



A STUDY ON THE WOMEN PROTAGONISTS REFLECTING THE RHYTHM OF SEASONS STRUGGLES FOR THE QUEST OF IDENTITY AND INDIVIDUAL EXISTENCE IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF NAMITA GOKHALE

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Abstract

Indian writing in English has gained immense and recognition in the last two decades of the 20th century. Most of the Indian women novelists focus on women issues, they have a women's perspectives on the world. The floodgates show no sign of closing and more and more books by women authors are hitting the book shelves. One woman writer who has given a loud and clear voice to the ongoing saga of exploitation and abuse of women is Namita Gokhale. She through her fictional work has brought forward the story of suffering and pain. that engulfs any woman who dares to transgress the pre-determined codes of conduct and behaviour. There is a varied image of woman in the fiction by woman. This study is undertaken to review the study of women in the novels of Namita Gokhale, one of the most popular Indian women writers in English. Most of her novels have mountains as the background as she belongs to the Kumoun Hills of Uttarakhand. The present paper focuses on the advancement of women's characters where Gokhale speaks to how these characters battle to lead their lives and how they make a picture of new women with their considerations. Her debut novel "Paro: Dreams of Passion" was published in 1984. This fiction is a satire on the people of the upper class living in and around - New Delhi and Mumbai. Gokhale's second novel, "Gods, Graves and Grandmother" (1994) is the tale of Gudiya and her almost aged grandmother (Ammi). It basically attempts analysis of predicament of Gudiya, the woman as silent sufferer, forever waiting for emotional support and creative release challenging life of women in Namita Gokhale's, "The Back of shadow" tells us that the money and beauty are not important for the life as peace through the life of Rachita in Ranikhet. This book was written when she was struggling to cope with her husband's loss, yet she describes it as her best book. "A Himalayan Love story", deals with the aforementioned theme presented in such a way that the familiar seems unfamiliar and we see it through a different lens, with a new perspective. Insanity in Parvati is suggestive of atrocities done to her by her homosexual husband and the society as well. Namita Gokhale's novel, "Things to leave Behind", is defined as her most ambitious work. One of the most defining qualities of this historic romance novel is the research generated by Gokhale - informative without being pedantic. As a result, history dances off the pages, bringing alive semantic and temporal vicissitudes. Author wins Sahitya Akademi Award for more " Things to Leak Behind "(2016) which opens up about her connect with Uttarakhand's Kumaon region. Her Own writing is reflective of her wide-ranging interests and callings. From reviving classical Indian folklore and mythology for children, to writing about the hills of kumaon, its people and peculiarities to amusing and shocking readers with her biting satire and sexually emancipated women of the Indian metros, her body of work has spawned academic study. She has attempted to redefine the feminine role in society.

Keywords: Women Novelists, Exploitation, Emancipated.

2. Introduction

The Indian women writers who expressed their views and agony through their writings in the post-colonial times for patriarchy and imperialism could be seen to exert different forms of domination over those subordinates to them. Women are subjected to both general discrimination as colonial toys of subjects and specific discrimination as women addressed as "double colonization". Namita Gokhale's novel is the honoured writer who spotlights on the women's life. Gokhale is a journalist in Delhi whose work focusses on women's issues and literary criticism.



Fig. 1. Namita Gokhale



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DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.01.114>

She feels a woman's life is,
"reflected in the rhythm of the seasons, not like men whose stories are rooted in wars, territories and legislation".

Most of the Indian women novelists focus on women issues, they have a women's perspectives on the world. One woman writer who has given a loud and clear voice to the ongoing saga of exploitation and abuse of women is Namita Gokhale. She through her fictional work has brought forward the story of suffering and pain that engulfs any women who dares to transgress the predetermined codes of conduct and behaviour. Her books have strong female characters that deal with love, lust, death and often the supernatural.

2.1 Her Debut novel Paro: Dreams of Passion (1984)

The novel is not just a feminist work but a woman's agonizing search for her true self in the society which is still largely traditional and swayed by cultural and societal stereotypes. The narrator claim that every word uttered by her is,

"The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" (p. 10m). She again says, I had always considered myself a person of little consequence, and less talent. I discovered, however, that I had an instinct, a faculty, for truth. I saw things as they were, not as they should have been or people tried to pretend, they were. It was this faculty of truth that had haunted me for years, distorting the happiest moments of my life". Published in 1984, to both notoriety and critical acclaim, Namita Gokhale's novel "Paro: Dreams of Passion" remains a social comedy without parallel in contemporary Indian writing. It's about Paro's rebellion and her rejection of the culturally imposed sexual repression. In the character of Paro, sex is symbolic of a quest for identity as a free woman - the symbol and prototype of emancipation and individuality. This fiction is a satire on the people of the upper class living in and around New Delhi and Mumbai. Although, it was received with admiration by English reading public in India it did not get the critical attention it deserved. She discusses love, desire and demise in equivalent measures.

2.2 Gokhale's Second Novel "Gods, Graves and Grandmother" (1994)

Gokhale's second novel, "Gods, Graves and Grandmother "(1994) is the tale of Gudiya and her almost aged grandmother (Ammi), who along with Gudiya's mother fled from their small town to the suburb of Delhi. Ammi settled along a solitary roadside corner in the suburbs of Delhi and gradually became a famous Bhajan singer. After few years, when the temple became a famous religious site, one night Ammi is found dead. Later on, Gudiya got married with Kalki and he deserted Gudiya with her infant.

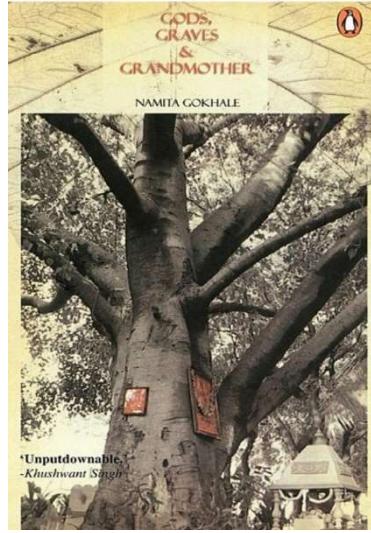


Fig 2. Second Novel: God's Graves and Grandmother

It basically attempts analysis of predicament of Gudiya, the women as silent sufferer, forever waiting for emotional support and creative release. Gokhale writes "Gods, Graves and Grandmother" after she has recovered from long illness. She accepts the past and yet ponders of present and future. Gokhale has viewed human life in her novels from the view of the woman. She has attempted to redefine the feminine role in society.



2.3 Challenging life of women in Namita Gokhale's "The Book of Shadows" (1999)

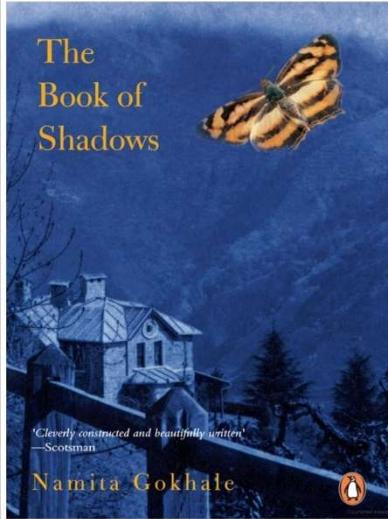


Fig 3. Gokhale's The Book of Shadows(1999)

Rachita working as a lecturer lost her beauty because of the acid attack by her husband's sister. She loses not only her beauty but also her self-confidence. After this incident, she could not face people and started avoiding even friends and college mates. But she tries to overcome this problem. Then she starts accompanying books and Lohaniju's stories. The Book of shadows was written when she was struggling to cope with her husband's loss. She describes it "as her best book yet". Part ghost story, part erotic romance. "The Book of shadows" is an ambitious book that investigates the nature of reality, love and faith. It is a work of startling originality by one of India's most daring and talented writers. Rachith says,

"Our kind is not nourished by the sun: it is the moon which gives us sustenance. We wax and wane with the moon, except when harnessed by a human energy, when the pull of the tides loses its grip. As dawn broke over the mountains, lighting up the still white presences of the snows, I fled to my refuge, my fated spot".

2.4 Familiar Seems Unfamiliar in "A Himalayan Love Story"

"A Himalayan Love Story", deals with the aforementioned theme presented in such a way that the familiar seems unfamiliar and we see it through a different lens, with a new perspective. She manoeuvres the classic theme of unrequited love into pursuit of emancipation for Parvati, the protagonist of the novel. Suppression of sexual desire often leads to mental illness. In this novel, not only Parvati suffers from mental illness but also her mother died of the same. Insanity in Parvati is suggestive of atrocities done to her by her homosexual husband and the society as well. This mental illness is symbolic of subjection of women. This novel shows the subjugation of Parvati leading to her mental illness and her resistance against suppression in pursuit of emancipation and identity. It also explores the psychological workings of the female psyche, which shapes their attitude and demeanor.

2.5 Author wins Sahitya Akademi Award for "Things to Leave Behind" (2016) and completes her TRILOGY

Namita Gokhales novel, ""Things to Leave Behind", defined as her most ambitious work, is an ode as much as a eulogy to her native Kumaon. It is a tomb to the freedom we seek from the shackles that enslave us, whether it's our gender, our colonisers, our sexuality, our independent agency or our greatest loves. One of the most defining qualities of this historic romance novel is the research generated by Gokhale-informative without being pedantic. As a result, history dances off the pages, bringing alive semantic and temporal vicissitudes. Namita Gokhale wins Sahitya Akademi Award for this novel in the year 2016. After "The Book of Shadows" and "A Himalayan Love Story" she completes her trilogy with "Things to Leave Behind".

2.6 Women characters in her novels with their own ideology

Paro: Paro in "Paro: Dreams of Passion" created her own world and thinks in a different way. Namita Gokhale creates a sensation with the development of Paro who can be treated as modern woman with her own ideology. Paro is the main protagonist who boldly searches for her life and also a rebellion of women against the traditions. Paro tries to reject the patriarchal rules in the Indian Society. She considers herself as a superior at every step of her life.



Grandmother: The character of the grandmother in "Gods, Graves and Grandmother" possesses a place in the title of the novel, as she is a woman of ability and an overcome woman. She doesn't fall prey to the troublesome conditions, however with her granddaughter – Gudiya. She sings bhajans to a better tune and she attracts a huge gathering of disciples. She turns into a living holy person. This way the grandmother made a living for herself- with her skill and capacity to move things as according to her advantage.

Gudiya: Gudiya in "God's, Graves and Grandmother" basically attempts analysis of predicament of Gudiya, the women as silent sufferer, forever waiting for emotional support and creative release.

Rachita: In "The Book of Shadow", Rachita/Bitiya is a young university lecturer in Delhi whose external beauty has been destroyed in an acid attack. Unable to bear the pain of her scars or the pity of others, she leaves for the hills of the Himalayas and becomes transfixed by the voices that sing from the foundations of her new home

Parvati: Parvati in "A Himalayan Love Story" is the protagonist of the novel. In this novel, not only Parvati suffers from mental illness but also her mother died of the same. Insanity in Parvati is suggestive of atrocities done to her by her homosexual husband and the society as well. This mental illness is symbolic of subjection of women. It also explores the psychological workings of the female psyche, which shapes their attitude and demeanor.

Tillotama: In "Things to Leave Behind" Tillotama, the matriarch, stands tall as she has rebellion in her blood—her uncle Badri Dutt Uprety was hanged for his participation in the 1857 mutiny. His whispered advice seems to have left an indelible imprint: 'Never be afraid, and do what you want. Not what you like, but what you want.'

Tilottama not only does what she wants but her never-say-die spirit extends to her daughter Deoki.

2.7 Honors and Awards

*2016 Sahitya Akademi Award for Things to Leave Behind

*2017 Centenary National Award for Literature from the Assam Sahitya Sabha

*2017 Valley of Words Book Award, Best English Fiction (Things to Leave Behind).

*2018 International Dublin Literary Award long list (Things to Leave Behind).

*2019 Sushila Devi Literature Award, "Best Book of Fiction Written by a Woman Author" (Things to Leave Behind).

*2021 7th Yamin Hazarika Woman of Substance Award

*She Conceptualised and hosted the Doordarshan show **Kitabnama: Books and Beyond**.

*She is a founder and co- editor of the **Jaipur Literature Festival** along with William Dalrymple and Sanjay K.Roy.

3.(a) Research Problem

Does the suffering and pain engulf any woman who dares to transgress the predetermined codes of conduct and behaviours.

3.(b) Research statement:

Advancement of women's characters and new perspectives in the attitude of Modern Women in the selected novels of Namita Gokhale.

4.Objectives

The objectives of the study research are

* Advancement of women characters in Namita Gokhale's works.

* New perspectives in the attitude of Modern Women.

*Women characters as the symbol of liberation

* Characters can be treated as a modern woman with her own ideology.

* Challenging life of Women.

* To redefine the feminine role in the society.

*To portray human passions such as false pride, greed, anger, jealousy, vanity, lustful conduct and perverted love in her novels.

* To view human life in her novels from the view of woman.

*To analyse a woman as a silent sufferer, forever waiting for emotional support and creative release.

*Characters in the novel (women) are subjected to both general discrimination and specific discrimination addressed as 'double colonization'.

5. Literature Review

Vinita Jain (n.d.): Namita Gokhale is a remarkable signature in Indian English fiction. She is a person of diverse personality. She very brilliantly pin points the quest of identity of women in her novels. Her novels give stress on concrete individual existence and consequently on subjectivity, individual freedom and choice. (A study of women in the novels of Namita Gothale", Jain,Vinita (n.d.)).

DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.01.114>

Vinitha,Usha Rani (2019):--Namita Gokhale has depicted some colossal women characters. Aside from Indianess in her works, we additionally find chronicled viewpoints. The names of the courageous women like Paro and Parvati have recorded names. She has honestly uncovered the substances of life. She says that every one of her women heroes has some place there in the adventure to getting to be themselves. (Images of Women in Namita Gokhales Works, Vinitha,Usha Rani, 2019).

Dr.Pramod Kumar, Vijay Kailas Shirture (2020):--Indian authors have astonishingly focussed on the concerns such as Gender Space, globalism and patriotism in the context of India, the discourse of religious conviction, politics, border issues, communalism and the psychological disturbance due to the domestic clashes. Moreover, they also presented the historical phases and the quest of contemporary displacement. Thus, the world is looking at India as becoming a powerhouse in producing such splendid literature or novels in English Writings. (Assimilating Space and Gender in Namita Gokhale's Paro: Dreams of Passion. Kumar, Pramod. Shirture, V. K. 2020).

P.Priyadarshini,S.Mohan (2020):--Namita Gokhale's portrayal of women characters are having the very distinctive true reflection of the women's life. Women are leading the different life style and each woman is facing the different struggle in their life. There is large feminist speech tantamount of people to understand the feminism and its approach. (An Analysis of Women character in Namita Gokhale's "The Book of Shadows", "Priya:In Incredible Indyaa", Things to Leave Behind", Priyadarshini, P. Mohan, S. Vol. 29 No. 08(2020)).

6.1 Research Gap: Previous studies have mentioned about the challenging life of women, analysed woman as a silent sufferer, forever waiting for emotional support and creative release. Many studies focussed in women's issues. But the present paper focusses on how the women heroes or protagonists of her novels develops, faces the world and grow with their own perspectives as they face the varied challenges in their lives. Their battle leads them to grow with more mettle and opportunity as opposed to requesting rights in the general public with their own ideology. So, there is a varied image of woman in these fictions by a woman. This study gives new bearings to the feminist compositions.

6.2 Research Methodology:

Research Philosophy: Interpretivism

Research Approach: Inductive

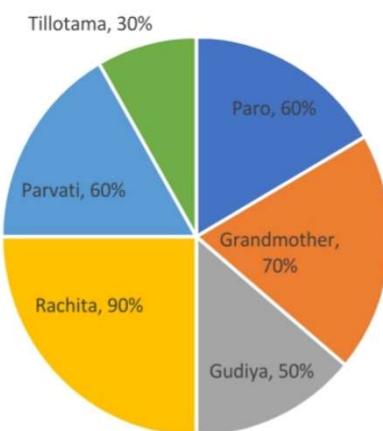
Research Strategies: Qualitative, Primary and Secondary

Time Horizon: Gross sectional, May- 2021 to Dec-2021

Data Collection: Questionnaire, Interview (watched on Utube), Novels of Namita Gokhale

The find out about has been started with observations while reading articles on feminism and women studies and found that Namita Gokhale through her fictional characters has brought forward the story of suffering and pain that engulfs any woman who dares to transgress or oppose the society. This study after going through the primary and secondary sources, questionnaire and news articles, progresses towards the women protagonists as women heroes who wins the life with their ever-going battles without expecting any male support and advances in their life with their own perspectives and ideology. They strongly confront any circumstances in their life, neither longed for the recommendations of the male.

Fig 4. illustrates the Development of Women Characters, battle to lead their lives and bring out a picture of new women with their own considerations





- a) Paro in Paro:Dreams of Passion – 60%
- b) Grandmother in God’s, Graves and Grandmother -70%
- c) Gudiya in God’s, Graves and Grandmother -50%
- d) Rachita/Bitiya in The Book of Shadow – 90%
- e) Parvati in A Himalayan Love Story- 60%
- f) Tillotama in Things to Leave Behind-30%

Paro: Namita Gokhale creates a sensation with the development of Paro who can be treated as modern woman with her own ideology. Paro is the main protagonist who boldly searches for her life and also a rebellion of women against the traditions.

Grandmother: The character is a woman of ability and an overcome woman. She made a living for herself-with her skill and capacity to move things as according to her advantage.

Gudiya: Gudiya basically attempts analysis of predicament of Gudiya, the women as silent sufferer, forever waiting for emotional support and creative release.

Rachita: Rachita/Bitiya is a young university lecturer in Delhi whose external beauty has been destroyed in an acid attack. Unable to bear the pain of her scars or the pity of others, she leaves for the hills of the Himalayas and becomes transfixed by the voices that sing from the foundations of her new home.

Parvati: In this novel, not only Parvati suffers from mental illness but also her mother died of the same. Insanity in Parvati is suggestive of atrocities done to her by her homosexual husband and the society as well. This mental illness is symbolic of subjection of women.

Tillotama: Tillotama, the matriarch, stands tall as she has rebellion in her blood—her uncle Badri Dutt Uprety was hanged for his participation in the 1857 mutiny. His whispered advice seems to have left an indelible imprint: ‘Never be afraid, and do what you want. Not what you like, but what you want.’

Tillotama not only does what she wants but her never-say-die spirit extends to her daughter Deoki.

6.3 Method of Data Collection

Information has been collected using both primary and secondary methods. The structured questionnaire has been designed for data collection, which consists of 20 queries Relevant to the type of the information that is to be extracted from the respondents in order to fulfil the objectives of the study. In addition to the above-mentioned primary source of information, secondary data has been collected through textbook, articles, research papers, reports. Newspaper and internet sites. Structured questionnaire is used.

7. Year Wise Plan and Targets

0-6months: The research work will be initiated by attending National and International Conferences. At the same time Literature Review and collection of Literature Review.

6-12 months: Next 6 months, research time will be spent on Compilation of Data and Data Collection.

12-18 months: Next research will be done on Drawing Inferences for the study and Analysis of Data.

18-24months: Submission of Final Report for corrections, guidance and further suggestions.

8. Conclusion

Most of the Indian women novelists focus on women issues, they have a women's perspectives on the world. One woman writer who has given a loud and clear voice to the ongoing saga of exploitation and abuse of women is Namita Gokhale. She through her fictional work has brought forward the story of suffering and pain that engulfs any women who dares to transgress the predetermined codes of conduct and behaviour. Her books have strong female characters that deal with love, lust, death and often the supernatural. The novel is not just a feminist work but a woman's agonizing search for her true self in the society which is still largely traditional and swayed by cultural and societal stereotypes. These novels are a woman's evocative commentary on the sybarite decadence of the Indian upper class. The novel lays bare its charm and banality, it's privileges and cynicism, it's schisms and intrigues before the reader through the sensitive portrayal of women characters as the novel has a woman as a central character and the narrative is primarily concerned with what she observes, feels and experiences, we may get the impression that the main aim of the novel is to support feminism. She through her fictional work has brought forward the story of suffering and pain. that engulfs any woman who dares to transgress the pre-determined codes of conduct and behaviour. There is a varied image of woman in the fiction by woman. This study is undertaken to review the study of women in the novels of Namila Gokhale, one of the most popular Indian women writers in English. . The present paper focuses on the advancement of women's characters where Gokhale speaks to how these characters battle to lead their lives and how they make a picture of new women with their considerations.



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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

ISSN:2277-7881; IMPACT FACTOR :7.816(2022); IC VALUE:5.16; ISI VALUE:2.286

Peer Reviewed and Refereed Journal: VOLUME:11, ISSUE:1(6), January: 2022

Online Copy of Article Publication Available (2022 Issues): www.ijmer.in

Digital Certificate of Publication: <http://ijmer.in/pdf/e-Certificate%20of%20Publication-IJMER.pdf>

Scopus Review ID: A2B96D3ACF3FEA2A

Article Received: 2nd January 2022

Publication Date: 10th February 2022

Publisher: Sucharitha Publication, India

DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi./2022/11.01.114>

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