

**THE PORTRAYAL OF EMANCIPATED AND NEW WOMEN IN NAMITA GOKHALE'S 'PARO, DREAM OF PASSION'**

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**Abstract:**

*Namita Gokhale (born 1956) is an Indian woman novelist, publisher, short story writer and editor in the literary canon of Indian English literature. She is a multi-talented writer and a great visionary with wide ranging novels, short stories and non fictions. She has obtained a unique position in the Indian women writings. She is also the founder co-director of Jaipur Literature festival along with William Dalrymple. She has primarily hosted Doordarshan Show 'Kitaabnama: Books and Beyond'. She won India's most prestigious 'Sahitya Akademi Award' in the year 2021. She has gained her popularity by presenting feminine perspectives.*

*The present study highlights the portrayal of emancipated, liberated new women in Namita Gokhale's select novel, 'Paro: Dream of Passions' (1984). Being a feminist writer, she has delineated the challenging life of women, their social protest, and their modern identity as an emancipated new woman. She has courageously investigated the diversity of women's experiences related to their self and society. Namita Gokhale's female characters especially Priya and Paro face challenges boldly. They are autonomous to take their decisions and choices throughout their life. They have strong ability to change the social standards with their individual considerations. They strive for liberation and impartiality with respect to love and lust in the context of Indian women. Paro, an emancipated new woman, revolts against the ethical and societal conventions that serve to recognize a woman in society. She defies, opposes and acquires freedom from conventional morals and lifestyles. She succeeds in discovering her quest for self awareness and deconstructs feminine perspectives.*

**Key Words:**

Emancipation, liberation, feminism, social protest, self awareness, quest for love and lust

**• Introduction:**

Now a day, quick changes are taking place in the socio-cultural and moral values and norms of the society. Being novelists of post-independence, Namita Gokhale has dealt with contemporary problems. Before going to discuss the research paper in detail, let us have a focus on key terms such as emancipated, liberated and new woman.

Women emancipation refers to the progression by which women are made to achieve right to use and control of all forms of possessions in a homeland. It was argued that women's liberation through edification and involvement in income-generating actions would escort to women's socio-economic growth. Thus it permitted them for greater control over decision and life preferences.

Women's liberation means to fight sexual discrimination and to obtain full legitimate, lucrative, vocational, professional and societal rights and contingencies for women, equal to those of men.

The term 'New Woman' refers to a woman who exercise control over their own lives whether it is personal, social, or economic. The novelist Sarah Grand coined the term '*New Woman*' in 1894.

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### ● **Objective of the Research:**

The main rationale of this research is to scrutinize emancipated and new women in Namita Gokhale's novel '*Paro: Dreams of Passion*'. The novel highlights the complications of human life and the woman's inquiry in the face of basic commonality in the light of socio-cultural situation. The emancipated and new women in Namita Gokhale's novels always remain under the patriarchal pressure and the oppressive mechanism of a society. They are subjected to social isolation and biased instead of their gender. They strive for their existence and identity. They do not want to become mere puppet in the hands of patriarchal society. They wish to eradicate patriarchal ideas that impose women towards domesticity. They affirm their uniqueness and expect self-reliance through edification. These women cultivate the yearning to be self-governing and escort lives of their own. Instead of mute sufferers they behave like gallant, candid, action oriented and strong-minded.

### ● **About the Novel:**

*'Paro: Dreams of Passion'* is a sensational, sensuous, autobiographical and debut novel written by Namita Gokhale. It acts as a contemporary classic and projects Indian smells and feelings. It also emphasizes on individual existence, freedom and choice. It discusses the theme of human predicament. The novel is the mixture of lusty relationships, astute interpretations and feminine feelings. It is about Paro's insurgence and her denunciation of the culturally forced sexual authoritarianism. All her self-consciousness and ethical barricades comes to an end and she becomes a figure of eroticism in search of the sexual diversity.

### ● **Priya as a New Woman of 'Free Will' and 'Naturalism':**

**Priya** is a foible to Namita Gokhale, narrator of the story. Through the character of Priya, Namita Gokhale projects her feminine perspectives. In this novel, both the characters of Priya and Paro are intertwined and serve as two binaries. Priya is a well educated woman. She marries Suresh from obligation and not her own choice. She does not like him but due to societal norms continues with him. Her life revolves around her husband Suresh. She longs for the camaraderie and connection of her husband. She calls over from Mumbai. Her husband does not yield to her strong aspiration for doing any employment. Suresh is a distinguished lawyer of metropolitan city like Delhi. His financial status is good. He is well educated and from upper middle class family. When Priya asked him that she wanted to do a job outside, his ego gets hurt and he becomes displease. He opposes her taking up a job. Priya claims,

*'Suresh was very upset at my taking up a job.'*

In irritating mood, Suresh says to Priya,

*“Priya, think of my position in society. People will think that my earning is not enough to cater the family needs. That’s why his wife takes up such a job.”<sup>1</sup>*

Suresh is reluctant to allow her to join in a job because of his higher rank in the society as a famous lawyer. Her intense craving for doing a job is denied. Here finance was not the major issue for them to escort a contented life. Her husband’s mind-set hurts her because her autonomy is rejected. Later on, he quarrels with her just for inconsequential rationale. He thrashes her without any legitimate motive. Here Namita Gokhale asks the readers to contemplate on the fact,

*‘Who is conscientious for her current condition’?<sup>2</sup>*

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The narrator draws our attention to the dictatorship and torments of women in upper middle-class families in which the woman is maltreated. It is believed that woman is influential for her wretched circumstances. Even today, woman is subjected to the material anguish in the middle-class families. We can’t deny the fact that women desire to be equal with man in all sectors and endeavors to appreciate her potential for which women needs to surpass their idiosyncratic femininity to go ahead to be self-sufficient. As an advocate, he is conscious of all the set of laws and knows very well the thrashing of wife is prohibited. He persecutes her for several reasons to gratify his male dominance and self-esteem. He does not identify her individuality. According to him, woman has no distinctiveness. In the present society, such kind of atrocities on women is continuously happening. Therefore the relationship between Suresh and Priya is not vigorous. Here Namita Gokhale interrogates us,

*‘How long Priya bears such restraint is the question. She broods over her predicament. Unless she changes her stance, she may not be able to live blissfully?’<sup>3</sup>*

In this way, Priya emerges as a new and emancipated woman in the novel.

Here Gokhale delineates man-woman relationship of the postmodern society,

*‘Woman’s tall steps remain unquenchable without a companion. Men have always been at the centre and women veiled, compressed intentionally and mistakenly. In this process, women are injured and they discharge the detestation when their turn comes, which Priya does.’<sup>4</sup>*

Though Priya dislikes her husband, Suresh, she is comfortable with him and returns to him. Being a typical Indian woman, she is happy and satisfied after talking with him. She says,

*‘I am an Indian woman, for me my husband is my God.’*

Here readers can visualize Priya’s attitude, her detachment, her individuality, her comfort, and her domestication. Everything is gyrating around her husband. Namita proclaims about women’s individuality,

*'Women in modern era desire for financial freedom and independence from the four walls of the house but still she craves for a companion.'*<sup>5</sup>

In such a mental state Suresh's money decided the proposal. Namita Gokhale's female characters exhibit traits of old and upper middle class. Thus new culture comes into existence. The life style of the rich class is different from that of a common man, but with the passage of time this barrier has lessened. After this mix up naturally each has its own aspects with them and finally a new life style named 'neo rich class' emerges.

Now, being an emancipated woman, Priya got a job and she started working. She has affection and attraction for her boss B.R. Not only Priya but also other girls were fascinated by his charms. B.R was a sewing machine magnate. He was short but had all qualities to magnetize women.

Gokhale projects the relationship between Priya and Suresh. Their relations are not good. They both believed in competitiveness rather than friendship. Priya says about her meeting with B.R.,

*'I would meet B.R. almost every evening and have dinner with him, with wine, candlelight, roses..... I found an immense sexual generosity in him. He ravished every female that he encountered.'*<sup>6</sup>

Priya talks about their relationship,

*'And I imagine of the sea at Marine drive, the first time that he kissed me. I capitulated almost instantly to the heaviness of his plastic lips. I gazed instead at the bashful.....My heart was throbbing passionately, and I quite overlooked there was a world outside.'*<sup>7</sup>

This candid exposure on Priya's part illustrates her personality and the concept of free will. Additionally she vacillates between the two assortments of life, somewhat falls within the milieu of sophisticated ways. The views of Priya enlighten us that sex is the need of men and women. She communicates that men ultimately govern woman's behavior. Any woman who comes to B.R. is enticed by his charms. This truth applies to all women. On the contrary, B.R. considers sex is the tool employed for fun and merrymaking. He makes him available to one and all for the motive of sex. These perspectives from the narrator of the story assert the outlook of male and female towards sex. Here the society and the corporal structure of man and woman play a key role.

Priya confesses her feeling with B.R. When she was in Bombay she came in contact again with B.R. and she could not oppose her previous attachment, she comments,

*'My petticoat was already soggy with expectancy. ....with gratitude wouldn't have minded dying in those moments of perfect bliss.'*<sup>8</sup>

These views indicate that bodily relations do play a important part in the life of Priya. It also confirms the role of free will in the life of Priya and the concept of naturalism. In reality, these characters become pathetic and deserve the sympathy of the reader.

● **Paro: A Symbol of Passion, Glamour and Emancipated New Woman:**

Namita Gokhale narrates the similarities of Paro and Priya. They both are obsessed with men and sex. Therefore their life seems to be disturbed. They are aspired for comfort, luxury and worldly pleasure. In order to acquire this comfort, they have forgotten their moral, ethics and values.

Namita points out the universal truth,

*'This trend is observed in our day to day lives also as marriages are diminishing, live in relationships are gaining impetus. This is an indirect effect of commercialism and globalization. Moreover common man has become aware and this consciousness is affecting them unconstructively.'*<sup>9</sup>

They both are the sufferers of this middle class society. Namita Gokhale, here projects the cultural adaptation of these two women. They live in a double minded and confusion state, especially in two zones simultaneously. Namita delineates the perspectives of modern women,

*'The Indian woman has begun to realize that wedding in most cases acts as a prevention. ....Marriage cuts a woman off from the mainstream of life and avoids her from accomplishing her objectives.'*<sup>10</sup>

**Paro** is the central character in Namita Gokhale's '*Paro: Dreams of Passion*'. She is a heroic seductress, passionate, proud, audacious, ambitious, attractive, avaricious and self -confident woman. She has ample of guts but has no control over her senses. She is the symbolic representation of quest for identity as a free woman and prototype of emancipation and individuality. She rebels against the social and moral codes attributed to a woman. She behaves like an autonomous entity.

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Paro does not observe conventions and customary values. She does not believe in traditional patriarchal norms. She opines,

*I could never comprehend customs, why something had to be one manner rather than other... who constructed these regulations?*<sup>11</sup>

She bids farewell to all communal systems, civilizations, principles, rites, power and all those things which oblige a woman to become a susceptible person. She wishes to assert her individuality. In the male-dominated society, she establishes her place. But she turns to be a treacherous woman who is against reputable ethnicity. She goes to any altitude in order to fulfil her desire and finally she meets to the tragic end. Here Namita Gokhale reveals the desolate actuality of human life and unequivocal illustration of sexuality. She describes about Paro's pride,

*'Vanity was her mortal imperfection.'*<sup>12</sup>

She wanders through the world of privilege, drinks Scotch Whiskey. Paro is constantly watched by Priya who was like acid to her. Then Paro, out of anger and jealousy, marries B.R. But their marriage does not last long. After their separation both Paro and B.R. engage in different affairs. The readers witness that Paro has seduced many men because of her lusty behaviour. Here the narrator claims,

*'Modern life is a life of anguish and it is the product of their way of life. There is relationship of veracity.....The characters, here destitute of scholarly and poignant vivacity and appear as stock figures.'*<sup>13</sup>

The novel tells us that life of pleasure-seeking is not a solution to the challenges life provides with. Paro manipulates this fact when she faces disturbances in her life. Finally she succumbs to life and circumstances. Paro believes in enjoying and hates self-discipline. Gokhale depicts the sensuous culture of the upper middle class society of the metropolitan cities such as Delhi and Bombay. The postcolonial life has a radical impact on the middle class society and that of the metropolitan cities of India. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* has influence on Gokhale's *Paro: Dreams of Passion*. Paro knows very well the art of taking. She is the woman who is present everywhere. She has the key skill to quench everybody's thirst. Priya, being the narrator, is familiar with Paro's activities. She comments,

*'There's this gentleman I have obliterated his name but his wife is this dame Paro.....rich and she's really attractive.'*<sup>14</sup>

The impact of Paro's persona was deep rooted on everybody. She had set up herself in that manner. She was violent in her motives and gesticulations were of superior being. She was unusual from others. Paro has been portrayed as a woman without free willpower, but ruled by the material laws of environment. Her conduct leads her to a bad end.

Namita Gokhale reveals the life of the women of the upper middle class of the post colonial India, their adventures, sexual tumbling, their world view within the structure of a novel. In spite of her courage, Paro wants someone to talk to, to divulge in. So she found a companion in Priya. She talks her about childhood happenings,

*'He abducted me in an orchard of pine-trees and in the forest behind the shrine. I still have the canvas I was painting .....butterflies, sapphire skies, and the mechanism. It hangs in my chamber. I look at it and sob.'*<sup>15</sup>

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These are Paro's disclosures, the narratives revolving around her school days, her drawing teacher's conduct and her mind-set which is commendable of her bravery and free will. This incident divulges diverse estimation as though she is lamenting. She further asserts,

*'I was good and wanted to be P.M. of India. I was good at painting and I really loved it. I was busy with my landscape. My art master was handsome, young and long haired man.'*<sup>16</sup>

He praised her beauty that she really looks like a wood nymph. Then Paro shares her sexual experience,

*'He did some sexy activities with me. Initially I felt awkward. Then he fucked me. After a while I liked it.'*<sup>17</sup>

Paro explains the concept of 'free willpower' and 'naturalism'. In order to gratify her desires Paro married a business magnate B.R. Their wedding was arranged on a magnificent scale. It made some of the girls in B.R.'s office little unhappy and envious of Paro. Even Priya comments here,

*'Mary, Ivy and I loved B.R. frantically and all of us despised Paro. Ivy, Mary and Anita were all inconsolable. I wasn't listened frigidly to all their energized babble about the ongoing hunt for the Right Gift.'*<sup>18</sup>

Priya cautiously went for the marriage of B.R. and Paro as she herself wanted to see her, she ornately dressed in her best-red chiffon sari which she had worn for the first time when she had met B.R. She vigilantly did her hair in a low bun. She minutely expresses the wedding ceremony and the conduct of the newly wedded. Her Namita Gokhale juxtaposes the truth,

*'The contemporary society woman after her smack and monetary autonomy is once again restrained and .....saris are once again in vogue, symbolizing feminineness.'*<sup>19</sup>

Paro entered into the room. Rai Bahadur hurried to receive them. She greets him and kisses on his forehead. She bent over a little to reach him her valor and self-confidence. Instead of covering her face with sari, she stood pompous and straight and led the way, with B.R and her parents followed her. Paro's father was a brigadier and her mother was a member of the upper middle class. They both had well-mannered empty smiles fixed anxiously to their faces. Paro walked through the room with a secure catlike elegance, one mehendi hand on a glass of gin and other on B.R. These words give us an indication of the showmanship of the high-class society, their superficial life blueprint, the splendor, the stance of the elders, and the man-woman relationship.

In next episode, Namita Gokhale focuses on Paro's superficial life. Men consider her behaviour, her utterance, her life style, food habits, exercise or any other as a final decision. Paro engages in capricious social boundaries. She thinks,

*'Life is made up of diminutive things and one who can take pleasure in the delicacy of life is a rich person.....activities because of her convincing potential, talent and dramatizing spirit.'*<sup>20</sup>

She shows that she is very powerful in outward manner but in reality, there was a vacuum in her personal life. She was engulfed by superficiality. Being an emancipated woman, Paro could not prolong with one man and wedding was not an enduring facet for Paro. Here Priya proclaims,

*'This is the Paro who is just enlightened from matrimony and convention. She is still persuaded that she is youthful.....the rest of us answered, or decided not to answer, at some period around adolescence.'*<sup>21</sup>

Paro had many lovers namely B.R. (her ex-husband), Lenin, Avinendra, Sambhunath Mishra and so on. Once Lenin disclosed to Priya about Paro,

*'According to me, Paro was a symbol of emancipation. She could not make herself contented with one man and was running here and there for love and recognition.'*<sup>22</sup>

Listening to Lenin's remark, Priya feels,

*'Lenin would disclose in me about Paro's conduct. He was entirely reliant upon her sensitively, and I surprised sometimes whether it was a mother mania..... Kurta-pyjama, trailing behind her as she stormed in and out of cars, houses, lobbies, like a leaf in a summer aandhi.'*<sup>23</sup>

Gokhale convinces that Paro never became a good daughter, a good wife, or even a good mother. She always spends her time with her friends. She had hardly time from taking care of her physical self. In this post modern society, she was like an indifferent mother. One day, B.R. divulged Priya regarding Paro. Then Priya defended,

*'Perhaps you harm her too, by all you're coquetting.'*<sup>24</sup>

He answered her,

*'Men very self-doubted human beings. They require a lot of love and gorgeous women. Unluckily stunning women are rarely premeditated to offer love.'*<sup>25</sup>

It is correctly said that intrepid woman enthrall him, fine-looking woman attract him, intellectual woman interests him and understanding woman gets him. This way Paro could become a magnet for many men, but could not get anybody for herself and that was her destiny. To Priya's uncertainty Paro answered,

*'I can manage to make everybody dance to my tune. It is not an emotional blackmail but it's a part of being a gorgeous woman. It's a full time occupation.'*<sup>26</sup>

Here we can say that Paro was entirely aware of her deeds and it was a justification on her part towards men. She could very well deal with to endorse this system against the social norms. But such an interesting action agitates her.

Paro fights against the traditional norms due to the suppression of her husband, which is against the traditional norms. She leaves her husband and develops illicit relations with Bucky Bhandpur, Lenin and flirts with Shambhunath Mishra. She has two failures in marriages with B.R and Loukas in pursuing her liberty. In the case of a woman, it is the outside force that rules her life and her proceedings. She is not the decision-maker in matters concerning her and therefore not accountable for the results. The male dominated society is responsible for her situation. Her grievances and protests are unable to reach at the other end. Her voice is kept unheard. This male world is by default liable for her depression. Within wedding, women reunite in diverse ways with the right formation in the husband's family and try to reduce gender inequalities. Domestic violence is considered as the brutality of the husband. He considers beating his wife is a disciplinary measure and legitimate motive for separation.



After a dramatic suicide proposal by Paro when she was with Lenin, she was saved at that time she comments,

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*'I am so delighted I continued to exist. I did this once before you know it was when I wedded to Bubu. One night I came back unexpectedly from visiting Mummy in Delhi.....after that I determined I would recompense him back in his own coin. I mean –every one was in love with me, and who you think could ever love that guy?'*<sup>27</sup>

This statement shows that she is basically a weak person and has fearful attitude. She is enticed by the things. Here we can see Paro's and B.R.'s personality. It is wrong on Paro's part to hurt herself in the flesh so as to reprove the other person. But she did this due the impulse for her husband. Paro represents the dreams of passion, glamour and emancipation while Priya is a contrast to this. Gokhale opines,

*'Men injure women without understanding the penalty. Men are frequently accountable for the disparity in the man-woman liaison.'*<sup>28</sup>

Though Paro is indefatigably on a sexual extravaganza, she craves for male companion, poignant protection. The society has cultivated in woman the concept of the womanliness, inferiority and emotional refuge. She also wants a male to offer her emotional prop up and she wishes to capitulate entirely. Paro is also a creation of this societal institution. She had relationship with Bucky Bhandpur to verify her individual sovereignty, idealistic friendliness for Lenin was attention-seeking machinery, but her submissive attitude towards Shambhunath Mishra describes the psychosomatic repression of women. Priya asserts,

*'The entire thing bewildered me. I could not appreciate the circumstances. I could blame on the nastiest probable intentions to her of having a relationship.....as his mistress. What left me thoroughly astounded was her unconditional arousing yield.'*<sup>29</sup>

Paro was infatuated with everything; she contemplates on it her right on whatever she like. She became depressed after rejection. She was with Lenin and could not comprehend the authenticity of life. She never wanted to learn things and as a solution, she drinks to forget the situation. Paro was a child of privilege. She always thinks of luxury and exaltation. But now, with a downhearted Lenin by her side, she had her first experience of scarcity and humiliation. She is absolutely unaware about queues, ration cards, bus routes etc. She never tried to know these things in her life. She only drinks gin and survive with a stubborn hope. In the end, when Paro is unable to magnetize men by her physical charms, she finds life absurd and ends her life by slashing her wrists. The sexual splurge comes to a catastrophic end. She crosses all the boundaries laid down by the society. She does not live within the framework of societal matrix. The infertility of

her revolt and emotional emptiness, loneliness left her with no choice. Paro destroys her and is even defeated in the process. While Priya drags on with no tangible purpose.

Initially the reader finds these characters of Paro and Priya with disapproval and abhorrence but later on they become compassionate. They are always enticed by the circumstances.

Gokhale juxtaposes the fact,

*'These women are victim to the fashion of the rich class. Their money, their behavior ensnares them ..... extravaganza, of the modern society and give themselves as the 'sacrifice' on the altar of post-modern society.'*<sup>30</sup>

In this way, Paro and Priya represent two binaries of life.

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### Conclusion:

Thus Namita Gokhale has projected several feminine aspects such as despondent but commendable wives, the beauty of fidelity and sacrifice, the small dissatisfaction and immense happiness of matrimonial love, imaginings of youth and the acquiescence of adulthood through her novel '*Paro: Dreams of Passion*'. She reveals the truth:

*'When women try to use their body as a weapon, they don't succeed but it gives a bad taste and brings sadness in their lives.'*<sup>31</sup>

Women show physical attraction towards the opposite sex and even use their body as their strength. Namita conveys the message that there are things above passion through her main character Paro.

Paro and Priya are the two binaries in the novel. They can be rightly hailed as 'hellcat demigoddesses. Priya is modest but exhibits an act of naturalism. In this regard, eminent writer Ira Pande asserts,

*'Denunciation of ethnically forced sexual domination, working class girls' aspiration to set free themselves, quest of self-indulgence, or artistic, philosophic and emotional magnitudes.'*<sup>32</sup>

The novel builds innovative shelves in a new constitution. The world is a disgusting place with cloaked queries and twinge. It is the flavored story of the infatuations and covetousness of middle class Indian people. Here Priya, being an observer and narrator, records the account of her own love affairs and breakdowns and those of her acquaintances. Namita Gokhale, as a narrator, asserts,

*'Addiction of the individual by any brawny obsession is a prerequisite to his devastation. The imaginative desire stems from the artist's yearning for a psychosomatic discharge.'*<sup>33</sup>

Thus the novel is about the potentials of discovering changes within oneself. The narrator Priya is always enthusiastic and amenable to redefining outlooks and relations of unjustified quixotic accompaniments. She wants to liberate herself from the customary anxieties and appreciates an impulsive escalation towards life. She determinedly puts forth the truth of women desire.

Namita's women protagonists feel their sentiments strongly but they retain an unvarying assessment about themselves and about their relationship with others. Though they belong to a diverse level of humanity, they do possess internal freedom to experiment with their existence. In the process, life defers self-knowledge which teaches them the potency of accepting that a woman's craving to be successful as a personage is not irreconcilable with her yearning for love or diminutive gratifications of domestication. In this manner, Namita Gokhale has depicted the internal ferocity of women and their intensifying nature for liberation and authorization.

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