

Indianess Traits and Emergence of Modern Women in Namita Gokhale's Gods, Graves and Grandmother

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Abstract

Namita Gokhale is one of the best Indian women writers who have contributed a lot to global literature. This present paper focuses on the indianess traits in Namita Gokhale's novel Gods, Graves and Grandmother. Indian society is a patriarchal society. Gokhale depicts this status of society in this novel. Gudiya is the protagonist of the novel. Through the character of Gudiya, Gokhale presents the progress in the state of mind of a young girl after marriage which is a factual element in Indian women. This novel also portrays the psychological trauma experienced by the people who are leading a street life in India. Religious beliefs and superstitious beliefs which are the prominent elements in the Indian society is also explained in this novel. Gokhale presents a clear picture of the indianess traits through her major and minor characters. Gokhale explores the feminine subjectivity and apply the theme that range from childhood to complete womanhood. Gokhale also exposes the humorous underbelly of merchandised religiosity. Gokhale's use of language and the vedic terms employed in this novel pictures the Indian society. Gokhale in this novel depicts the bourgeois class in the Indian society and their struggle to lead a better life.

KEYWORDS: Traits, Beliefs, Indianess, Psychological trauma, Bougeois class

This paper explores the indianess traits and emergence of modern women in Gokhale's novel Gods, Graves and Grandmother. Namita Gokhale is an Indian women writer. In the nineteenth century more and more women actively participated in India's reformist movement. Over the years the feminist ideologies began to influence the English literature of India. The novels of Namita Gokhale are really outspoken. Namita Gokhale has bold views over the society that are reflected in her novels. Her novels are works of protest and an outburst of reservations and contaminations. Namita Gokhale is the author of eighteen books including nine previous works of fiction and several works of non-fiction.

In this novel Gods, Graves and Grandmother, Gudiya is the protagonist of the novel. This novel portrays the life of people living in streets of India. As Gokhale lives with her two daughters in Delhi, this novel presents the life of people of Delhi. Gudiya exposes the male dominance in Indian society by recounting her past life in haveli. Gudiya lives with her mother and grandmother in a large haveli. Her mother and grandmother is a Kothewali. This shows that women are used only as a tool for men to satisfy their carnal desires. The only work which women of some caste can do earn to earn for their living is prostitution. This novel is a satire in which the male dominated Indian society, religious beliefs are being satirized.

Gudiya's happy life in the haveli is shattered when they are sent out of the haveli suspecting that Gudiya's mother has killed a man. Due to the physical and mental

agony experienced by Gudiya's mother as a prostitute her hair starts falling. Her mother longs for love and she runs away with an old beggar named RiyasuddinRizvi.

After mother left, after she ran away with RiyassudinRizvi,
less than a week after we had counted on the money,
grandmother grasped that we had to diversify to survive(11).

After the elopement of Gudiya's mother, Gudiya's grandmother, Ammi, decides to earn for their living by playing on the religious beliefs of the people. She stands as an embodiment of modern women. She decides to earn for their living neither by begging nor by prostitution. She is a muslim woman by birth but she pretends to be a Hindu Brahmin and places a marble slab under the peepul tree and starts doing poojas to that. People believe this as a shrine and starts worshipping it. She earns money by playing with the religious beliefs of the people. Even Sundarpahalwan, a man with strong muscles falls in the trap of Ammi and Starts believing her and later worships her.

Arre Rama RamaRama she exclaimed her honeyed voice
taking on a new texture altogether. Seize our money
pahalwanji but spare our self respect. I am the widow of
a brahmin my husband was a priest guard your tongue or
else a virtuous woman's curves may follow you(12)

NamitaGokhale provides the emergence of modern women through her other characters like Phoolwati and Roxanna Lamba. Phoolwati is a widow of Shambhu. After the death of her husband, she prospers in her business which even Shambhu couldn't. She develops her tea stall into a shop which sells incense and flowers for worshipping the deity in the temple of Ammi. Later she records the speeches of Ammi and sold it for the devotees of Ammi. Phoolwati though a village woman empowers herself after the death of her husband on her own. She even remarries SundarPahalwan which is hardly accepted in this male dominated Indian society.

Phoolwati set up another stall just outside the temple
which sold incense and marigold garlands and
coconuts and little brass amulets which she had
ordered from Moradabad(26).

Roxanna Lamba runs a school for socially handicapped. She loves the nature of Gudiya. She decides to take Gudiya with her. But this doesn't happen in Indian society. A girl cannot be brought up by someone who is complete alien to her family members. Ammi is a Kothewali by birth. But the religious beliefs which is rooted in the blood of Indians makes rise up to the level of saint. A statue of Ammi is erected after her death with great efforts. People starts worshipping her too.

The statue was brought to the temple from the sculptor's

studio in Rajouri Gardens in a specially decorated tempo
accompanied in the later part of the journey by the
Shiv Mohan band(171).

Gudiya as a grown up girl searches for her true identity. As she is a daughter of a prostitute woman she doesn't know who her father is. She gives her a new identity as PoojaAbhimanyu Singh. Identity crisis is an important element in this novel. As a teenage girl Gudiya falls in love with kalki, a bandwallah and loses her virginity to him before marriage. This shows an immature mind of a young girl of bad parenting. This attitude of a girl is not acceptable in the traditional bound Indian society. Phoolwati marries gudiya with Kalki with the help of SundarPahalwan. But gudiya doesn't lead a happy married life.

kalki has desires only for money. Gudiya sends kalki to Bombay according to his wish and starts forgetting him. Gudiya leads her later life with her daughter Mallika and phoolwati. They earn for their own living without the help of any men.

We live together Phoolwatimallika and me. Mallika
is now two years old and looks amazingly like my
Ammi(237).

The astrological terms and vedic rituals quoted by the character panditkailashShastri exposes the astrological beliefs in the minds of Indians. Another character Lila stands as a great disciple of Ammi. This shows the belief of Indian people in sainthood. Gokhale in this novel provides a complete picture of the Indianess traits and emergence of modern women in india.

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