

Treatment of Love in the Novels of Namita Gokhale

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Abstract

Namita Gokhale is well known for talking about man-woman relationships. The treatment of love in her novels is different from what it has been traditionally. The female characters of Namita Gokhale desire to receive true love in life but they fail as modern world offers relationships of convenience. Paro, Gudiya, Parvati, Rachita, Shakuntala, and other female protagonists of Namita Gokhale fail in their love-life. All their hopes and aspirations meet disappointment due to the selfish nature of their partners. The present article intensely explores the treatment of love in the novels of Namita Gokhale.

Key Words: Love, Marriage, Relationship, Woman

The theme of love in the novels of Namita Gokhale reveals her accomplished craftsmanship. These days this theme has gained more significance because of the rapid industrialization, increasing awareness among women of their rights. Modern writers do not discuss this subject in the traditional manner. They describe the relationship between man and woman in a realistic way. Namita Gokhale focuses on the issues related to the interaction between man and woman as well as between the individuals and the social world.

In *Paro: Dreams of Passion*, Paro is a sophisticated and financially self-reliant woman. She is in quest of her identity. Paro has been portrayed as a proud and ambitious woman. She has many affairs in her life. While in a boarding school, she had an affair with the teacher Marcus. In Delhi, she comes across B.R., who is ignorant of her past affair with her teacher. He falls in love with Paro, and they get married. Paro marries B.R. with a lot of expectations but all her dreams

shattered as B.R. could not remain faithful to Paro for a long time. After her separation with B.R., she gets involved in brazen adulterous relationships. She has an affair with Avinendra also known as Lenin. Paro feels free with him. She attends parties with him and orders him like a child. Lenin knows very well that Paro was once married and has divorced her husband, but he still loves her. He not only loves her but also adores her for her audacious ways of life. He is of the opinion that her rebellious ways of living make her liberated.

Paro develops relations with many men, but she is emotionless and indifferent in these connections. She changes her partners so soon. Every relationship and encounter seemed to have ended in bitterness, misunderstanding and wrangling.¹ She defies all the norms prevalent in a traditional society. She thinks she has manipulated men but in the real sense she has terribly abused herself. She has corrupted herself a lot. Her partners depart from her life when their passion is spent gradually. Bucky Bhandhpur leaves her because he is betrothed to someone else. Sambhu Nath Mishra has an enjoyable time with Paro and then begins to take care of his family. Lenin also gets married and departs. Therefore, we find that neither Paro nor her partners are loyal and honest in love. After the sad end of her relations with all these men, she starts thinking about leading a settled life. She marries Leoras but to her absolute discontent she comes to know that he is a gay and is not able to keep her happy. Besides, he is a watchful husband who employs private detectives to have an eye on his wife.

Priya loves her boss B.R. but could not get married to him as he marries Paro. She cannot forgive him for marrying Paro but keeps her relations with him alive even after her marriage to Suresh. She gets delight in the company of B.R. and forgets her responsibility as the wife of Suresh. She knows very well that B.R. is not honest in his relationship with her but still she feels attracted towards him. Priya goes back to her normal life after getting a warning from her husband Suresh. It can safely be established that the main characters of the novel are not romantic in their approach. They fall in love only to satisfy their physical desire. The relationships are based on selfishness and material gain.

Gudiya in *Gods, Graves, and Grandmother* alters the traditional view on man-woman relationship. She loves Kalki at the very first sight and is willing to sacrifice anything for her

love. She does not hesitate in surrendering her chastity before Kalki's physical desires. She does not listen to what her grandmother's assistant, Phoolwati advises. Kalki is a worthless person, but Gudiya decides to marry him. Here Namita Gokhale redefines the rules of feminism as she presents women in the role of subjects and men as objects. The relation between Gudiya and Kalki reverses the established order as Kalki has been presented as the object and Gudiya as the subject. Kalki begins his relationship with Gudiya with an expectation of having some material advantage. His interest in Gudiya has been in the beginning stimulated by the instinct to fulfill his physical desires and not by genuine and honest love for her. As a result, the marriage does not appear to be made in heaven for them. He marries Gudiya reluctantly as he does not find himself ready for such responsibilities. He has his own aims and aspirations in life, and he wants to go after them. Gudiya loves Kalki in the real sense and feels hurt when she understands his indifference towards her after their engagement. She says:

Our love remained in the make-believe, for, behind his carefully maintained facade, Kalki was seething with a desperate rage. He had in no way forgiven me for our engagement, whatever I did; I simply could not penetrate his hatred.²

Gudiya marries Kalki with a lot of expectations to receive true love, but her married life turns duller day by day. Though she and Kalki satisfy their passion, Gudiya begins to feel exhausted and dejected. Kalki's uncultured traits entirely wipe out Gudiya's dreams and desires. She becomes a woman of broken heart with all her dreams destroyed, "that this was how my whole life might pass – in indifference, indignities and calculated cruelties"³. Despite her love for him she decides to get rid of him. Soon Gudiya stops thinking about Kalki and continues her life. Though Gudiya loves Kalki, but she prefers her freedom and peace of mind and is happy to live without the man she loves.

Namita Gokhale's *A Himalayan Love Story* is a sad tale of the sufferings of Parvati who longs to receive love throughout her life. Parvati lost her father long ago. Her mother also dies after some time. After her mother's demise, she goes to live with her uncle who is a learned man and has worked as a headmaster in a school at Nainital. He knows the value of education in life. Parvati starts receiving education there and soon starts to feel attracted towards her very handsome

young teacher, Salman. She was captivated by him. The young girl praises his sensuality: I first saw Salman and I was dazzled by his beauty. He seduces her, and she enjoys physical pleasure with him. Here she appears like Gudiya who falls for Kalki because of his physical charm. She does not have the slightest feeling of remorse. Later Salman departs from the scene and his leaving does not leave any mark on Parvati. She does not appear to be affected at all:

I was stoic, even relieved, about his departure... My encounters with Salman had quelled some silent hunger within me. I felt triumphantly normal, and indeed the next few years were probably the happiest in my life.⁵

After the departure of Salman, Parvati develops friendly relations with her classmates Mukul and Lalit. Parvati loves Mukul and he also has a soft corner for her. They could not get married because of the caste differences. Parvati's uncle wants her to marry Lalit and she has no option but to obey. She controls her feelings for Mukul and submits before her uncle's decision. She knows that she does not have the right to select her life-partner as she is a woman.

Parvati had her own expectations from her marriage but to her utter disappointment she fails to get any love in her married life. Lalit is unable to keep her happy. Besides his nature is obstinate which adds to her frustration.

The women characters of Namita Gokhale often turn to illicit relations in order to satisfy their restless heart and starving body. Parvati like her mother also indulges in relation outside marriage to get physical pleasure. She enters relation with her brother-in-law, Raju. Parvati's relation with Raju shows the fragile nature of the feelings of a physically frustrated woman. Usually, such relations do not last long and Raju leaves after some time. So, Parvati at last learns to resolve things with Lalit but it is too late as he does not live long due to consumption. With Lalit's death she loses her sense and laughs like a lunatic. She turns insane because of the ill-fated conditions of her life

Mukul comes back to Nainital. He knows that Parvati is not in a good condition and needs help. She along with her daughter is a financial burden and is sent to a lunatic asylum. Though Mukul

is married but he still has feelings for Parvati. He wants to help her but the economic condition of his country and the rigid caste system prevalent here force him to abort his plan of staying here and therefore depressed and deserted he departs. This seals Parvati's fate forever. Parvati, who in her youth showed some spark of promise, is now a lunatic. Thus, in this novel Namita Gokhale narrates the story of broken hearts. Parvati leads an unhappy life and does not receive love throughout her life.

In *The Book of Shadows*, Rachita Tiwari, the central character of the novel, is a 34-year-old college lecturer. Her fiancée commits suicide, and his sister hurts her face by throwing acid on it. The personalities of Rachita and her fiancée Anand are entirely different. Anand is a bit violent, but Rachita is calm and composed. Anand is younger to Rachita in age. He is only twenty-six while she is thirty-three. But his pride is greater than that of Rachita. He looks at her as his future wife with love, but he also has the possessiveness of a boyfriend. Anand all the time wants Rachita to be submissive to him and behave according to his wishes. He always tries to control Rachita.

Rachita is in love with Anand, but she is involved in infidelity with the husband of her best friend. When Anand comes to know about her unfaithfulness, he cannot bear it. He feels humiliated and ends his life. Rachita believes that she is in no way accountable for his death. After his death she says:

Who was this swaying on a rope before me? This was not my lover, the stroker of my brow. It was an unbearable excess of all that was possible and bearable. There was defect here, and a loss of dignity. This travesty of not-life was not how death was to be faced: of this, I was sure.⁶

This death of her fiancée and the acid attack on her face has a traumatic effect on Rachita's life. Before the catastrophe, Rachita Tiwari was teaching English Literature at a college. Evidently, the acid-attack shatters her self-confidence. She has lost her identity. It has also put at risk her career and her individual development. She alienates herself from her social life. She finds herself alone and no one comes to pacify her. She says:

I was myself an earnest overgrown student masquerading as an academic; I tried to explain the concept of alienation to my students. Rich young girls from Punjabi Bagh, without a care in the world beyond their next shampoo, creased their perfectly threaded eyebrows in puzzled if polite concentration and accosted the problem.⁷

Namita Gokhale describes a love affair in which men believe that women are inferior to them. Females are expected to be compliant and dutiful to men. Anand expects the same from Rachita. It is always prevailing in his behaviour. Once Rachita organizes a party and there Anand tries to demonstrate his authority over her.

Rachita and Anand frequently fight with each other though there is no genuine reason. They fight over slightest disagreement between them. In one such fight, they start shouting. Anand screams at Rachita, "That's exactly what I was saying. The trouble with you is that you don't bother to listen to me. The trouble with you is that you are so bloody self-obsessed."⁸

Rachita knows well that her relationship with Anand is not based on mental understanding. It is only her fate that has brought her in relation with him. Anand all the time suspects Rachita and his presence in her life has marred her individual identity. The relation ends painfully with Anand's death and Rachita's alienation. It leaves a permanent mark on her face as well as on her soul.

Shakuntala is married to Srijan, a rich man. He is the chief of fourteen villages. Shakuntala is his third wife. His other wives have died without giving him any child. After her marriage, she starts a new phase of her life. In her opinion, her marriage is a means to escape from the grip of her dominating mother. Shakuntala has her own view on freedom in life. She has fervent desire to see the world. But her marriage with Srijan could not provide her any such opportunity. Srijan often goes on tours, but he does not take Shakuntala with her. As a result, Shakuntala starts getting bored with her marriage. She becomes sad when her husband brings a woman named Kamalini with him. She starts feeling insecure because she also must give Srijan his heir.

Shakuntala comes across Nearchus, a man from the land of Yavanas. Her meeting with Nearchus brings an unexpected turn in her life. He fascinates her with his healthy and burly appearance.

She knows he is an outcast who is conventionally thought to be impure. Despite all this, she is ready to run away with him. She is unable to think about ethics and modesty after meeting Nearchus. She is so much attracted towards him that she does not hesitate to establish illicit relation with him. He calls her Yaduri, and she imagines herself to be the same and thus forgets who really, she is. She is no more the wife of Srijan. She is a slave of her desire. She travels with him a lot. Her insatiable lust for physical enjoyment makes her wild. Even Nearchus is astonished at her passion for pleasure.

But like Paro, she also meets a tragic end. Her lust kills her. When she separates herself from the Yavana, she finds that she cannot go back to her husband. Her lust has degraded her and now she cannot lead the life of Srijan's wife. Like other female characters of Namita Gokhale, she enjoyed physical pleasure but fails to receive true love in her life. They all keep craving for love throughout their lives, but they are unable to receive it. They indulge themselves in pre-marital physical relations, they willingly enter adulterous relations but ultimately, they realize that physical pleasure cannot give solace in life. As a result, they face frustration which sometimes results in catastrophe as we see in the case of Paro and Shakuntala.

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