

Women's Well Being in Comparison as Portrayed in Select Novels of Namita Gokhale and Shivani

Sharmila Jajodia

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Dept. of English, HBSU; Asso. Prof. RJC, UoM, Mumbai, (M.S.) India

Dr. Savita Kishan Pawar

Research Supervisor, Department of English, Homi Bhabha State University, , (M.S.) India

Abstract

Women who generally take care of the whole family are not only neglected, marginalized, suppressed and oppressed but also deprived, discriminated and exploited too, in the matter of health be it physical or psychological health. They constitute half of the world population approximately, still, they don't get equal space and opportunity in terms of food and nutrition, love and affection, health and education, freedom to express, spend and choose their life-partners even in twenty first century in India. It has been reflected in Indian literature in every age, country and language since time immemorial. The reason being men were the ruler, producer and consumer too in almost all fields including literature. So, this research is directed to analyse the select literary texts from psycho-feminist point of view to underline how women's physical and psychological health have been portrayed in the select novels of Namita Gokhale and Shivani. The gender inequality caused by various external forces can be eliminated to make India a developed country by 2047 and to convert the dream of women led development a reality in 21st century in the backdrop of its national mission of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao.

Keywords: Gender, Reduced inequality, Social reflection, Well-being

Introduction

Women, being birth giver and nurturer, take care of the whole family yet they are exploited and also deprived of equal treatment like men from womb to tomb in terms of food and nutrition, health and education, freedom to express and choose life partners even in twenty first century in India. It has been reflected in Indian literature in every age, country and language since time immemorial. It also results in domestic violence, depression and anxiety disorders. It is a cause of concern as women too are an asset for family, nation and the world in 21st century so what should be done by individual and society so that the

females can also live in a sustainable way for a better society.

Literature depicts women in every field in their journey from expression to entrepreneurship despite challenges. The proposed study is a vital social contribution as it will make the society realize how one can contribute to the formation of a just, equal, healthy and developed country by forsaking the rigid social systems. Besides, it is not only relevant in the contemporary period but also will be immensely contextual forever as so far no research of this kind has been proposed. Firstly, it will explore the pettiness of our social and cultural values which are considered

important to exploit the women by the so called men / protectors. In fact, it is so unnatural to healthy human behaviour. Secondly, the importance lies in the need to transform the socio-cultural tenets completely by analyzing the various types of psychosomatic disorders and status of the woman in the society. The socio-cultural shackles have denied the women their right to participate in national development and lead a healthy life.

So the research aims to study women's multi-dimensional obstacles in various spheres which prevent her from being a healthy human being. The deprivation of basic drives, instincts and needs lead to psychosomatic disorders and secondary status. Consequently, it acts as a barrier to national and global development. Therefore, the hypothesis is whether woman's deprivation and exploitation can be checked for their good health and well being if the patriarchal mind set is changed.

Method:

The researcher will mainly use a qualitative method and psychoanalysis as a literary approach. The primary data would be collected from Namita Gokhale's *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1984), *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* (1994), *A Himalayan Love Story* (1996), *The Book of Shadows* (1999) and Shivani's *Bhairavi* (1969), *Krishnakali* (1970), *Shmashan Champa* (1978), *Chal Khusaro Ghar Apane* (1987). The secondary data would be collected from reference books, journals, thesis etc., available online and offline. These novels will be criticized using psychoanalysis as a literary approach and comparative method. The result will be consolidated also on the basis of researches in the field of abnormal psychology.

Result and Discussion:

Psychoanalysis as a therapy came into existence when doctors could not find any physical reason for nervous disorders of human beings and consequently they started exploring the human mind. Hence, psychoanalysis studies human mind and behaviour for treatment of psychological disorders and some of its premises are also used to analyse the behaviour of literary characters.

Psychoanalysis owes its origin to Sigmund Freud and its development to Carl Jung, Jacques Lacan, Karen Horney, Julia Kristeva, Nancy Chodorow, Juliet Mitchell in the West while to Girindrashekhara Bose, Sudhir Kakar, Salman Akhtar, Amrita Narayanan and Gananath Obeyesekere in the East. It assists to understand what factors make or mar human behaviour.

In "*The Ego and the Id*" (1923) Freud had observed repeatedly that not all unconscious processes can be relegated to a person's instinctual life. He mentioned the three-way structural model of ego, id, and superego. The id is repository of our basic biological impulses, drives or instincts—primarily hunger, thirst, sexual and aggressive instincts too since birth. It demands its immediate fulfilment without any consideration while the ego either curbs or keeps the urges of the id to direct the behaviour according to social practices and possibilities. The superego establishes and maintains an individual's moral conscience on the basis of ideals and values internalized from parents, teachers, leaders, celebrities and others in the family and society. Freud outlined that the repressed urges in their attempt to surface cause nervous disorders so the constant clash between instinctual demands and repressive culture play a vital role in superego formation but he did not accord primacy to external world and

considered them as responses to the struggle of inner world. Dominance of id results in impulsive, of ego in balanced and of superego in restrained and over-controlled personality. Jung insists that the psyche has its own structure, laws and a dynamic system. The general psychic energy libido is not merely sexual as Freud viewed it. Rather it is based on the principle of opposites- beginning and end, cause and effect, etc.,. The forward movement of the libido, progression, satisfies the demands of the conscious and is concerned with active adaptation to one's environment while the backward movement, regression, satisfies the demands of the unconscious and is concerned with the active adaptation to one's inner needs. Regression might result in a return to fantasy, neurosis or psychosis. Karen Horney talks about the neurotic needs and coping strategies which an individual apply for healthy interpersonal relationships. She states that aggression is used when one wants to control others for social recognition and prestige while Amrita Narayanan opines that Indian families have internalised the external forces- unsafe streets, the socio-cultural conditioning- the veils and burka, . . . scandal mongering and social status etc., in their group values. She considers patriarchy is an 'intimate enemy' because of unconscious social identification so better public facility and equal psychological change is required to unload women from the excessive psychological burden. (Psychology Today) The Western and Eastern psychoanalysts admit that women suffer due to lack of social power which may be conscious or unconscious due to socialization process. The women also experience frustration, mood swings and alienation temporarily or for a longer period due to individual traits, hereditary and environmental factors. In their efforts of expression of emotional outburst or

resistance of the socio-cultural tenets, they use defence mechanisms. Consequently, they turn out to be healthy or suffer from neurosis or psychosis. They either act to comply, behave extraordinarily or react aggressively to demonstrate non-conformist or anti-social behaviour. It results in obsession, compulsion, suicidal and homicidal tendencies. As per statistics, Indian women suffer from psychological health disorders 3 times more than men; 39 percent women from stress and 30 percent from anxiety because women internalise while men externalise their conflicts.

Literature is an expression of human behaviour in society through artistic language. Psychoanalysis is a literary theory based on the therapy which tries to understand human behaviour using free association technique to treat the behavioural disorders. Hence, literature and psychoanalysis are interrelated. Freud himself accepts that literary writers were using psychoanalysis in their creative writings much before he came with that idea. That is why M. Rajeshwar in "Indian Women Novelists and Psychoanalysis: A Study of the Neurotic Characters" expresses that one suffers from neurosis if one is very sensitive or weak to face the oppressive situations. This disorder is both expression of suffering and protest against suffering also. Women being doubly marginalized happen to be worst sufferers due to gender and socio-cultural factors.

So this research studies the non-normative female characters of the select novels of the two women novelists- Namita Gokhale from Indian English literature and Shivani from Hindi literature as women's psychological health is a neglected area in life as well as literature.

In *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1984) Paro's ayah Maryamma refused to leave her even after her arranged marriage to Raju, a driver

in Dubai and his frequent visits to India and umpteen gifts-saris, watches, tape recorders, passionate love letters etc.,. Raju didn't write for a long time and she was anxious. Then one of her brothers came to see her. One afternoon Paro found her crying, "All finished, Madame, all finished." (106). Her brother disappeared and Paro could not extract anything further from her. She couldn't stop her tears and kept repeating her statement. It was finally known that Raju had been involved in some kind of *lafda* with his mistress. "Very bad, these Arab ladies very bad, madame", Maryamma repeated with pity. (107) His master confiscated his year's salary, returned him his passport with the fare and since then no one heard of him either in India or Dubai. Raju couldn't be found even after Paro's many attempts in diverse directions. "Maryamma wouldn't eat anything, and took to just sitting around, staring at the walls." (107)

In *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* (1994), Lila came in to check why grandmother did not get up till so late. When she saw Ammi's dead body "she went stiff with shock and collapsed" (73-74). Phoolwati slapped Lila tightly to revive her. Lila was still in a state of extreme shock. Phoolwati persuaded her son and daughter-in-law to take her home for some rest. Lila left without protest. She was looking half-dead herself. Her eyes were blank and her face was suddenly haggard. Lila didn't stay with her son and daughter-in-law for long. She returned to participate in the ceremony and she was looking better. "With a swift rapid movement she hurled her gold chain and bangles into the grave . . . Lila hesitated and then plunged into grandmother's grave." (78) Phoolwati tried to pull her out, but her weight and size counted for nothing against Lila's manic strength. Gudiya thought she too would topple in after Lila and would

crush her Ammi with her enormous frame. Lila was sitting vigilantly near grandmother's grave. She didn't move even for eating, drinking, sleeping, bathing or for toilet. Gudiya and Phoolwati "were unnerved by the almost fanatical fervour of Lila's grief. . . Phoolwati was of conviction that she had gone mad" (82) as she would sit near the *samadhi* with a rather silly smile on her face, and mutter mysterious and unintelligible prayers to herself in a loud half-breath. Sometimes a tear would wander down her cheek, sometimes a sob would replace the smile. Lila's family lost interest in her after she has thrown her gold jewellery into grave and made a few half-hearted attempts to take her back home. In such mental condition too, Lila treated the beggars outside the temple with kindness by giving them some offerings while Phoolwati didn't offer a packet of coconut and the 'blessings from the mother-head card' to them which she was distributing liberally to other visitors.

In *A Himalayan Love Story* (1996), Parvati's paternal cousin Pushpendra Pandey's wife Abha, a Rajput, Bisht had run away from her first husband to marry him. Irra and Abha are like oil and water though he wants to keep her niece with him. As a lawyer, he is ready to appeal to the Supreme Court for Parvati to get her due to protest her uncle's unfair terms of the will. Abha bites her tongue in self-reproach when she asks Mukul to meet mad Parvati. She takes him to her room but leaves it sensibly. She doesn't share good rapport with Parvati. She sighed, "I do wish for Push's sake this Parvati wouldn't come here to trouble us." (183) Parvati enters the room daringly with assertion as if she was hopeful of being prohibited. She looked at Mukul with uncertainty and sat down on the most distant chair from Abha, Parvati demanded tea but Abha ignored it. Mukul asked them about

Irra's whereabouts and Parvati replied, "This Thakurain snake charmer threw her out. My daughter has nothing to give. She threw me out as well, but greed always overcomes greed." (184) Abha didn't react while Parvati was stirring her tea. Abha replied to Mukul confidently, "Irra is still staying with Pooran. After all, she feels settled there. She is old enough to decide for herself." (184) Parvati was eating the jalebis gluttonously. She was looking as if she is not accustomed to food. When Mukul was leaving, he saw Parvati sitting and examining the lines in her palms with too much interest. Then she said suddenly, "An inquisitor's hands" (184) and gave Mukul a very shy look. Abha was furiously sitting with uncombed hair in the veranda of her house. "Little bubbles of spittle had formed in the corners of her mouth. Her face was ravaged with hatred." (194)

In *The Book of Shadows* (1999), the Botiya girl Lali- sister of Mr. Cockerell's coolie- had fair, sun tanned complexion, red cheeks, piercing eyes and finely arched eyebrows. She had a drooped shut eyelid which makes her face comical and roguish. She was agile and tolerant. She was able to carry a big load upon her strong back and she could be a good domestic help for Mrs. Cockerell. She had a childish enthusiasm, she was a free spirit and a pagan at heart. One day when Mr. Cockerell went for a walk, Lali attacked him like an animal/ a beast. She tore open his clothes and disrobed him under the blue sky. She growled and cried like a Fury and pursued him with her full strength despite his resistance. She got excited more and ran like a possessed woman. She waved her sharp scythe and she ran to the sloppy point of the deep dark ravine. She was attacking herself with that scythe and leaving the blood line in the green grass and the marigold flowers. She then jumped off the ravine while slashing

her head and died of suicide. She was searched for by her friends and relatives. Her distorted body was found at the foot of the valley but her head was taken away by the wild animals. Her last rites were performed by the fire ritual and her silver 'hansuli' necklace was buried in the ground. Her death was mourned at by her brothers and other relatives. it was believed that Airee was angered and so a devil has possessed Lali. She had been a victim as a malicious goblin that prowls often there.

In Shivani's Bhairavi, Maya didi keeps consuming chillum throughout the day and would be lost in the other world till five or six in the evening. Maya didi was sitting quietly with her innocent child like smile and bright glance at the peepul tree. Charan was taking advantage of her meditative state. Maya was moving her body in the same condition they had left her in. Charan told Chandan that she had already told her that she would be swaying like a madwoman for a day or two because she had crushed the fresh marijuana and put it in her chillum. She took hold of Maya didi who was behaving like a small child but Maya didi got up as soon as she had been lain down and created a scene. She pulled her saffron dhoti close to her knees and clapped. Sometimes she laughed loudly and sometimes she saw Chandan screwing her eye. Despite her voice being that of an experienced singer, Chandan could not understand the meaning of the song but perceived her desperate physical hunger through her well placed gestures. She thought who would consider her a sanyasi living in forest and meditating and which addiction had yielded her to such a low level. (36) Whether it was the after effect of the smoke of the chillum or the smoke of Nature's chillum and which unfulfilled lust/desires were compelling that intoxicated

woman to dance so ugly and inappropriately. (36)

In “Shmashan Champa”, doctor Sheela Joseph comes to the hospital as a house surgeon directly from Bellare. She was very thin and active. She performs two major operations singlehandedly even if none assists her. She had an innocent face and smile like a child. She used to read Bible and knit lace with her machine. Her gait was strong and her glance was intoxicating. One night she got a call from Sen’s house so she came running to Mini and wanted that Mini should accompany her. Mini holds herself responsible for her death. She extended her hand for friendship many times but Sheela turned her face. She used to assist Sheela. Sheela used to demand tools from her like a nurse and thanked her. Mini thought that she was arrogant and let her suffer alone. She heard that Sheela committed suicide. By the time Mini came, she was buried. When Mini asked why no medical examination was needed, Mr. Sengupt frightened her through his fiery glance. Doctor Basu signed the death certificate. He settled the matter when he wrote in the report, “She was suffering from psychological disorders and she committed suicide as a seizure outbreak.” (63).

In Chal Khusaro Ghar Aapne, Malati’s first care taker Marium was in love with Malati’s husband Rajkamal Singh who didn’t encourage her advances. But she was physically violated by his elder brother Krishnakamal Singh who resembled him so Marium misunderstood him as Rajkamal Singh. She was three months pregnant when she hanged herself by the fan. She could not tell her grave tragedy to anyone. She thought she would confess to Lord Jesus and appeal to him for His pity and kindness. “Mera itna hi dosh hai Khuda Baap ki meine kisi se pyaar kiya hai.” (83) (O almighty! My only fault was that I loved someone.)

(Translation by the researcher) But Lord Jesus perhaps did not forgive her. The result of her wrong deeds frightened her. She identified her condition as she was a nurse. She felt that his brothers would associate him with this wrong act because she was under his guardianship and she was the mother of his illegal family line. So, she thought of filing her case in the court of the Almighty to get justice there.

In Krishnakali, Parvati fell in love with Asadulla Khan but he ran away when she was pregnant. Rosy asked her, Yah kya kar bethi Parvati? Kaun tha vah hridyahin? Batati kyon nahi bachchi? (15) [why did you do this? Who was the cruel person? Why don’t you tell me, child] (translation by the researcher) She was maddened with restlessness due to anxiety about future of the child. Rosy tells her, “Bachche mei Ishwar ka ansh hota hai. janati hai Parvati? Ishwar ka gala ghotegi tu?” (11) The child is the particle of God, you know Parvati? You will strangulate the God? (translation by the researcher) She asks her in a low voice, “Kya theek nahi kar rahi hoon mei, apne paap ka phal bhogane ise kyo jeene doon?” (11) “Am I not doing right, why should I keep her alive to pay for my bad deeds?” (Translation by the researcher) She told the doctor in a weak voice that she had ended the life of the child. Firstly, she has given birth to a girl child. Secondly, the parents were divine. She was happy and contented at the success of her devilish act. Rosy was alerted by the cries of the new born baby as if it is screaming for safety. She said, “He Bhagwan! Abhagi, ye kya kar diya tune?” [O God! What did you do, luckless lady?] (translation by the researcher) when she saw the clear imprints of two fingers on the neck of the child. She prayed and smeared the small body with brandy to bring it to life. She hands over the

child to Panna. Vanisen names the child Krishnakali.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion, it can be easily inferred that Maryamma, Lila, Parvati in (HLS) are neurotic while Lali, Maya, Sheela, Marium and Parvati in Krishnakali are psychotic. They suffer from psychological disorders due to painful experiences of betrayal by men in marital affairs, death of an intimate person, physical

abuse, non-fulfilment of sexual needs in their lives which have wounded their minds. Resultantly, they are disconnected to their own selves as well as society. They either harm themselves or others to protest and rebel the wrongs done to them. To conclude, the gender equality can be achieved by adopting harmonious social, cultural, political and economic codes for women to make India a developed country by 2047 in the backdrop of its mission of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao.

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