

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A NEW WOMAN IN NAMITA'S PARO: "DREAMS OF PASSION"

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**Dr.G. Kalpana Devi**

Asst. Professor of English,  
RVR & JC College of Engineering  
Technology,Chowdavaram, Guntur Dist.

**Dr.V.V.Subba Rao**

Associate Professor of English,  
Chalapathi Institute of  
Mothadaka, Guntur Dist.

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**Abstract:**

Namita Gokhale creates her own signature in the contemporary Indian womenwriters' list with her frank presentation of realities of life. As a multi-faceted personality, she pens down the status of women and men in the society and their relationships with real time experiences through her characters. Her debut novel 'Paro: Dreams of Passion' deals with men and women and their life style with urban backdrop.Her new approach on woman towards identifying and presenting problems in an unconventional way. She succeeds in presenting alternative realities with her new woman voice 'Paro' who quest for self-identity and self-autonomy with liberation. This paper explores how a liberated woman gives a new shape to the image of traditional Indian woman and also presents new life styles in cosmopolitan cities like Delhi and Bombay.

**Keywords:** Namita Gokhale, Paro, self-identity, realities of life, liberation

**Introduction**

The life of woman in a society including problems, practices and changes reflected in the writings of Namita Gokhale. Women writings with feministic approach directly or indirectly inform, questions, criticize the ill practices of society from various perspectives in all dimensions. She realizes the need of 'New woman' to strengthen her woman voice with her character 'Paro'. 'Paro' unlike a traditional woman, she creates her own space in the society by fulfilling her dreams with complete liberation and tries to create her own identity.

A glance- The concept of new woman

The phrase 'new woman' coined by Henry James which represent the changes in women and their lifestyle in Europe. The concept of new women started in early 1880s and introduced by Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, and George Egerton, feminist writers. This is a noticeable movement which gives a turning point for gender roles in Britain. There is no concept of single New Woman, but a multitude within literature based on the urgency and experiences of the feministic writers. The

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main idea of this concept is to create a new model of womanhood by providing more rights and opportunities for women with equal education, independent decisions, and sexual freedom and so on.

Problems and experiences of women can be seen in post-colonial women writers such as Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Bharti Mukherjee, Kamala Das, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapoor and Namita Gokhale. Being a woman novelist, Namita has won a niche by exploring the various dimensions of the women. She presents her women to define self-identity who fluctuate between conventional situations to modern world. "New woman" in India as the concept to show the position of womanhood and their attitude shift in the modern context. This concept is amalgamation of western influences as well as native culture. The post-colonial modern novelists depict a "new woman" in their fiction, one who revolts against the traditional social set up. The new image of woman presented by novelist under this study is ambitious, lustful, and bold. They use sex as weapon to win and mould men to their viewpoint and get the better of them. This evolving new image of women has created a crisis in family and society and has shaken the foundations of age-old institutions like marriage. Pre-marital sex, extra-marital relations or divorce are no longer considered to be a taboo. The concept of ideal Indian woman has become

out-dated. A modern woman is career-oriented who no longer accept male dominance and fight for independence in all aspects.

A woman plays various roles like caring mother and daughter, supporting sibling, devoted wife, like many responsible roles, sometime beyond her boundaries. Man and woman relationship is developed based bond and trust. Though she played various roles in dutiful manner, she always treated inferior. Social responsibilities, norms, customs imposed based on gender. Identifying the problem from the scratch and ventilating gender discrimination. Questioning and fighting for equality in all aspects like social, economic and political as same as the men in the society and try to erase predetermined conventions in a patriarchal society where everything favored men over women. Various movements were led to achieving equality and deactivating suppression. Feminism, a complex and contradictory term which requires understanding ideas in multi-layers. Understanding the term interrelated with the issues of women's position in the society especially in social, cultural, political and economic. During 20<sup>th</sup> century, Women started fighting for equal right and liberated from male dominated society. Suppression of women and less treatment in the society develops superior and inferior roles between men and women. Many philosophers and feminists conducted

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various movements and results in designing new way of life style. Women writers like Juliet Mitchell, Simone De Beauvoir and many other express opines through their works and stressed the need of rights and create awareness.

Namita Gokhale, who creates a new trend through her women characters. The new woman is brave enough to talk about freedom, sex, happiness and pleasure. Questioning for equality is common, instead, women characters follow their way of life to achieve independence. *Paro: Dreams of Passions* (1984), debut novel of Namita Gokhale who concerns seeking independent existence of women. She sees women as victims of tradition bound Indian society and give complete liberation to her women characters and provide liberty and quest for identity. Namita Gokhale critically observed the life of the people around her life. She portrays of variegated female characters on the lines of the new perspectives in feminism. Her characters belong to a class where women are still relatively free. 'Paro', the protagonist of the story, could not enjoy her marriage life because she neither accepts the dominance of the man nor bound to the male rather she used men as puppets in her life to lead an independent life. She spent her life for pleasure, affluent and freedom.

Paro married B.R., a business man later she divorced B.R., and maintain

lovers to fulfilling her physical desires. Paro's affairs with a flaky Minister's son, a politician; and even her apparent attempt to seduce Priya's conventional hubby Suresh-- which triggers the near-collapse of this barely tenable marriage. These writings provide new insights to the readers to understand the life of women. The lot of average Indian women still remains much the same for custom as superstitions die-hard and it is indeed very difficult to break the old barriers and destroy the shackles of tradition. The bond of love by women at all stages of human life seems to become a curse to them. This love makes them to confine women in the feminine world.

She challenges unrestricted optimism and its ability to subvert male domination. However, she identifies that love is a source of misery. This misery is born out of true love of women towards her concerns. Whether it is a family, society or any other institution, woman commitment is different and dedication is also identical from patriarchy. Choice, freedom, autonomy and dedication are manifested between the men and women. At this juncture, she argues that there is a divergence of goal that elevates the difference. There is a striking difference in the attitude of men and women in case of marriage and family.

Gokhale portrays the harsh realities of life without any compromise. The life of

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people in Delhi and Bombay in general, sensitive elements like love, hate and jealous in the characters of women in particular, she explains in such a way that these concepts are common in all. However, these elements lead to the peak of their intentions and explain how the women are envious of one another. The main characters like Paro and Priya are two different and identical women. Paro is highly possessive and not so intuitive. Priya tries to strengthen the family bonds and brings the family together. Paro did not care anything women supposed to possess. One finds here that the distorted freedom as women do not get the right to get pleasure from sex freely without bothering the ethical values. She seems to be angry at the presence of male quite uncomfortable and horrible because of their malicious thoughts. She also thinks that the entire episode of woman tragedy lies in the mind of male dominated society. They are responsible for the pitiable condition of woman in the present-day society. B.R. a man without principles caught the attention of Paro with his sewing machine. He did not pay much attention to the institution of marriage and did not take care about the responsibility of the husband. It sowed the seeds of the revenge in the mind of Paro. One can see the similarities and dissimilarities in the characters of Paro and Priya. Their life suggests the attitude of the next generation. The new woman moves freely and speedily with all the people in

the society. She feels comfort and easy to move individually in order to complete their work smoothly. So, it is not possible to achieve anything without complete dedication and also responsibility. It also indicates that the society is in fluctuation. The character Paro is a woman who has all types of contacts with a number of men in society. But she always thrives for the real love and affection which she fails to find in the society. The natural portrayal of the character Paro is very strong but her psychological features reveal that she is delicate smooth, soft and longing for love. It is the situation of woman in the contemporary society where many men move around her and no one can share actual feelings of her just they move only for the satisfaction of their physical needs and after fulfilling it simply neglect her. Thus, the real portrayal of women is depicted in the writing of Gokhale.

Everyone points out at the male dominated society is responsible for the failure of men and women relations. Gokhale penetrates into the deepest layers of the problem and analyses them with an insight into woman mind. The female protagonist of the novel 'Paro' is elevated as a woman chasing pleasures by entangling affluent persons in the society. Ultimately, she meets her tragic end in the course of her action. Gokhale exposes the bare facts of life with sympathy without any hesitation. Gokhale uses the clever medium

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of writing the novel as a secret diary kept by Priya who always follows Paro's tumultuous wake, carefully paying attention on her sexual conquests, her vulgarity, her plunges from high social map to the filth-encrusted sabzi mandis. The entire episodes in the novel turn around the love-hate relationships between Paro and Priya. They form the central theme and the spine of the story. Though there are a few other characters in the novel, they work as a catalyst and speed recovery of the elements to move the novel very fast.

The novel describes women with a perspective to protect self-respect. There are many instances of expressions in an honest love among the characters. It makes the atmosphere of novel alluring. The novelist supported a leading life of respectable and virtue. But her attempt enforces her to redefine her style of thinking. She comes to a conclusion by saying that every woman in India may not think like Paro, Priya or Shakuntala but the order of thinking in older terms is drastically changed. But the new attitudes towards the thinking are yet to improve more and more. At this juncture, it cannot be ignored how she describes love, loneliness and death connotes the inner features of an individual. The emotions float up in an individual as a result of separation of love, kept in loneliness, an aversive, frustration and anger. Sometimes,

these feelings were also born out of surrender and suppression.

Paro believes in enjoying, self-discipline is an alien aspect to her. It depicts the sybarite culture of the upper middle-class society of the metros like Delhi and Bombay. The postcolonial life has a drastic impact on the middle-class society and that of the metropolitan cities of India-the glimpse of which is evident in this novel. Paro knows the art of taking she can do that efficiently. Paro is everywhere, everybody's thirst to be". Priya present her envious thoughts towards Paro and her beauty:

“There's this guy-I've forgotten his name but his wife is this dame Paro.They're stinking rich and she's really beautiful.”(2)

Paro's identity and its effect were profoundly established by everyone. She was highly forceful in her thought progression and eccentricity was of prevalent being, she was not the same as others. Though Paro is represented as a strong woman with liberty and freedom, she was governed by her physical relations. Her conduct drives to a miserable end.

Indian Women writers show their attitude of individuality in some mixed voices, other raised female voices strongly

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while others show the cutting-edge woman and a new woman idea as of late instituted in the realm of writing. Gokhale's capacity to use language reveals the life of women belong to different classes of society like upper middle class, middle class, lower middle class and their escapades, sensual acrobatics and the characters presented by the framework of a novel. Paro was a lady with an extraordinary will power, however, she additionally expected somebody to converse with, to trust in and here she found a sidekick in Priya.

The above are the general opinions of Paro, the incidents and the issue moves around her early childhood and schooling days. She used to recollect the memories of her school teacher who taught her drawing and her opinion on him is quite extraordinary which expresses her daring and dashing nature. Such incidents in the novel explain the multiple opinions of her while she was weeping and making herself low. She used to display such inspiring portrayals of pictures and try to keep them on the wall as a part of a decoration. Such views of certain characters are portrayed by Gokhale generally expose the opinion of her on the situations. In the sensational novel, Paro, she explains the general concept of free will and naturalism in the present-day context. In order to satisfy her psychological feelings first she marries B.R., a business man. Her capturing nature of attraction made B.R. attract her. So, he

submitted himself to her and later married. When there was a huge applause from all corners of the society, B.R. begins feelings a kind of jealous and depressed. Paro takes part in unconventional social limits Men acknowledged whatever she did, she had that persuading ability and expertise. She was too incredible apparently for anyone to disregard yet in her own life there was vacuum.

Paro could not confine herself to one man and one marriage. For her all these are not permanent institutions they are all dynamic which should be changed from time to time. Paro had maintained a relationship with men like B.R., (her ex-husband) Lenin, Avinendra, Sambhu Nath Mishra and so on to fulfil her desires. In the words of Lenin, Paro was projected as a symbol of emancipation. She never compromises or satisfies with one man and try to find love, affection by accepting many men.

The nature of women was described by many writers in the past. Helen Ronald describes a woman as below:

“A good Woman inspires a man,  
A brilliant woman interests him,  
A beautiful woman fascinates him,  
But a sympathetic woman gets  
him.”

When we compare Paro with the above, she was able to attract men with her

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beauty, but she was not able to get anybody for herself. That was the fate of Paro. In Priya's observation, Paro can make anyone to dance with her tunes, but in the words of Paro:

*"It's part of being a Beautiful Woman. It's a full-time occupation."*

The above statement clearly exhibits the nature of Paro and her clear views on her attitude towards men. She disobeys the norms of the society and manage her life. At the end, she committed suicide again by cutting her wrist when she realized her life was meaningless. Finally, the sensual pleasure leads to woman a tragic end. Paro grabs complete freedom to enjoy her life, but with the same flexibility she destroys her life. The author narrates two different settled lives under the name of Priya and Paro. While weaving the story one clearly understands the character who tries to follow the social norms. Though Priya tries to follow, at certain situation she crossed the limits. One can be treated as inner ward nature of the woman and another one can be treated as outer ward nature of the woman.

A woman who prefers to break the bondage and come out of the standards of life and keeps her from accomplishing her objectives. Henceforth, Gokhale's ladies are stray away from the standard life design. The concept of 'new woman' was presented by her character 'Paro'. Whereas Priya loathes Suresh, her better half she is

alright with him and comes back to him. She convinced herself as an Indian woman that we clearly observed in the following lines:

"I am an Indian woman, I told myself, and for me my husband is my God. So, I got down to telephoning him...". (27)

The above sentence reveals the nature of Indian woman and her attitude, anger, role and responsibility. She believes that everything in her life is her husband. Though the woman at present society achieved economic freedom and social freedom to live out of the house, still they seek for companionship. Words of Priya also reveal the same as the novel concentrates on the problems of the origins in the contemporary society. The two characters look like two different at the starting point of the novel, but when it goes on it clears that both are leading to similar conditions and received sympathy from the reader. The two women have less control over their emotions and lead their life according to the situations in their life. Both are aimed and attracted to lead the rich life.

**Conclusion**

Namita Gokhale depicts struggles and pains of women in modern society and their struggle to manage between tradition and modernity. The concept of new women in literature developed differently especially

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in author's feminist views. Paro, 'The new woman', who demands to hold the equal position and status in sexuality and rights. She portrays rebellious woman who seeks self- autonomy with her new life style.

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