

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT**

**TITLE:** A Study of Feminism in the Novels of Namita Gokhale (with special reference to Paro: Dreams of Passion, Gods, Graves and Grandmother and Shakuntala: The Play of Memory)

### **SUMMARY**

Namita Gokhale is one of the famous Indian women novelists. Her novels reveal her keen concern for the welfare of women. The research has been focussed on three novels written by Namita Gokhale- Paro: Dreams of Passion (1984), Gods, Graves and Grandmother (1991) and Shakuntala: The Play of Memory (2005). In her novels woman are the central characters and the narrative is primarily concerned with what is observed, felt, and experienced. The novels reveal the women's quest for self, an exploration into the female psyche and efforts taken by the protagonists to assert themselves. Her perception about women's liberation is deeply entrenched in the Indian woman's situations within the socio-cultural and economic spaces and paradigms of the country. The protagonists of her novels struggle to assert themselves at times going against the set conventions. She has depicted their likes, dislikes, aspirations, desires, quest for freedom and search for identity.

Namita Gokhale in 'Paro: Dreams of Passion' (1984) presents the story of Paro, the seductress and Priya, the narrator. It is a tale of a tall, sexy, green-eyed, gin-drinking temptress, Paro and is narrated by the observant Priya, who records not only the loves and failures of her friend but also her own. The basic theme of Paro is human predicament; it is a woman's agonizing search for her true self in the society which is still largely traditional and still dominant with cultural and societal stereotypes. In Paro, Namita Gokhale emerges as a committed feminist author. She has successfully portrayed the insensitive fatality of option which the society has cringingly given to its women.

Her next novel 'Gods, Graves and Grandmother' (1991), deals with the story of a family of Kothawalis (prostitutes) once living in a large haveli and patronised by the rich zamindars, merchants and even the sahibs. Gudiya, her mother and Grandmother (Ammi) have to leave their Kotha. The destitute grandmother and grand-daughter arrive in Delhi and setup a make-shift temple under the peepal tree and a hut to sleep in. The female characters exhibit self-reliance in

financial matters. They use their abilities, courage and shrewdness not only to stand on their own legs but also to prosper by leaps and bounds. In the novel Gokhale has projected the women as self-dependent and she empowers them to face the harsh social reality. These women are not cowed down by the adversities. They do not brood over their misfortunes or indulge in self-pity but face the world bravely and become financially well-settled. Ammi, Gudiya and Phoolwati thus come to a place which is completely new to them. They have to struggle to survive and seem to fulfil the matriarchal utopian vision which aims to see women as powerful with command over their bodies and their lives.

Shakuntala, the central character and narrator in Gokhale's novel, 'Shakuntala : The Play of Memory' (2005) has the quest for experience and knowledge. Shakuntala, a victim of gender discrimination during her childhood, was restless to see the world, to wander with the freedom of birds and clouds. After marriage her husband, Srijan, brings a handmaiden, a betrayal which she cannot sustain. Her hunger for knowledge, experience and freedom results in her elopement with a Greek horse merchant. Breaking the set traditional norms, she seeks sexual pleasure. But ultimately is filled with remorse, and with unfulfilled desire to return home, dies in Kashi, the city of her longing. Thus the female characters in Gokhale's novels constitute a broad encompassing feminist vision which visualises a rightful place for women in the patriarchal society.

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