

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS DEPICTED IN SELECT NOVELS OF NAMITA GOKHALE AND SHIVANI: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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## Abstract

*The fiction in all languages by Indian women writers is an effort to give expression to their unlimited mental agonies and existential sufferings caused by various socio-cultural, political and religious factors and a quest for identity and self-expression. They started depicting the prolonged conflict between the traditional and modern images of women. The stream of consciousness technique offered them a voice to speak out their hearts. They have depicted diversity of women and diversity within women. Namita Gokhale and Shivani have dealt with marital disharmony, parental apathy, oppression of women, sexual frustration, unrequited love, passions, ignorance, jealousies, and various other contemporary issues- illicit (pre/extra-marital) affairs, child abuse, homosexuality, acid attack, incestuous relations, suicidal tendencies, neurosis, psychosis, etc., in their novels. They lay bare the existential trauma of females for they are the more oppressed lot. The research methodology psychoanalysis will be used to explore female psyche in the select novels of Namita Gokhale and Shivani. Their female characters often run from homes in complicated situations or suffer from psychological/ personality disorders. They have chosen to depict the interior struggles by using memory, nostalgia, dreams and flashback techniques because the natural feminine sensibility can be best understood by them. Thus Namita Gokhale and Shivani have depicted sustainable development goals 3- Good Health and Well Being, 5- Gender Equality and 10- Reduced Inequalities in their novels and focused on inclusivity for national and Global development. Therefore, this paper tries to analyse comparatively the select novels of Namita Gokhale - Paro: Dreams of Passion (1984), Gods, Graves and Grandmother (1994), A Himalayan Love Story (1996), The Book of Shadows (1999) and Shivani- Bhairavi (1969), Krishnakali (1970), Shmashan Champa (1978), Chal Khusaro Ghar Apane (1987) to study women who are an equal contributor so they too deserve equal space, just and human treatment for their good health and well-being.*

**Keywords:** Equality, health, well-being, woman, society

## INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 is a call for action on global level by all developed and developing nations to make the world a better place to live in, to create a just and equitable society by reducing inequalities in all sectors of life to promote gender equality, good health and well-being.

Namita Gokhale and Shivani have been winners of Sahitya Academy Award 2021 and Padmashri 1982 respectively for their excellent literary output. They have depicted the importance of sustainable development goals in a woman's life in the backdrop of existential trauma. They have dealt with marital disharmony, parental apathy, sexual frustration and oppression of women in their novels to present how it affects their good health and well-being when women don't get equal rights, opportunities and space to satisfy their basic needs, instincts and drives. Although these women, through self-help, can contribute to reduce inequalities in their lives for social transition yet, the support from their counterparts, family and society in general is equally essential for their overall well-being.

## OBJECTIVES

- To explore female psyche by probing into the multi-dimensional existential trauma
- To reason out the role of external forces and personal traits in creating the disintegrated female characters
- To analyse the contributions of individual and society in dealing with these withdrawn females

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher will apply psychoanalytic and comparative theories to elucidate the selected novels of Namita Gokhale and Shivani.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Women being doubly burdened face stressful urban lives, complex existential situations in their personal and social lives due to globalization, scientific, technological, educational advancements and consequently increasing human awareness. They are unable to express themselves because they are being repressed since centuries and suffer from various psychological disorders. So, psychoanalysis as a literary approach has been employed to understand the female psyche.

The term 'Psychoanalysis' was first used by Sigmund Freud. According to Freud, 'To understand the human psyche, it is compulsory to understand the role of the id, ego and superego- the three components of personality which are governed by three levels of mind-unconscious, preconscious and conscious.' The id follows pleasure principle and is the repository of our basic drives or instincts- hunger, thirst, sexual and aggressive instincts too. It demands instant gratification of instincts without any other consideration. The ego is governed by the reality principle. It considers what is practical and possible as well as the urgings of the id. The ego lays the groundwork for developing a conscious sense of oneself as a distinct individual. The superego develops from the internalization of the moral standards and values of our parents and other people in our surrounding. It serves as a censor or internal moral guardian. The superego monitors the 'ego' and passes judgement on the right and wrong and thus, the ego stands between the id and the superego.

The basic premises of Freud's theory are-(i) an individual's mental processes are largely unconscious. (ii) One's attitude to sex governs his/her behaviour. (iii) Social taboos compel a person to be inhibited about love and sex and hence most of our sexual desires are repressed.

Jacques Lacan believes that human unconsciousness is structured like a language and insists that the unconscious can also be seen at work outside dreams, in jokes, slip of the tongue and puns through displacement and condensation.

Freud believes in 'individual unconscious' while Carl Jung in 'collective unconscious' and Lacan in ego as a carrier of neurosis and approaches life in terms of psyche and language. Karen Horney talks about ten coping strategies which results in moving towards people, moving against people and moving away from people.

The researcher would like to use comparative approach to analyse female psyche, the neurotic and psychotic characters of the select novels of the two novelists.

In "Paro: Dreams of Passion" (1984) Namita Gokhale has depicted how Paro has been victim of child abuse. She marries B.R., a sewing machine magnet but divorces him when she finds him in extra-marital relation with their neighbour's daughter. Then she, in search of true love, is in relations with many men- a Marxist Avinendra, a political leader Sambhunath Mishra, a cricket player Bucky Bhandpur and Suresh, a lawyer, Loukas Leoras, a Greek film director but doesn't find a true lover in any of them. Thus, Paro answers her husband in the same coin and expresses, "I am myself . . . and no one else. I depend on nobody. I am my own person." (48) In the end, she commits suicide by slashing her wrist and dies. Priya was in premarital relations with B.R. but she feels betrayed when B.R. finally marries Paro. Priya afterwards marries Suresh, a lawyer. She, being dissatisfied with her marital life, has post-marital affairs too with B.R. Suresh also had post marital affairs. Both, Priya and Suresh somewhere feel cheated in marital relations but still continue the family life.

Gokhale's second novel "Gods, Graves and Grandmother" (1994) is a tale of three generation of women- Gudiya, her mother and her grandmother Ammi in addition to Phoolwati and Leela. Gudiya's grandmother and mother were indulged in prostitution for their livelihood. Gudiya feels alienated when her mother deserts her forever and runs away with a man. Her Ammi becomes a Hindu godwoman for her survival. She is considered a burden by her grandmother when she reaches puberty. She is taken care of by Phoolwati after her grandmother's death. She is pregnant due to her premarital relation with a bandwallah Kalki. Kalki, a drunkard and gambler, marries her after a lot of pressure but she becomes victim of domestic violence. Gudiya suffers from depression because she is devoid of love, affection, parental proximity as a child besides social security and sexuality as a wife. She concludes, "I often dream about my mother, but she is elusive even there. Grandmother is dead. . . Even Kalki is gone." (240)

In her third novel "A Himalayan Love Story" (1996) Gokhale has portrayed how Parvati as a child is denied basic happiness and right to education by her mother. Parvati's poor and widow mother is in extra marital relations with her neighbour kirana shop owner Shri Krishanji. Parvati too is engaged in premarital relation with her history teacher Salman. She is married to a man by her uncle without asking her decision. Her husband Lalit turns out to be a gay man. Resultantly, she establishes incestuous relations with her brother-in-law Raju to get rid of sexual starvation. She expresses, "He was an ally, . . . our needs possessed us, and we made uncompromising, uncomplicated love." (43) Her husband Lalit dies of tuberculosis suddenly. She gives birth to a girl child born out

of the incest being a widow. She is tortured at her matrimonial home. Resultantly, she suffers from psychological disorders. She and her daughter Irra are considered a burden by their relatives and Parvati is admitted to an asylum. Irra's eyes had a fierce look and she tried hard to contain it when she said about her mother, "She is quite happy there . . . but she could be happier outside." (200)

Namita Gokhale's next novel "The Book of Shadows" (1999) narrates the life of Rachita Tiwari, a college lecturer in English, who is a victim of acid attack. After her fiancée Anand's suicide due to her infidelity temporarily, his sister throws acid on Rachita's face to take revenge upon her. Rachita had to leave her city Delhi after her initial medical treatment. She, with her disfigured face, goes to her maternal home in Kumaon to live her life silently in loneliness in an attempt to connect the threads of her shattered life. She suffers from delusions and hallucinations as she feels she is being stalked by Anand. She even notices Anand smiling in a friendly way in her room and telling her, "No hard feelings, baby" . . . "There are more things in this world, Rachita, than are dreamt of in your philosophy," Anand declaimed, as though on cue." (228) She has to undergo a lot of pain due to trauma. She consults a world-famous plastic surgeon and a psychotherapist Dr. Bhatia and regains normality after treatment.

In Shivani's "Bhairavi" (1969) translated into English as *Bhairavi: The Runaway* (2020) by Priyanka Sarkar, the protagonist Chandan jumps from a train as she is victim of a gang rape. She is going for a honeymoon with her husband Vikram when she is physically violated by four army officers. She is saved by an aghori tantrik (necromancer). She spends almost one year in his ashram but realizes that her aghori tantrik guru is unable to get rid of his physical desires in spite of yoga and meditation. Therefore, she goes out of ashram from the window in her room to save herself. She visits her Gurubahan Vishnupriya for shelter but is denied shelter owing to her charismatic beauty. She then reaches her matrimonial home. She comes to know about her husband's remarriage. She comes back from there the way she had come in and her dilemma is to find a safe and secure place to shelter herself. Shivani ends, "Chandan, like a prisoner set free was wondering the same thing: where would she go? Where? (BTR, 182) Thus, Bhairavi's lifelong sufferings have been depicted through flashbacks in this novel.

Shivani's "Krishnakali" (1970) too has psychological overtones as Krishnakali is an illegitimate child of a couple who is suffering from leprosy. She is taken care of by a prostitute Panna. When Krishnakali finds out that Panna is not her real mother, she is disappointed. She suffers from frustration as she is a victim of societal neglect. She by chance meets Praveer. She adores him and wants to marry him. So, she begins to live with his mother. But Praveer marries someone else. This news depresses her. Later on, she suffers from cancer. She commits suicide by taking sleeping pills before Praveer meets her. She has been a model, receptionist and a smuggler too. She unconsciously reacts toward society through her aggression caused by existential crises.

Shivani's "Shmashan Champa" (1978) is a story of Champa whose younger sister Juhi marries a Muslim boy Tanveer Baig and leaves for Afganistan. After her medical education gets over, Champa is engaged with Madhukar but his family breaks the marital ties when they get to know about Juhi's interreligious marriage. She goes to work in a hospital located in a lonely place to get rid of social exclusion. She, by chance, comes across Juhi who is now known as Rini Khan. She comes to know that Juhi has left Tanveer because he is a gay and she is pregnant from an extra-marital relations resultantly. Champa is threatened by Juhi's friend Mayuri to abort Juhi's child as she works in their hospital. Champa suffers from fever and is on her way to Mumbai when she meets Madhukar in the train compartment suddenly. Madhukar assists her to get proper medical treatment timely but she deserts his home immediately when Jaya, his beloved and his father Ramdutt threaten to commit suicides if he does not marry Jaya. Champa returns to her hospital. She receives a letter from Juhi's friend and reads that Juhi has murdered her lover when she gets to know that her lover is marrying another girl. She surrenders and is arrested. Ramdutt taunts Champa for living with Madhukar. He declares that Mrs. Sen is a prostitute and Champa is her adopted daughter. Besides, she is also learning the tricks of the trade from Mrs. Sen. He tells her, "Champa nahi, shmashan champa hai tu ladki... dekh . . . aaj se aathvein din mere bete ka vivah hai, is beech mere putra ka anisht mat karna samajhi?" (127)

"You are not Champa, you are graveyard flower Champa, O Girl . . . See . . . From today, on the eighth day is my son's marriage and you please don't anything which leads to his destruction, you understand." (Translation Mine) Ultimately, she renounces this world to become disciple of Shri Shri Guru Kenaram.

In "Chal Khusaro Ghar Apne" (1987) Shivani tells how Kumud takes care of her widowed mother and her siblings without caring for her basic instincts and drives. She works so that her brother Lalu and her sister Uma become educated. But she realizes that her mother's love is spoiling Lalu, a drug addict and Uma, a prostitute. She resigns from her job of teaching to get rid of this societal defame. She becomes a caretaker of Raja Rajkamal Singh's abnormal wife Malati. Once he suffers from fever and is also well taken care of by her. Resultantly, he embraces Kumud which is noticed by Malati. She chokes Kumud out of suspicion. Later on, Rajkamal Singh apologizes her for his behaviour. He also alerts her of his two brothers who resemble him and are characterless. He shares that the earlier caretaker Marium has committed suicide when she was pregnant as she was physically abused by his elder brother. Marium thought of him as Rajkamal Singh due to same resemblance because she used to love him.

Kumud goes to Singh's guru for advice and leaves her job soon to return to her own home. She is considered a keep and a mistress by others despite being very chaste.

Paro, Gudiya, Parvati, Rachita, Chandan, Krishnakali, Juhi, Champa and Kumud are victims of existential crises. They either run away from home and society or suffer from personality disorders because it affects their psyche negatively. Some of them - Paro, Priya, Gudiya, Gudiya's mother, Parvati, Parvati's mother, Rachita, Juhi, Uma are new women who are guided by id, the pleasure principal and so they are indulged in illicit relations while Gudiya's grandmother, even Gudiya and Priya as a wife in later stage of life are guided by ego, the reality principal and struggle for survival till end. Priya, Gudiya, Parvati suffer from neurosis as they are devoid of affection and security. They are alienated, depressed and have horrific dreams. Paro, Juhi, Krishnakali and Rachita suffer from psychosis due to murderous, suicidal tendencies or hallucinations and delusions. Chandan, Champa and Kumud are guided by superego, the morality principal so they are sacrificing and women of integrity. Besides, they stay single and withdraw from society too. All these women are in quest for identity and self-discovery. Though they are considered weaker sex yet they are courageous, resilient and rebellious. They triumph because of collective women power despite marginalization, silent sufferings and psychological disorders. Thus, Namita Gokhale and Shivani have depicted sustainable development goals 3- Good Health and Well Being, 5- Gender Equality and 10- Reduced Inequalities in their novels and focused on inclusivity for national and global development

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, man and woman are the wheels of a vehicle of life and love is the binding vine for everyone at every stage of life so fulfilment of basic needs, instincts and drives is essential for women too. Women who constitute 50 % of the world population, if deprived of their basic rights, needs, instincts and drives, will not be able to contribute significantly to national and global development. Therefore, besides self-help, right psycho-social approach, non- patriarchal attitude and non-blackmailing emotional support is essential from their counterpart for social transition and woman's dignified, happy and healthy personal and social life.

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