

## The Image of Powerful Women in Namita Gokhale's *Gods, Graves and Grand Mother*

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Namita Gokhale is one of the prolific writers, publishers, and Co-director of the Jaipur Literature Festival. Her first novel, *Paro : Dreams of Passion*, created a stir by its frankness in the early 1980s. She has written five novels and continued to work as a journalist focusing on women's issues and current literary criticism. Her work is very women-oriented. Her second novel is *Gods, Graves, and Grand Mother* consists of social realism. It deals with religious and superstitious elements. The women characters in the novels of Namita Gokhale are mixture of sensibility and realism. Her novels also focus on the problems of contemporary life of Indian woman.

*Gods, Graves and Grand Mother* is a remarkable novel in two respects. Firstly, it has a theme of life in the Indian contemporary society and secondly, its structure is held high by the light irony. It proves between the everyday details of poverty, ignorance, and illiteracy, and supernatural realism of the temple. This is a magical novel with its insidious readability and surreal humour with many complexities lightly. It will continue to haunt its readers.

*Gods, Graves and Grand Mother* is a fine texture for examining the inner feeling of woman character in Namita Gokhale's fiction. This novel consists of love, hate, religious, superstitious and simultaneously, sexual elements. Gudiya, the protagonist of the novel, lived with her grandmother. She was very rich as her mother and grandmother were prostitutes and from that heights, her world plunges into the depth of almost complete penury, she went to Delhi with her grandmother and

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lost everything. Her grandmother kept a slab of marble stolen from a building site, five rounded pebbles and flowers from a garden. Then she transformed the place beneath the holy peepal into a worshipping place and added her sweet singing voice.

Her grandmother became a religious lady under that peepal tree. So they could feed themselves properly. They had the neighbour of Shambhu from the stall and a slum lord, Sundar Pahalwan. Shambhu felt proud of increasing Gudiya's knowledge by admitted in a school. Her grandma considered it as the wastage of time, as a girl should be a good cook and married a respectable man. Magoo, a young woman succumbed to Shambhu's charms. But her husband killed both of them. Gudiya and her grandmother got thirty-two gold sovereigns on the grave of Shambhu. Saboo's violent remorse forced him to make an emotional long confession that her grandmother was a most holy woman. Phoolwati, the widow of Shambu set up another stall having marigold garlands, coconuts and little brass amulets and began to handle the cash of the temple. An old lady named Lila accepted the major burden of the temple work load. Lila criticized Phoolwati as the papaya and banana trees would never be fruitful as they were planted by a barren widow. Suddenly the trees were filled with fruits. Kalp Nath Mishra, a police officer with his wife came to grandmother to save their son in coma stage. According to the prediction of grandmother, their son got well soon. Gudiya attained her womanhood. But her grandmother was very upset which cannot be expected from a holy woman. Pandit Kailash Shastry foretold Gudiya's destiny awaited for fortune, wisdom, wealth, knowledge, name and fame and the blessings of the God. Gudiya wanted to change her name as she was not at all a doll. She changed her name as Pooja Abhimanyu Singh which would lift her in the social hierarchy.

Gudiya want to go Simla. As it was Friday, Amavasya night phoolwati let not go her. That very Friday her grandmother died. But she lived immortal in the hearts of her devotees. Gudiya's life changed once again. She was senseless for sometime. Mrs and Mr.Lamba gave Gudiya

shelter and support. In their house, Gudiya examined her renewed delighted surrounding, which she never expected. But even in all pleasures of life, She dreamt of her grandmother and mother. She decided to go back to her own ordinary world, On one of her trips she happened to meet a young man. She was impressed by the man, Gudiya suggests her lack of control, concept of free will is observed. Though she is aware of his limitations, Kalki entered in the life of Gudiya, She accepted him. He goes to Bollywood and forgets innocent, poor Gudiya and her daughter Mallika. They are under the care of Phoolwati who always remembers the promise given to Ammi about upbringing Gudiya and gives hope to Gudiya with all sort of comfort.

In this novel Gokhale makes Gudiya desire Kalki, the young good for nothing, bandwallah. In social status and wealth, she is superior to him. Even though she has glimpses of memories, this does not affect her self-confidence. She herself puts it.

“I missed him, but I sensed in his absence an opportunity for growth, for escape which I was determined not to miss. I loved Kalki, but love is not life, and the imperatives of survival pulled elsewhere” (224).

She is like her Grandmother in brave, talented and generous. Pooja Abhimanyu Singh proves the worth of the name through her dealings with money-minded Mr.Lamba and Cyrus, his nephew. Mrs. Roxanne Lamba is an English educated parsi and broad minded social worker. She liked Gudiya very much and owns “The Sharp” blade company, and its distributor. Lila is a calm, pious, self-effacing old woman who becomes a disciple of her Grandmother. Without the support of her son, she learns to live at the temple all the time. She also loved Gudiya and her Grandmother very much. She even washes their clothes and irons them. Also she massages the feet of Ammi. She has a dog, like devotion to Ammi. she is selfless and goes to the extent of throwing her jewels into the grave of grandmother. Even the minor character like Malvika Mehta is also a powerful woman.

Thus the novel describes the portrayal of powerful women with supernatural power, self determination, optimism, hardwork, honour and respect. They are powerful women who solve their problems themselves and are practical, assertive and resilient. Shakespeare in *Hamlet* writes "Frailty thy name is woman. (1-2). But Gokhale presents the urges, dreams and desires of Indian women. The author describes the Indian women in different dimensions. The women characters in the novel are found to be determined, courageous, dynamic, courteous, and self-less. They face life the way it comes. No woman of Gokhale is found to be mourning for their failures. They are intelligent and focused, and they have the power of requirements and do not depend for their survival on their fathers, husbands or sons. The image of new woman constitutes a forceful and effective in solving their problems. The novelist creates a female space which her women occupy with dignity, confidence and feeling of self worth. Gokhale has succeeded in narrating the life of powerful women who faces their fate happily, intelligently, and powerfully. They have the power to change and write new fates that they desire.

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