

**Emancipation And Empowerment As Tools Of Resistance: A Study of Namita Gokhale's
Protagonists**

Dr.Harshita Chhikara¹ Prof.Randeep Rana²

¹Assistant Professor

Department Of English

Sh. L. N. Hindu College

Rohtak

Haryana

Email-harshita.hc18@gmail.com

²Randeep Rana

Professor

Department of English And Foreign Languages

Maharishi Dayanand University

Rohtak

Haryana

Email – profrandeeprana@gmail.com

{Received:20October2020/Revised:30October2020/Accepted:10November2020/Published:29November2020}

Abstract

Women writers in India have simulated a crucial part in articulating the beliefs and aspirations of Indian women. They have traversed an entire spectrum of sentiments from revisiting the ancient Indian myths and stories with a female's frame of reference to upholding their identity in the concurrent times. NamitaGokhale as well unearths the path trodden by women from each and every walk of life. Her works explore the issues of women with a different perspective. Her writings are fearless and so are her female protagonists. NamitaGokhale Has successfully investigated the female's longing and by what means it emancipates and empowers her characters despite their pitiable end. Gokhale in her works acknowledges the choices made by women and their repercussions in their quest for self and identity. She interrogates the several particular specifications thrust on women and arrays resistance to these selective identities with the help of her characters. The paper explores how NamitaGokhale's protagonists use resistance as a tool to emancipate and empower themselves.

Key Words: Emancipation, Empowerment, Resistance, Identity, Patriarchy

Introduction

Namita Gokhale entered the sphere of literature as a forceful means of empowerment. Gokhale initiated to write fiction, particularly novels. Her first novel *Paro: Dreams of Passion* in 1984 became a best seller. *Paro* is a satire on the high society of Bombay and New Delhi. The novel is known for its frank treatment of sex and licentious bearings. Critics contemplate it as documentation of a woman's liberation. Khushwant Singh attuned it in his Weekly. He acknowledged Gokhale as he acknowledged Bapsi Sidwa from Pakistan. Gokhale then lost her husband, and confronted much existential crisis. She fell ill often. All this is explicit in her later fiction. Gokhale's other novels are *A Himalayan Love Story*, *Gods, Graves and Grandmothers*, *The Book of Shadows*, *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory*, *Priya: In Inedible Indya* and *Things to Leave Behind*.

Analysis

Namita Gokhale's first novel *Paro: Dreams of Passion* exhibits the narrative of an unrestrained, unreserved, glamorous harming woman who is aware of her assets and deliberately makes full use of them for enslaving the males. Paro's sexual encounters with men become both a means of asserting the power of her femaleness and an exercise in defining herself. She is driven by a subconscious urge to be herself, to discard the constraints that a patriarchal cultural set up imposes on woman to conform to the image constructed and perpetuated by the male. A characteristic feature of the typically male society is a casual attitude towards adultery by the male but a strict censoriousness for the females who lead a promiscuous life. Adultery in woman is unpardonable and an adulterous woman is treated as a moral blot on society. It is this hypocrisy and these double standards which Namita Gokhale seems to be attacking by making Paro travel from man to man as a seductive temptress. May it be the author taking revenge on male society? Paro has sexual liaisons with a series of men like Bubu, Bucky Bhandpur, the test cricketer, Lenin, who is a son of a Marxist Cabinet Minister, Shambu Nath Mishra, a fat and ugly creature, Loukas Leoras, a homosexual and Suresh, Priya's husband. Gokhale ostensibly replicates the male norm of climbing the social ladder by using woman as crutches; Paro, as an ambitious individual, does exactly the same. She makes use of her body and beauty for her empowerment. Gokhale invests Paro with masculine traits, such as determination, courage, and competitiveness. It is said,

Paro fits into the mould of a pretty woman seized by what Jung called the animus that is why she is headstrong and her opinions have the character of solid convictions. (Anand)

Through *Paro*, the novelist subverts the prototypical rolemodel for women in society which visualizes women inside the house. Subhash Chandra believes that

Paro's passion and apparent promiscuity become emblematic of the struggle for liberation from the constricting socio-cultural environment which binds woman to the societal taboos and impinges on herself.

R.S. Pathak observes, "Paro becomes the 'symbol of and prototype of emancipation and individuality.'"

Gokhale's second novel *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* (1994) has a similar theme. The novel deals with what we can call radical feminism. In this novel, not only does Gokhale present a gyno-centric view of the world, but also makes women characters self-dependent and empowers them to grapple with the hostile social reality. Women clearly occupy the spotlight in the book, but what is more significant is that they are not frightened by the wily, devious, and domineering males they come into contact with. They eminently succeed in carving a niche for themselves in the maledominated society, and prove that what man can do woman can do. They turn themselves into subjects performing acts and desiring men and things. They define themselves.

The cover page records that,

The novel is a gripping and enthralling book that wears its many complexities lightly. It will continue to haunt its readers long after they have put it down.

The plot of the narrative is as follows: The young girl, Gudiya and her Grandmother suffer from adverse strokes of destiny and are rendered homeless. They are compelled to construct a Jhuggi in a lane for shelter. The old woman (referred to as Grandmother) whom Gudiya calls Ammi, has a positive outlook about life and she succeeds in erecting a makeshift temple under the peepal tree behind their jhuggi. The temple becomes the source of their livelihood, when they are paupers. The fact that they are Muslims does not deter Ammi from appointing herself as the priest of the temple in order to collect and use the offerings. One old woman (Lila) belonging to a family of singing prostitutes puts her melodious voice to good use for singing enchanting bhajans which create a group of dedicated devotees who regularly visit the temple. Slowly, the number of devotees increases and the proceeds increase. Phoolwati, another woman joins the group, and the four of them-- Ammi, Gudiya, Lila (a staunch follower of Ammi) and Phoolwati -

- create a world in which women live without any constraints. They live by themselves. It is seen that the men who disturb them will have bad luck. It is said,

It is, thus, to be noticed that women in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* (i) are endowed with well-defined identities, (ii) possess stronger personalities than Paro, (iii) have tremendous innate resources to grapple with the crises of life unlike Paro and, (iv) succeed in establishing an alternative mode of life, as against Paro's failure to do so. Gokhale goes further in her later novel inasmuch as she comes up with a bolder perspective on the possibilities for women, their gender constraints notwithstanding. Women in *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* are an extension of Paro, and become Paros who are successful and satisfied and affirmative in their attitude to life.

A Himalayan Love Story (1996) is about the passion of love. A young girl yearns to fulfill her sexual desires, only to find that the source of her childhood affections is not really the person with whom she will spend the rest of her life. Neither does she finally end up marrying somebody that she fancies. But then life carries on and Parvati, the protagonist faces a near ruin. Finally her life takes a turn, when her husband dies and she is left with the task of bringing up her daughter Irra. An old lover Mukul Nainwal revisits her and having made it good, finds that he cannot absolve himself from some of the responsibility that his bonds with Parvati tie him down. Even as he tries to help her daughter, he is torn between his loyalties. The story is told in two parts. Parvati is the beginner. She tells us about her deprived childhood in a reasonably civilized part of the Himalayan foothills. Her father dies young; her mother suffers. The girl child is the narrator in the beginning of the novel and the whole text has chapters. Unlike Paro, *A Himalayan Love Story* is about an elusive love as the former is about woman's emancipation. The novel is not quite effective. Much of the story is about lust though the characterization is life-like.

The Book of Shadows deals with autobiographical elements. Indeed, The Tribune observes,

The novel is a chronicle of displacement, strangeness and exile, of forbidden passions and family histories told in a sensual, descriptive style...The Book of Shadows is a compelling story.

Conclusion

Namita Gokhale's works are brimming with ardour and specifications. Her unrestrained self is presented in her literary oeuvre. She has power enough to manifest her women characters in light of their basic feminine sensibility truly and resolutely. They never lose their feminine essence in

any of her works. Gokhale through her works demands equality for women, centering on the scopes to attain liberation. She expresses with new profound quality, as stipulated by which a woman isn't to be taken as an inconsequential toy, a demurrer of desire and ephemeral charm, yet man's equal and respected accomplice. Namita Gokhale needs the women to perceive and discover themselves a new.

Works Cited

- Anand, T. S. "Paro-A Psychological Approach," *Indian Women Novelists*. Vol II, ed. R. K. Dhawan, Prestige, New Delhi, 1993, p. 205.
- Chandra, Subhash. "Female Subjectivity and Female Empowerment in the Fiction of NamitaGokhale," p. 87, 92.
- "Concept of 'BharatiyaNari' a can of worms: NamitaGokhale." *Deccan Herald* 29 May, 2011. <https://www.deccanherald.com/content/164852/concept-bharatiya-nari-can-worms.html>
- Gokhale, Namita. *A Himalayan Love Story*. Penguin Random House India, 2017.
- ---. *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*. Penguin Random House India, 2001.
- ---. *Paro: Dreams of Passion*. Penguin Random House India, 2011.
- ---. *Priya: In Incredible Indyya*. Penguin Random House India, 2013.
- ---. *Shakuntala, the Play of Memory*. Penguin Random House India, 2001.
- ---. *The Book of Shadows*. Penguin Random House India, 2001.
- ---. *Things to Leave Behind*. Penguin Random House India, 2016.
- Pathak, R.S. "Paro: Dreams of Passion or Passion of Dreams," *Indian Women Novelists*, Vol. VI. ed. R.K. Dhawan, Prestige, New Delhi, p. 186. 88