



Chapter V

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Namita Gokhale has joined the growing number of women writers from India, like Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Githa Hariharan, and Shobha De on whom the image of the suffering but stoic women eventually breaking traditional boundaries has had a significant impact. They invigorated the English language to suit representations and narration of what they felt about their women and their lives in post modern India.

The aspects of themes and technique in the novels of Namita Gokhale are not isolated elements. In order to convey her theme, Gokhale judiciously uses character, situation, dialogues, and other elements in relation to the plot. The theme serves as the skeleton incorporating the whole life-perspective of Gokhale through situations. Gokhale has been so much careful about the techniques in her novels. Her novels are singularly free from strain and form has never been all owed to smother the content of her works . Consequently her novels make a fascinating reader.

Namita Gokhale's art lies in her strictly naked realistic description of the minutia that is part of middle class existence in small town and in

the metropolis. Namita Gokhale writes not for publicity, but to mirror the society as she observes it. She is least bothered about name and fame. She is very curious to bring forth the changes accruing in the society, in her novels

Gokhale takes for granted that her readership is bilingual and she has used Hindustani expressions. In fact, she exploits the two codes, Hindi-English, and has often taken resort to lexical and phrasal switches, often for ironical and satirical purposes and also for the deliberately drawing attention. She herself says about Indianising English in a conversation with Pavan Verma:

There is nothing wrong. We have to appropriate it and do whatever we want to do with it. But we have to do this within certain parameters and the biggest problem is that if we really want to look into the depth of our history, our culture and our country, the English language, whatever we do with it, is really inadequate to express our feelings. (Gokhale, the Hindustan Times)

Namita Gokhale is conscious of the fact that there is first the problem of accessibility to a literary tradition and to a language or languages other than English, that is, in effect to create an age and experience and between the writer and the reader. The earlier writers addressed this problem in different ways-Raja Rao through narratology and using a 'katha' framework in *Kanthapura*, Mulk Raj Anand by giving his language a spoken ruggedness, R.K. Narayan by syntactical change.

Others turned to the very correct version of English and still others, like Anita Desai, to a private interiorized world of the mind but Namita Gokhale has done so by sticking close to daily life experience. She uses the 'realistic' approach to domesticate English. Her love for her mother tongue is expressed through Rachita in *The Book of Shadows*:

I dodge these high words, this alien language, and seek refuge in Lohaniju's soft and consonated Pahari. The Kumaoni language, Pahari, is dismissed as a mere dialect, yet its sounds reassure me, silence my puzzlement and pain. (TBS 12)

Gokhale loves writing and her own confession about her compulsive writing in an interview with Mita Kapur is similar to Priya's in *Paro: Dreams of Passion*:

I got compulsive about writing. I wrote on backs of envelopes, scraps of paper. When I have to write, I can write anywhere — at airports, in crowded places. It's a downloading experience (Gokhale, *The Hindu*).

The underlying theme in Namita Gokhale's novels is human relationships, especially the ones that exist between husband and wife and between mother and daughter. In all these relationships the woman occupies the central stage and significantly the narration shifts through her feminine/ feminist consciousness. Her feminism is peculiarly Indian in the sense that it is born out of the predicament of Indian women placed between contradictory identities: tradition and modernity, family and profession, culture and nature. Her art is intensely personal.

The deep-rooted desire of every Indian-male or female-to have a son is reiterated by Gokhale in *A Himalayan Love Story* and Parvati is her mother's greatest disappointment in life. An evidence of extreme discrimination comes forward when Parvati's mother says:

It would be different if you were a boy,' she would say angrily, 'then you could earn and provide for me in my old age. But all you are going to do is get married to some no-good. And take my gold champakali necklace off with you as dowry. It's a double curse, to first be born a woman, then get straddled with another female to provide for. ((HLS 6)

Gokhale values experiential sense of knowledge a great deal more than what is derived from other people's statement or is based on mere theories. Her creative anxiety derives her to ceaselessly interrogate and evaluate whatever compels her attention and the resulting sense of life, reasonably authentic rather than merely epistemic ,precludes her being type cast as simple 'some kind of writer'.

Her writing career thus reflects an ongoing process of problems, life's conflicted and compromises, resolutions and irresolution, ironies and affirmations, triumphs and tragedies and so on. This constantly mellowing mode of viewing human condition without any closures concretizes the major themes of her novels such as man –woman relationship, human desire, longing, body gender discrimination marginalization, rebellion, and protest.

The act of writing novels for Namita Gokhale, as indeed for any other writer, is triggered by her authorial disposition. An integrated awareness of the latter helps illumine her work. As one who is a woman and who writes in English in India, Gokhale's authorial self is often plagued by a deep sense of her isolation doubly so because what she writes is out of tune with the main stream of writing. She, therefore, finds no models in the texts or authors in the corpus of Indian English writing to follow and wanders off to where she belongs.

Languages do not develop in vacuums. They are rooted in a cultural context. Myths, memories, histories, proverbs and idioms are all a part of it, as are sounds, smells, syntax, allusion and imagery. Language also had a climatic relationship and words evoke certain response. In a similar manner, culture absorbs its environment and context and in an accumulative process, creates and recreates myths and associations.

The concrete sensuousness of language is culturally influenced. But as Bill Ashcraft has observed, can an alien language carry the burden of a native culture? Other before him, and creative writers at that, have asked the same question, Raja Rao in his well known 'Foreword' to Kanthapura wrote:

The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of

certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. We cannot write like the English .We should not, we can write only as Indian. (Rao, foreword)

One of the most challenging tasks before the Indian English writers is to write the English language in a manner that conveys the essence of the Indian socio-cultural ethos without distorting the language .It is singularly difficult feat to achieve, especially if one considers the vast difference between the Indian and the English cultures, and the problems that these difference might pose to the writer, yet,it has not inhibited Namita Gokhale from using English as the medium of her fiction.

Gokhale's language has often been called "simple"," realistic", and "transparent". It neither draws attention to itself nor does it hinder the reader in any way. It subtly lends itself to all situations. Gokhale's primary stress is upon the middle class ethos and her language reflects this concern. She uses English the way an average ,middle class individual educated in both the vernacular and English would use it that is,unaffectedly, a little " incorrect" at times, by the standards of British English .

Writing for Gokhale is not only a means of self discovery and self learning, but also a process in which the other has a definite role to play in the broader social context. She maintains that if one self of the writer writes about the articulates all those voices which struggle to be

recognized in a never ending, often enough subversive, dialogism, the other self is a critical reader who constantly assesses how these voices have been materialized in the writing.

Undoubtedly, a writer writes not only out of herself, but out of the society she is living in as well. However the basic focus is always the human being .Society is the background: it is the individual response to society: it is what society does to the individual that the writer is really concerned with the people who are both complex and complicated, and therefore writing, good writing that is, ultimately provides a complex and complicated picture, not the simple picture that would emerge if the writer were writing with the intent of speaking against social evils or for social reform.

The intimate relation between culture and language falls into place in the act of narration, an act placed between two simultaneous contexts: the location of writer and that of the reader. This placement of narrative policies is the ground on which meaning is created and also interpreted.

Myth and modernity have also played a vital role in the novels of Gokhale. Besides the realistic method and the use of myth, the focus on the individual psyche is also important .The human being as human being is important.

Indian literature written in English is now generally considered a legitimate part of Indian literature. Gokhale writes a variety of Indian English that is rooted in the ambience of regional cultures. The culture specific words and sentence sit easily and naturally in her body of work, so that the work reflects a contemporary, middle –class, Indian – English.

Namita Gokhale avoids foregrounding the Indianness of the writing through the self conscious use of local colour but writer in English with which her readers would be familiar and comfortable. Therefore, Gokhale's position as a writer foregrounding her cultural milieu is significant, the way it has been received by her readers.

There have been critical comments on Gokhale's explicit articulation of female (hetero) sexuality and sexual desire. one can take the position that female sexual knowledge and pleasure is never autonomous, that is, a man , usually the husband ,only awakens it and hence ,is not at all radical in an Indian or western context.

Though Gokhale attempts to go beyond this frame work, and writes about extra – marital sexual feelings, how significant liberation is debatable , and could in fact be tied to the later point about vaporizing male figures , however ,these episodes are important in the two ways – firstly ,they indicate that women's disgust consciousness; secondly for a middle – class Indian woman's sexuality in non –titillating way and from

the woman's viewpoint , is in itself a ' tactical' move against patriarchy .

Just as importantly, this recon ceptualization of desire is anchored in discourses of the body where the woman mediates her relationship with her own body and ideologically intervenes in her relationship with her reproductive economy. The construction of female subjectivity through desire invokes complex issues given the intransigence of the local structures of domination including the patriarchal family, and the position of desire as a means to feminist agency can also function to disrupt the resistance.

From the days of her controversial novel *Paro: Dreams of Passion* in 1984, Namita Gokhale has been accused of narrating overtly sexual behavior of the character. She tells in an interview with Manu Dash about it:

Sexuality is an essential part of character, plot and motivation. A woman's sexuality as expressed in a literary space is always somehow considered more provocative than male expressions of desire. In a society where women are still negotiating both the inner and outer expressions of their sexuality within an often repressive patriarchal framework, such literary expression is a political and potentially subversive act. (Gokhale, manudash.com)

Twenty seven years after her debut novel shocked and awed Indian publishing with straight-from-the-shoulder sexual humour, Namita Gokhale wrote another novel *Priya: In Incredible Indyya* that takes

potshots at today's politicians and well-heeled society. Through the eyes of a middle class girl who works her way through social and professional ranks to become the wife of a minister, Gokhale's recent novel *Priya In Incredible Indy* takes a sneak peek at Bollywood culture, cricket, gay relationships, infidelity, political hobnobbing, social activism, current economic scenario as well as various events that make it to the daily newspapers:

Yes, I have caricatured society again in my new novel. From the time I have written my first novel *Paro* society has seen many changes. I wanted to go back to writing social comedy and took characters from the first fiction. (indianexpress.com)

The formula for Delhi's social networking, its obsession with acronyms used for various civic bodies and the mores of political spouses, society ladies, and the working class form the various themes in Gohale's new novel *Priya: in Incredible Indyya* that is a take off from her 1984 book, *Paro: Dreams of Passion*.

Paro: Dreams of Passion is a comical novel, funny novel and then as a reaction Gokhale went into writing more and more serious books which were fun also but in a different tone,. For Gokhale it was fun to go back to writing about the society in Delhi with its contradictions and self importance a sense of privilege and entitlement it implies.

Likewise, most of her works of fiction such as *Paro: Dreams of*

Passion, Shakuntala: The Play of Memory and *A Himalayan Love Story* narrate tales of strong women, as does her non-fiction work *Mountain Echoes: Reminiscences of Kumaoni Women*. In fact, with her first novel *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1984), written when she was 26, she raised quite a few eyebrows with her candid depiction of promiscuity among the elite of Delhi and Mumbai – an “extremely bold” endeavour considering the times. Gokhale says in an interview with Nita Sathyendran:

Funnily enough at the time I never thought that *Paro* was bold or that it would create such uproar. Even my normally reticent father, V.C. Pant, was like ‘can’t you have been more discreet!’ On that note, I am not a feminist, nor do I aspire to be one; agreed, strong women do come through. Maybe it’s because we as a society are a bit regressive towards women and I want to alter that. It just happens. (Sathyendran, *The Hindu*)

Perhaps the strong female voices also come through because of her own experiences as publisher of *Super*, one of the film magazines of the 1970’s:

Perhaps... There I was fresh out of college – sans degree because of a technicality – newly married, and running a magazine at the age of 20 to boot! That was a time when Bollywood had yet to become the Bollywood. But we ran it for seven fabulous years. Many an influential film critic including Bhavana Somaiyya and Rauf Ahmed began their careers at *Super*. (Sathyendran, *The Hindu*)

Priya: In *Incredible Indyya* takes off on the social satire of *Paro: Dreams of Passion*. It’s a funny novel called *Priya*; funny because it picks up from one of the characters in *Paro*. It’s a social comedy set in

contemporary Delhi, because Delhi is the seat of high comedy. Being a housewife in contemporary India is a tedious task and comes with a new set of pressures, says writer-publisher Namita Gokhale who also believes that Indian feminists balance and suppress a lot.

The novel is a journey into the layered core of the country's changing economic scenario and the issues politicians strive to unravel in a flurry of five-star dos peopled by networkers, operators, business magnates and social hangers-on. Gokhale said in an interview with Madhusree Chatterjee:

Life is a tragedy for those who feel and a comedy for those who think. These are the two aspects of my work. Some of my work is sad and tragic - but this book, I have tried to keep it funny. (tribuneindia.com)

Gokhale traces the roller coaster life of Priya, a girl from India's growing middle class, who works her way up through social and professional ranks to become the wife of an Indian minister, Suresh Kaushal. Priya copes with social vertigo, infidelity, menopause and relationships and learns some vital lessons watching her new friend Poonam chase status, sex and designer shoes.

The mother-daughter relationship has occupied an important place in Gokhale's novels. Motherhood is not idealized as it is in traditional

Indian cultures. Her mothers are human and fallible, often melancholic, because omen is all of these things. The experiences of being a daughter and a mother, Gokhale's narrative voice suggests, is a bitter –sweet experience, brought with tensions and conflicts love and cruelty, joy and pain.

Shakuntala's mother showers all her love upon her son Govinda. For the entire day, things are planned and done only for Govinda in a proper manner by the mother. She provides good food and education for her son and also appoints a teacher for his studies. But when Shakuntala asks her mother for her education, she is chided by her mother:

Of course I kept my opinions to myself, for they were neither asked nor valued. My mother never fatigued of telling me not to fancy myself a scholar as the scriptures were forbidden to women. (SPM11)

The conflict between mother and daughter is presented by the Gokhale as a conflict between tradition and modernity, a clash between freedom and dependence, or assertion of selfhood and the need for love in relationship.

Most of the female protagonists of Gokhale reject their mother as role models, because they represent a patriarchal outlook on the life. The whole question of 'motherhood' is also a major concern universally in contemporary women's literature and has obvious reverberations in the

terms of feminist criticisms. The relation between mother and daughter, mother mirroring and affirming identity or notices of the birth of female identity through transference to the text and symbol is also particularly important within a postcolonial context.

Namita Gokhale basically reflects on the problems and concerns of the middle class Indian women. Her writings, rooted in the culture in which she lives, remain sensitive to the common everyday events and experiences, and they give artistic expression to something that is simple and mundane.

In Namita Gokhale's novels three types of suffering women characters recur with subtle changes. To the first type belongs the heroine's mother or the mother figure – the traditional woman who believes that her place is with her husband and family. Whatever be her troubles, she does not leave her husband; she strives for a working relationship with him at any cost. In a sense, she represents the traditional religious ethos and confirms to the Manu code that the woman should be under the control of the father in their status as mothers or mothers-in-law. Shakuntala's mother (*Shakuntala: the Play of Memory*), Parvati's mother (*A Himalayan Love Story*) and Priya's mother (*Paro: Dream of Passion*) belong to this type.

The second type of suffering women is the converse of the

traditional type. Here, the woman is bolder, more self-reliant and rebellious. She cannot conform to the Sita's version of womanhood and is consciously inclined towards what could be designated as radical feminist ideology, Paro (*Paro: Dreams of Passion*) and Gudiya (*God, Graves, and Grandmother*) hold a feminist ideology to life for the sake of which they choose to lead an independent life.

The third type of women characterizes the woman in between. Most of Gokhale's heroines belong to this category. This woman is neither traditional nor radical in her ideas and practice. She might walk out of her home in protest against her suffering, but gradually realizes that walking out does not solve her problems. Shakuntala in *Shakuntala: the Play of Memory* broods over her agonies even after she escapes her marital home. Rachita Tiwari in *The Book of Shadows* seeks refuge in her ancestral home, but she is unable to accept her fate as any ordinary woman might do.

These heroines suffer more because they are aware of the escape routes of two other types of women – the traditional and the radical – but hesitate to choose those options. Their initial position is one of remaining at the crossroads. It is towards the end of the novels, that Namita gokhale's female protagonist realizes herself and learns to live up to the challenge.

Namita Gokhale's characters are often divided into the categories of good and bad, but the author herself views human relationships in a greater complexity. Gokhale's women do not opt out of imperfect relationships, but try and redress the power and gender imbalances through self-knowledge – a strategy that is effective in a limited way. It ultimately limits the narrative/ ideology of liberation by sanitizing its transgressed potential; the onus of 'bettering' themselves in the order to make their husband/ marriages better, again fall on woman.

In *A Himalayan Love Story* Gokhale has described Heeranand Joshi's nephew Pooran's character with utter minuteness:

Pooran is of medium height, and has a thin clear face, with deep laughter lines running from his fine nostrils to the edges of his narrow unsmiling lips. He was dressed in black trousers and a brown jacket, both shiny from wear. He wore socks and flip-flop slippers. His palms were clammy upon contact as he stepped forward to shake hands with me, the tips of his fingers stained brown with nicotine. (HLS 96)

Through her writing Gokhale has tried to give a glimpse of social customs, fundamental rules and Hindu tradition and its impact on modernity. In particular she stresses more on the condition of widows in society. They are still suppressed oppressed and victim of social custom.

Namita Gokhale is one of the few writers who have successfully managed to bridge the gulf between the demands of creativity and the

demands of biologically and socially prescribed roles of wife and mother. Her prime concern is to understand the need for engaging her subtle but flexible narrative to embody a feminine metaphysics and to amalgamate the individualism and free spirit of the society around with its stark realism. In fact, she uses the narrative forms developed by men to express masculine value, to emancipate the artist and the feminine spirit.

Namita Gokhale thus engages herself in a redefinition of woman as a biological mechanism meant for the reproduction of the race and as a creature of self-abnegation. This way she rejects the romantic notion of an artist as hero which exclude women, an abstract idea, or the picture of world of facts and events without any attempt to present a woman's point-of-view or her individual consciousness.

However, the dynamics of Gokhale's narrative is not geared towards the creation of a radical self akin to the third world feminist narratives. If it disrupts and question the orders of a conventional sequestered life and the order it, it is only to redefine a new role and not just to resist. The writing thus produced is only to radiant picture of sunshine that later on opens the way for more and more radical breaks from the traditional mould.

Gokhale, in fact, never uses herself to express a radical break and declaration of self independence. Rather she uses her art to express the

subterranean life of silence lying under the skin, a life that is equally eloquent and vibrant like the life lived on the surface. I believe that even though she has never taken an oppositional stance Vis-a -Vis the world of man, the contested terrain of her narrative is full of echoes voices of a submerged life lived always from the dominant gaze of a male dominated society.

In the process she is ramping a new region from the perspective of the oppressed and the marginalized. She does make attempt to go beyond the limitations imposed upon her by carving out a distinct way of narration to confront her protagonist with the new hidden dimensions of her own self with its distinct identity on the edge of a complete breakdown.

Namita Gokhale understands that the desire for imagined aesthetic space is different from the drab and dull matter of fact in the present, in fact the dream for a separate identity where a woman can open herself without the burden of tradition, is very much alien to millions of women who are only conscious of making the most of their –worn lives.

Namita Gokhale's fiction exemplifies a literary phenomenon and critical methodology we can call deep mapping. She uses her narrative to create "maps" of a distinct cultural feminine space and articulate "deep maps" of Pease by foregrounding issues of culture and identity to suggest

that space is both geographical location and psychic construction. Her position is problematic because of the realization that the demands of creative self seem incompatible with the demands of the biologically and socially prescribed role of women as a wife and mother. She has to amalgamate the individualism evident in the desire to emancipate and the emancipation is essential for aesthetic expression.

Namita Gokhale is a leading Indian English writer, championing the cause of women who have suffered the age old masculine yoke. Women intimate and yet enigmatic co-associate in human relationship has often been at the receiving end in the male dominated world. Gokhale has probed into the suffocated psyche of women to height light their suppressed desires to lay bare their ambition and frustrate, soothe their ached and pain and activates their slumberous feminine 'I' gifted with equal mental capacities.

Memory is recurring theme in Gokhale's novels. Characters imprisoned in their memories dominate the narrative space of novels. They keep revisiting their past in manner that threatens their present and future. The ghost of the past has been aid if they were to lead a life that one ordinarily calls normal. So one finds characters coming to terms with the past through process which are often strategies of exorcism revisiting, re-telling and recovering.

This attempt to recover the past is, in fact the configuration of a supplement to experience. Only this supplement would help the character into a second kind of recovery that is not a supplement but a cure. Writing as re-telling mediates the past and the present, the forgetting and remembering do important vectors constitute a duality that the characters move through. The recovery of the past in writing is a supplement a retrieval of forgetting, not at once evident to the characters haunted by memories of the past.

Because Gokhale does not write for western readers, her novels are free from surplus age and padding which has affected even some very competent Indian writer's-writings. Most of her novels are open -ended, and the reader is free to supply the conclusion the way he deems fit. This has been done to encapsulate the reality which is certainly unidirectional.

While remaining well within the bounds of the Indian middle class respectability, Gokhale has raised some significant question pertaining to the position of women in society and gender issues. In her novels most probably she concentrates on husband wife relations. Her novels generally centre around family relationships particularly the relationship between husband and wife and latter dilemmas and conflicts.

Namita Gokhale does not believe in offering readymade solution. But the conviction that ‘we can always hope’ and that ‘life has always to be made possible’ speaks of a genuinely positive attitude to life. Gokhale’s protagonists finally try their best to conform to their roles, and the short stories end with an optimistic note with the possibility of some positive action in future. The writer emerges in them as a bridge-builder between the old and new between tradition and modernity. For this end for portraying the basic reality of Indian society and place of women in it in a sensitive and authentic manner her novels are incense values.

Author and publisher Namitha Gokhale can be called a mover and a shaker, and even a trendsetter, when it comes to the literary scene in India. As co-founder of the Jaipur Literary Festival (along with author William Dalrymple), Namitha has gone a step beyond the isolated world of writing bestsellers and has created a platform for vibrant interactions between author and reader, and also author and author. Her novels are remarkable for their strong female voices.

Gokhale is also “deeply fascinated” by Indian mythology, with a lot of her books inspired by its tales and characters. It has also led her to writing books such as *The Book of Shiva* (on Shaivaite philosophy) and an illustrated version of the *Mahabharata* for children. Gokhale said in an interview with Nita Sathyendran:

The more I read, the more interested in mythology I become. After all, being in India, one simply can't ignore it. (Gokhale, *The Hindu*)

In dealing with the fictional women of Namita Gokhale, we come across a definite quest for a true and authentic self. Her novels are concerned with an exploration into the female psyche and an understanding of the mysteries of life and the protagonist's place in it.

Namita Gokhale's woman-centered novels give us a psychological insight into the working of a woman's mind; especially one belonging to a typically Indian background. The years of societal and cultural conditioning teaches the Indian woman to be self-effacing, submissive and subordinate to man, suffering the tyrannies of a patriarchal society in silence.

Though Gokhale doesn't like to be labeled as a feminist writer she mostly focuses on the issues relating to the rainbow coalition of rights, desires, agendas, struggles, victories', speaking for all the women. Just like a staunch feminist she seeks to discover the female author's quest for empowerment through self-expression by escaping the controlling authority of the male in the realm of social/sexual power and examines the 'double colonization' of women under imperial and patriarchic condition. She also dares to expose, question and challenge the age-old traditions and prejudices in male-dominated society.

Her novels eclectically employ the post-modern technique of deconstructing patriarchic culture and customs, and revealing these to be man-made constructs Gokhale sees the need to harmonize the man-woman relationship as equal partners. There is no victory in the subjugation and destruction of the male. The need is to see each other's need for space, freedom of expression and love .The fictional world of Namita Gokhale is not directed towards the annihilation of the existing order but it seeks a reorientation of society where a more balanced relationship might have been possible.

To conclude Gokhale, portrays the basic human problems and the anguish of the lonely soul. In spite of all apparent relationships, woman is alone. No human relationship can relieve her of her existential problems. The loss of moral and spiritual moorings leads the characters to an intense awareness of futility. Though they are defeated in the battle of life, they do not surrender their individuality.

On the other hand, they accept stoically the challenges of life. Namita Gokhale's vision of life is one of ambivalence, born out of an awareness of paradoxes at various levels. Her fictional world is a world of defeat and disillusionment on the one hand and on the other of compromises and reconciliations. Memory and dream, joy and suffering, disillusionment and hallucination, individual and community are the

central preoccupations around which revolve Gokhale's perception of the paradoxes.

In the process of realizing these paradoxes Gokhale's characters undergo a process of suffering and purgation. The assertion of the existential reality of the individual against the forces of chaos and disintegration creates a profound sense of tragic tension. The experience of defeat and disillusionment in Namita Gokhale's fiction not only leads to agony and suffering but also to an acquiescence of life. The protagonists of Gokhale confront with courage the sordid realities of life that threaten to submerge the individual self in the welter of cosmopolitanism and social obligations.

Though they often fail in their mission, their confrontation assumes a tragic dimension in terms of their anguish and profound introspection. They are tormented souls who, in their death-in-life, aspire towards life-in-death. It is in this sense that Gokhale's fictional world reflects a tragic sense of life.

Gokhale's experiences in life, beginning from her early marriage, her academic let down, her brush with death and her husband's death had perhaps left her emotionally and mentally drained. By her own admission she had a very eventful life. These events in her life could have led to her philosophical bent of mind where she tends to view everything

philosophically. Gokhale's characters are thus a reflection of her own independent and rebellious streak of mind which emerges in her creativity also.

Gokhale is a writer par excellence when she deals with human issues which are of interest to all humanity. She effectively portrays the lot of Indian women and the convolute state of things resulting in their self-abnegation in her writing known for her writing known for courageous and sensitive handling of significant and intractable themes affecting the lives of women. Her works, therefore, constitute an outstanding contribution to Indian literature in English.

Wome are aware that the old aged societal norms and their preordained roles have subjected them to severe suffocation and humiliation. Despite facing cold attitude from Lalit, Parvati in *A Himalayan Love Story* does all the duties of a responsible wife:

I was expected to cook for Lalit's family. Here I was able to display my culinary prowess, and took some satisfaction from the praise all of them heaped on me. As I got to know them better I grew to like them as an affectionate, trusting lot. I was unexpectedly popular with them: Parvati bhabhi was considered an accomplished and dashing new addition to the extended family. (HLS33).

The women protagonists of Namita Gokhale have already begun to question their roles, functions, attitudes even behaviours. They have

realized that they have to unshackle themselves from the chains of bondages which have changed these women's rights for centuries. They finally succeed in knowing about themselves but within the limited preview of their own lives. In a way these women have no interest to raise their feelings as modern feminists do with the capacity to purge society of its evils and blaze forth in a trail of glory.

Namita Gokhale has tried to colour every section of woman psyche. She usually concerns with human relations as husband-wife relation, daughter-mother relations, and male-female relations. She desires to present evidence through her woman protagonist that,

A woman should be aware, self-controlled, strong willed, self reliant and rational, having faith in the inner strength of womanhood. A meaningful change can be brought only from within by being free in the deeper psychic sense. (Nahal 17)

Namita Gokhale is thus one of the most important Indian writers. Gifted with a rare literary bent of mind, she has matured with experience in life. For her novel writing is an art she has carved a niche for herself among Indian English writers. The transparency of her novels makes them highly readable. Her real contribution lies in portrayal of plights and problems, trial and attribution lay in portrayal of plights and problems, trials and tribulations of the middle class Indian women.