saini came across different parts of the ancient ruins, from “the Lost City” Dwarka to the Vrindavan Temples, to disclose the treasure of Lord Krishna or “The Krishna Key” to help murders to stop. Saini gets to know that Vakil is after the Four seals that were entrusted to him by his friend and three other scientists. If that secret gets to Vakil, it will disrupt the sanity of Humanityhumanity. To solve the puzzle of "the Krishna key," four seals must be brought together. These seals are owned by four different people who were the descendants of the Yadava tribe; Anil Varshney had the first seal that was given to Saini by him before he got murdered, Dr. Nikhil Bhojraj had the second seal, Rajaram Kurkude had the Third Seal, and the Fourth seal is with Devendra Chhedi. The mystery of "The Krishna Key" will be solved by these seals. These seals together make an heirloom named “Samyantaka” which is a passport of Krishna’s ancient system to Dwaraka; this heirloom is engraved with the emblem of animals like a Bull, Unicorn, and goat on an anticlockwise side on the front of the seal.

Before the crisis, there was a discussion between Saini and his doctoral student Priya regarding the Exact dates of the Mahabharat where Priya says, 'You were wrong, Prof! It was two possible years -- 3067 BCE and 2183 BCE -- that remained as viable alternatives for the Mahabharata war according to Achar's research,' (Here we can see that Ashwin Sanghi tell the exact date of Mahabharata through his character Priya, in one of his videos he said that "People always ask me how I came up with that number. Actually, I didn't. In the Mahabharat, Rishi Vyas is said to have met Dhritarashtra on the eve of the war and warned him about the terrible planetary omens that he had seen- one was a conjunction of Saturn and Aldebaran; another was a retrograde Mars before reaching Antares and a third was a lunar Eclipse near Pleiades Professor Narhari Achar from the University of Memphis searched for those years in which all three astronomical events had happened simultaneously and found that it occurred together in 3067 BCE and that's the date I used) which depicts the level of research done by the author in writing this book.

In the meantime, a mysterious character is introduced who is seen to be the mastermind behind all these murders. Vakil committed the murders, but she was the reason behind all those murders. The police officers who are keen to find Saini as a murderer but get to know about the clues that he could be entrapped in those murders and get to know about Mataji from preventing those murders from happening. They try to solve the oblique clues. For solving, these are different locations that have been seen in the story from the desert of Kalibangan, The undersea ruins of Dwaraka, the icy peaks of the Himalayas, the Milky white Taj Mahal, and the lingam of Somnath.

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At the start of the novel, Priya seems to be a supportive character who helps Saini get away from being accused of the murder, but by the end of the novel, the reader gets to know that 'Priya' is, in fact, "Mataji" the mastermind behind all these murders. She brainwashed Taarak, being a Kalki Avatar, and told him that Anil Varshney and all his murdered friends were doing the works of Lucifer. As it is described in Mahabharata, the final incarnation of Lord Vishnu, 'Kalki' will destroy the evils and purify the earth, and the track was used by Priya/ Mataji to get a hold of "The Krishna Key." Taarak was influenced by Mataji, who was supposed to be Kalki's Avatar, and eventually became a serial killer. It is stated in the Mahabharata that the Kalki Avatar is supposed to be born in a village named "Shambhala" to the parents named "Vishnu Yasa" and "Sumati," and coincidentally, Taarak's village and parent's names are also the same. Kalki would have a parrot named "Shuka," which is the same coincidence as Taarak also, but the difference is that the parrot of Kalki was a divine gift from Lord Shiva. Also, Kalki has a dazzling sword, "Ratna Maru," and Taarak also has a Scalpel like Kalki, these coincidences make Priya's/Mataji's path easy and her boss "Sir Khan" to influence Taarak to commit those murders.

In the first part, Saini was on a journey of quest with Priya, but in the second part, it was with 'Radhika Singh' and 'Rathore' in the ruins of Dwarka, then to the mysterious lingam of Somnath then to the icy heights of Mount Kailash, to Vrindavan Temples then finally to Taj Mahal is the quest of discover the most prized possession of Lord Krishna, the Syamantaka and to prevent all the murders and overcome with all the obstacles faced by them during this expedition but they eventually realize that "The philosopher is more important than the philosopher's stone."

In the end, they got to know that the Syamantaka is on the banks of Yamuna in the twenty-two rooms, which will be locked and cannot be accessed by the common man. It would be sealed for future generations, and the answer is "Taj Mahal." In the Taj Mahal, there is a Double dome, the fake ceiling inside a large outer skin, so the outer dome retains its imposing volume. It's a speculation that the magical heirloom of Lord Krishna can be located between the internal or external dome, which is just a conjecture.

The post-Mahabharat history was narrated by Sanghi in a very detailed and nonchalant way through the protagonist, who is from the descendant tribe of Lord Krishna, the Saini tribe of Punjab. In conclusion, we can state there are a lot of unexplored scientific aspects of Mahabharat. This word is a semi-fictitious novel, which is said to be 'Faction,' which is half fiction and half Reality, which can be enticing for the readers. The characterization of the novel and the characters are written beautifully.

#### **Analytical aspects of the Works:**

Here, we will discuss the analytical aspects of the works and the characters through the lens of the protagonists who created their Karmas through their Gunas, which eventually ended up in their journey through Moksha. The basic idea of the theory of Karma is doing actions without the expectation of the fruits or results of that action. In both of these works, we see the narrator of the Karma Cola, which is the author itself telling everything about the karmas through their experience; in this way, her experience makes her the protagonist/

narrator of the work. In this nonfiction work, there are no characters but entities to which we can analyze the karmas through their Gunas.

According to Karma Cola, Sattva Gunas are possessed by those Sadhus/ rishis who are spiritually inclined towards helping the Westerners teach them about Karma to gain Moksha and Westerners who genuinely wanted to know about the Eastern teachings. Tamas Gunas is possessed by those who are Sadhus/Rishis who are seeking Westerners just for the monetary gains and Westerners who just want Nirvana because they are bored in their hectic life abroad and want to get a break from their hectic life. Rajas Gunas are possessed by those who are in the middle of this distinction, who want to know about real enlightenment but also want monetary gains. So that's how the Gunas of the entities of the Karma Cola are categorized by Gita Mehta.

On the other hand, we have Dr. Ravi Mohan Saini, who is the protagonist of the work The Krishna Key, and we will see the story through his lens, but we all have different characters who have different Gunas, and through those Gunas on their journey to Moksha changes. We can see through the story that Dr. Ravi Mohan Saini contains Sattva Gunas because, for him, work is his only worship, and he doesn't want to jeopardize the ancient heirloom of Lord Krishna and fight for his life to save that. The character of Taarak Valik is very delusional and thinks of himself as the descendant of Lord Vishnu and incarnation of Kalki, and he murdered Anil Varshney and other scientists for the sake of the possession of the Krishna key, he possessed Tamas Gunas. His struggle will be seen in the work.

Another important character is Priya/ Mataji who is helping Dr. Ravi Mohan Saini to prove his innocence at first, but later on, as the story progresses, we get to know that Priya is Mataji who influenced Taarak to commit all those murders to get the hold of the Syamantaka. So, we can state that she possesses Tamas Gunas. There are two more characters in the novel of the police officers "Radhika Singh" and "Rathore ."They are investigating the murder of Anil Varshney and others; in the beginning of the novel, they are after Saini to arrest him, but eventually, they get to know about Mataji and Taarak and arrest them and help Saini to get possession of The Krishna Key, so we can state that they possess Rajas Gunas and through this, we can explain the analytical aspects of this work.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, we can say that in the work Karma Cola, there are different entities discussed by the writer: Eastern entities and Western entities: eastern entities have genuine enlightenment and can help Westerners in need who genuinely want to know about the path of Moksha are have sattvic Gunas. Eastern entities don't want to do anything about the Enlightenment, but they are not following Westerners for the monetary gains, and Westerners who want to know about the Enlightenment just for the sake of it, but they are not insulting the concept of karma, and Moksha possess Rajas Gunas and those eastern entities who are pseudo-rishis/pseudo-sadhus who are fooling westerners for the monetary gains and those western entities who have done a bad thing and now wanted to get enlightenment so they won't end up in Hell those selfish entities will fall under Tamsik Gunas.



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Through *The Krishna Key*, we learn about Dr. Ravi Saini's thriller quest to get hold of the Krishna Key and not fall into the wrong hands. Throughout the journey, there are so many characters who change their Karmas according to the Gunas that they have. The character of Dr. Ravi Mohan Saini, who fights for his life for the Krishna key so it doesn't fall into the hands of the wrong people, states that he has Sattva Gunas. Then, the character of Taarak Vakil, who thinks of himself as the descendant of Lord Vishnu, kills Anil Varshney and other scientists, thinking that they are evil or a threat to Humanity, and becomes a serial killer, which states that he has Tamas Gunas. The character who influenced Taarak to commit all those crimes is Priya/Mataji, who wanted to get hold of The Krishna Key and used Taarak for her gain, which depicts that she also has Tamas Gunas. Then, the characters of the police officers Radhika Singh and Rathore try to arrest Saini at first, then get to know that Taarak committed those murders and was influenced by Priya/Mataji then, they help Saini in the quest to find Syamantaka, who states that they possess Rajas Gunas.

As an outcome, it is clear that this study examines how the characters go through their journeys because of their Karmas accumulated in their previous or present lives, which make up their Gunas, through which their Karmas take place in this life.

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Impact Factor:8.175 (SJIF) SP Publications ;Vol-7, Issue-2(February), 2025

## **International Journal Of English and Studies(IJOES)**

ISSN:2581-8333 An International Peer-Reviewed and Refereed Journal

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*Sanghi's Bharat series and related literature:* International Journal of New Technology and Research (IJNTR) ISSN:2454-4116, Volume-5, Issue-1, January 2019, Pages40-43: Article

Pathinathan, Santini. *1000/- Voices in Ashwin Sanghi's The Krishna Key*: vol.1 no.2 January 2017 e-ISSN:2456-5571: Article

### ***Citation:***

**Pragya Shastri & Dr. Aprajita Sharma**"Living Through Karma and Searching for Moksha: Insights from Gita Mehta's *Karma Cola* and Ashwin Sanghi's *The Krishna Key*"*International Journal of English and Studies (IJOES)*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2025, pp. 283-292. DOI: 10.47311/IJOES.2025.7.02.292.