CHAPTER – IV

NAMITA GOKHALE’S WOMEN CHARACTERS: A REPRESENTATION OF THE ‘NEW WOMAN’
Any study of Namita Gokhale will remain incomplete without the 'woman subject' for in her novels it is the woman who occupies the central place. This chapter is devoted to probing the woman characters of Namita Gokhale in the light of the concept of the 'New Woman'. Namita Gokhale moulds her women ranging from major to minor into the framework that represent the 'New Woman'. Her investigation of the feminine psyche unfolds the sense and sensibility and the inner strength of the self-assertive women.

With the advent of feminism, there is a wave of exploring the growth and emergence of the 'New Woman' in the fictions written in English by women in the Indian context. Such novels have women narrators and the stories revolve round the life and experience of the women protagonists under the
patriarchal set-up. Even though each novel tells the story of subjugation, submission and exploitation of women by men, it is the woman that attracts the attention of the readers with a new thought and experience.

The concept of 'New Woman' is very much akin to the non-conformist women who are aware of their rights and duties in the society and who demand an equal footing with the male counterparts. Such women are untraditional and unorthodox in their outlook in respects of their activities and consciousness about their rights and privileges and even to a great extent sexual behaviour for most of them are either emancipated or are less restricted and uninhibited. Freedom is always associated with this concept of 'New Woman'. New women are able to make certain changes about their lives and are quite independent and follow their own decisions not depending on the dictates of men folk. They are able to guide their destiny, which means their ability to make conscious efforts to make life worth living by virtue of their individual or collective will in spheres _ economic, social and political for a collective goal or individual person. Usha Bande and Atma Ram's view regarding the concept of the 'New Woman' can be cited here:

Broadly speaking, the 'new woman' is one who, shorn of her 'feminine mystique', is aware of herself as an individual, she is
free from her traditional, social and moral constrictions and is able to live with heightened sense of dignity, and individuality. The new woman, then, is the product of a new economic order in which woman casts aside her 'individuality', comes out of the metaphorical purdah, and avails of the opportunities provided by education, enfranchisement and employment. She, with her male counterpart, struggles for achievements in the professional and economic spheres, and deconstructs the image of a submissive, repressed and self-effacing being. The picture that emerges is of a self-reliant, emancipated and happy individual, a person, sexually uninhabited, intelligent, confident and assertive.¹

The 'New Woman' also shakes off the chains of tradition and convention to embrace the freedom of individuality. Here, it is worth quoting what Sharad Srivastava says about the characteristics of the 'New Woman':

The other traits of the 'new woman' also have a universal character such as her determination to oppose sexual harassment and male-domination, the urge to create a milieu for the full expression of her emotional and moral self and what is most important to her – the craving to be accepted as an individual,
person in own right and enjoying the same status as man has always enjoyed.²

Such characters abound in Western fiction about the turn of the 20th century not necessarily in woman's fiction alone. In Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* we have the character of Sue Bridehead who flouts all rules and codes of patriarchal marriage institution. Again in his autobiographical novel, *Sons and Lovers* Lawrence creates the character of Clara who is quite uninhibited, free while spurning the traditional sexual moral code. And again in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* we have a glimpse of Miss Kilman, not for praise, of course. All these are harbingers of 'New Woman', a tradition just born. With the development of feminist literature one can see the gamut of 'New Woman' ever on the rise.

The new feminists are heading for the creation of 'New Woman' who transgresses conventionality. They are also dealing with heterosexual attraction and intimacy to show some aspects of the 'New Woman'. They believe that sexual freedom go hand in hand with economic freedom. They think that women have sexual passions equal to men's, as against Freudian concepts that 'woman lacks' and suffers from 'penis envy'. On the other hand, they celebrate female sexuality and assert women's sex rights. Sex outside marriage is a kind
of behavioural outlawry that appeals to new feminists’ desires to overturn conventionality. Indian feminists have been cautious of giving the impression that the emancipation of women will promote their sexual liberation as well – a position contrary to the Western feminism. Indian feminist writers are walking a tight rope. As for them education for women and liberation do not mean sexual freedom. Yet there are still moralists and non-conformists. And sexual promiscuity is not considered a moral offence in the case of many women even in Indian society.

So there is a sharp contrast between the traditional moralists and new feminists regarding the concept of love and marriage. In traditional Indian society adultery was regarded as a moral offense, not merely because of the problem that it might lead to legitimate reproduction, but also because it was thought to represent ‘excessive’ sexual energy. It is obvious that a society’s moral standard is linked to the sexual morality of women. Women have to guard the society from falling morality as if they were the moral guardians who would preserve the images created for them by men. In Sexual Politics Kate Millet gives the pictures of the subdued women in patriarchal society. She writes:

Under patriarchy the female did not herself develop the symbols by which she is described. As both the primitive and the civilized
worlds are male worlds, the ideas which shaped culture in regard to the female were also of male design. The image of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs.³

In Indian patriarchy women are taught to be modest and shy as their fundamental virtues. A critic rightly gives the vision of an Indian woman corresponding to the patriarchal demand of what women ought to be:

She is supposed to act, speak, move, look, smile, laugh, and weep in a ‘reserved’ way. Her space is limited everywhere. Her eyes should be lowered, her voice should be low, her steps should be short, her mouthfuls should be small. As her voice, her vision, and her gestures are all extensions of her body, these should not occupy too much space – because space means power.⁴

We can just look at Kamala Das’s “An Introduction” in which how a woman is initiated into the man-world as she grows up: her look, her dress, her gestures, her movement, her way of speaking, response to the environment – all to domesticate her in an enclosed women’s ghetto without the light of knowledge and enlightenment. Thus the society demands that women’s
suffering should perpetuate without redemption whatsoever. And a feminist has
to challenge all impositions by patriarchy.

... Dress in sarees, be girl,
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in. Oh,
Belong, cried the categorizers. Don’t sit
On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.
Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
Still, be Madhavikutty, It is time to
Choose a name, a role. Don’t play pretending games.
Don’t play at schizophrenia or be a
Nympho.⁵

The New Woman protests such prescriptions and recommendations laid
down by the male authority regarding a woman’s conduct of what to do and
what not to do in a society. She no longer wants to get herself confined within
the kitchen and the bedroom only to cater for the needs of menfolk. She wants
to step out of the limited area allotted to her and to transgress the social code by
reversing the power relationship of the sexes. So the new woman is now
standing up as ‘woman’ and recognizing her unique potential as female, taking
pride in her feminine body. K. Meera Bai also gives her view about the concept of the ‘New Woman’:

The word ‘New Woman’ has come to signify the awakening of woman into a new realization of her place and position in family and society. Conscious of her individuality, the new woman has been trying to assert her rights as a human being and is determined to fight for equal treatment with man.⁶

According to Usha Bande and Atma Ram the ‘New Woman’ can’t be taken only for those women who are free and independent in terms of sex. What the ‘New Woman’ requires to achieve is the extra ordinary power of her real-self. So the ‘New Woman’ in the Indian context need not follow the civilized western society ignoring her own root. There is no rule that the ‘New Woman’ should be overt, indecent and hater of male. She does not need to be worshipped as the incantation of ‘Shakti’ or ‘Devi’. She requires the treatment of a human being who thinks and feels the same as men do. She is modern in the sense that she is aware of her status in the society and thinks of her own life and future in addition to thinking about her family and in-laws. Self-awareness is her chief characteristic. Subhas Chandra also gives his opinion about the chief features of the ‘New Woman’:
She is conscious, resourceful, confident, dynamic, at times even aggressive, busy re-defining herself, acquiring a new identity, and dealing with the world around on her own terms. She occupies the centre stage and has shed her position of the ‘other’.  

The presence of the elements of the ‘New Woman’ can be seen in most of the women characters created by Namita Gokhale. In her first novel Paro: Dreams of Passion, the two women Paro and Priya represent the ‘New Woman’ of the new generation. Both these women are defying the moral values of Indian patriarchy by having promiscuous relations outside wedlock. From her school days Paro has been a carefree and fun loving girl. She was good at study and became the head girl in final year. In hope and ambition she “wished to be P.M. of India.” The rape incident in the boarding school has laid the foundation for Paro to become a sexually free woman. The incident does not make her emotionally break down. She rather enjoys the new experience with delight. She muddles up the concepts of love and sex and thinks that she is in love with the teacher who rapes her. Paro reveals “After that, we were at it, wherever and whenever we could. I thought I was in love with him” (Paro, 31). Instead of feeling exploited and used, the rape incident triggers love and desire for the rapist. But the society is not ready to accept the unconventional behaviour and sexual liberation of girls and women. So there was a scandal
throughout the place about Paro’s filthy relation with the teacher. It was in the papers, letters to editors discussing the new morality of the students of the public school. Unable to bear the scandal, Paro’s father took voluntary retirement and shifted with his family to Delhi. Unlike the tension of her father Paro admits: “Funny thing is that I was not raped, I loved every moment of it (Paro, 32). When the whole drama of her affair with the rapist ends up with her expulsion from the school, Paro is not shattered by the loss of love and trust of the teacher. She is not the type of woman who keeps brooding over the mishaps of the past. With full zest and energy she comes into marriage with B.R., the sewing machine industrialist, and begins a new life of glamour and luxury. That incident in the boarding school leaves Paro an indelible scar on her psyche making her lose all her womanly modesty. She becomes a role model for an independent and carefree woman of modern generation. Her bold and dashing behaviour puzzles the onlookers at the reception party of her wedding to B.R. She brushes aside the shyness, modesty, timidity and delicacy of a Hindu bride and shows an image of a sexy, smart and glamorous lady of high society. She greets her father-in-law with a kiss on his forehead. Priya, who attended the reception, gives us a visual commentary about Paro:

Her audacity and self-confidence took my breath away. This was not how brides behaved in my world. All the brides I had ever
encountered kept their heads — which were so perilously downcast as to appear anatomically endangered — well covered with their sari pallavs. But she stood proud and straight, and led the way, with B.R. and parents trailing after her (*Paro*, 10).

Priya further observes the audacious manner of Paro:

She circulated through the room with an assured catlike grace. One mehndied hand carelessly held on to, horror of horrors, a glass of gin! The other was graciously bestowed on B.R., who followed in her wake, a slightly glazed look in his fine eyes (*Paro*, 10-11).

This is evident that Paro is by no means a tradition bound Hindu woman but is a free woman not orthodox. She is fearless in her overt sexuality. Uninhibited as she is nothing deters her from showing explicit freedom in sex and wine. For Paro, a prototype of new woman, marriage does not mean the mutual union of man and woman sanctified by religion and society for lifetime companionship. The relation between the husband and the wife can not be treated as permanent and rigid. It is only a sexual bond between the two people till the ecstasy of love and desire for each other dissipate. It is changeable if the occasion demands. So, when she discovers her husband B.R.’s infidelity
through the incident of his screwing a neighbour’s daughter, Paro feels the need to break the marriage. She has full audacity to fight for female liberation against the male supremacy. Getting a divorce from her husband, the emancipated Paro begins to live with Bucky Bhandpur for some period of time. After Bucky, the next bed-partner of Paro is Linin, who is much younger to her but his undying infatuation for the woman shows Paro’s power in manipulating men. Moreover, Paro is an indifferent mother. She neglects to bestow the motherly care and affection upon her son Junior. Instead she spends most of her time in night clubs and late night dinner parties with friends and lovers. She lives in a dream-world of fun and pleasure without any responsibility. She loves a life with no restriction, no convention and no conformity. When Priya introduces herself to Paro at a dinner party saying that she used to work in the latter’s husband’s office, i.e. B.R.’s office, Paro’s quite unconcerned reply is “He used to be my husband”. And she “bursts into a massive horselaugh” (Paro, 27) mocking her failed marriage with B.R. It seems there could be no grief, no pain, no regret in breaking the relationship. Indeed, all the men she encounters in her beautiful world worship her as the goddess of love. In spite of their knowledge of the fact that Paro is a divorcee, Bucky Bhandapur, Lenin, Shambhu Nath Mishra even Suresh are besotted by Paro’s charm. They all think that she is a real woman with strong personality. Paro even claims “I am myself ... and no one else. I depend on nobody. I am my own person” (Paro, 48). We can say that Paro
inherits all the traits of the ‘New Woman’. She never submits her inferiority to any male partners. She does not want to be treated as an affix that can be attached to a man in order to know her identity. The new woman’s yearning and search for self-identity and re-definition of her own personality can be seen in Paro also. When all her part-time lovers have left her alone, she begins to look into her life with a hope of extracting a new meaning. Here, her words are important to be noted:

And so, one day, after Lenin had left, and I was all alone in the flat, I looked at myself in the mirror. ‘Who are you, Paro?’ I asked myself. And I knew I didn’t know. So I started looking for myself again, deciding to follow wherever my search took me (Paro, 109).

So, to redefine herself, Paro joins a theatre group and plays Clytemnestra. It impresses all her friends and Suresh compliments: “She really is a very talented girl” (Paro, 111). Through the theatre circle Paro becomes a celebrity who appears in the social columns and even in the cover of weekly magazines. Her marriage to the Greek film director Loukas Leoras makes her an international figure of fame and glamour. The picture of their wedding features on the cover of the Time magazine with the headline ‘celebrity
wedding of the year'. Giving comment about his encounter and relationship with Paro, Leoras says: "I knew when I met her ... that I had at last met my mother – for Paro is the universal mother" (Paro, 148). Paro never fails to receive love and adoration from the menfolk wherever she goes and whatever she does. She has been portrayed by the author more as a rebel against tradition and social taboos than as a violator of moral code. She accepts illicit relations as an essential part of fame and glamour. From the feminist point of view, Paro is not treated as a whore. She is an enigmatic character worshipped by dozens of men encountered in her life. Her suicidal death at the utter bitterness of her married life with homosexual Leoras moves the hearts of her friends. She is given their last homage burning her body at the crematory ground reserved for the V.I.P's. Namita Gokhale’s Paro is above the authentarian patriarchal and institutionalized woman that is the 'other' of man. She flouts all social, moral codes when her sexual relationship with men is concerned. Paro is Namita Gokhale's example of a 'New Woman' who is searching for freedom and liberation from the bondage of marriage and conventions of male-dominated society.

In this sense Priya, too, is equally important and she holds the centre stage like Paro. "Priya and Paro, in fact, like the two faces of a coin, they are complementary to each other. Both of them put together stand for a typical
‘modern’ women of today.”9 Priya reflects the presence of some distinctive features of the ‘New Woman’. As the eldest child of a single-parent of a middle-class family, Priya shoulders the responsibility to look after her widowed mother and younger brother. She is the chief bread-earner of the family. Her physical intimacy with B.R., the Boss of the office where she works, shows the new woman’s sexual freedom and liberal outlook on man-woman relationship. It seems that she has separate notions regarding love and marriage. For her, love is a personal matter whereas marriage is a social duty. So she harbours in her heart the love for B.R. even after she has become the wife of Suresh, a Delhi-based lawyer. Regarding Priya’s adulterous relation with B.R., Sharad Srivastava opines:

... in the kind of society Priya aspires to belong to ‘one-man-for-one-woman’ norm does not seem to exist. Here extra-marital affairs and casual ‘flings’ are not things which are considered extra-ordinary. In the circumstances, it is quite natural for Priya also to enter into a similar relationship.10

Feeling pain, anguish, jealousy and hatred when she thinks about her adulterous relation with B.R. and her loveless marriage to Suresh, Priya develops the habit of writing “a sort of confessional diary” (Paro, 120). In her
article “Eroticism and the Woman Writer in Bengali Culture”, Nabaneeta Dev Sen says that the act of writing is an act of intellect and therefore it is regarded as male territory. In a patriarchal society the area of the mind is allotted to men and the area of senses to women. So the moment a woman takes up the pen, she “commits an act of transgression against the social code. She has trespassed on this male territory and has given rise to silent hostility, to an unconscious resistance among her readers.”11 Priya’s writing the truth of her own life experiences marks the bold and challenging spirit of the ‘New Woman’. Here, Namita Gokhale’s view about the women writers is worth noting: “Resisting stereotype, resisting control, women will continue to read and write, for and about each other, where in they will explore the unique contours of their lives.”12

It is through her controversial diary that Priya flashes a light on her true self frightening her husband Suresh. The male ego in Suresh is totally threatened and castrated by Priya’s revelation of her adultery and their meaningless marriage. Suresh is quite surprised to read his wife’s autobiography. He does not expect such things from his wife. The traditional view of a husband brought up in Hindu patriarchal society is seen in Suresh’s words to Priya: “Writing about us like this is something, which, to my mind, no Hindu housewife would ever do” (Paro, 124). What Namita Gokhale wants to
do is the violation of traditional morality. So Suresh’s casting off Priya from his house for a sensible period of time is not an act of reasoning but an attempt to subdue the female revolt. Even at this critical juncture of their conflict, Priya never gives up her pride of self-dependency. When Suresh tells her of booking train ticket for her to go to Bombay, she says that she will manage it by herself. Her words “I’ll take a plane. I’ll fly, and I’ll buy the ticket myself” (Paro, 130) reveal the high-spirited and self-dependent life of the ‘New Woman’, who is no longer a seeker of her husband’s favour. Indeed she withdraws all her modest savings from the wages she has earned by working in a bookshop and flies to her brother’s house in Bombay. Priya’s comeback to Suresh and her marriage does not diminish Priya’s portraiture of a strong woman as there is no rule that the new woman has always to break her marriage. Here, Sharad Srivastava’s opinion about Priya may be noticed: “What Priya does in her marital life qualifies her to be called an emancipated modern woman who has shed some of the inhibitions imposed on a woman in the male-made social order.”

In Gods, Graves and Grandmother also, the author projects all the women characters – Grandmother, Gudiya, Phoolwati, Mrs. Lamba and even Lila as the representation of the ‘New Woman’. Irrespective of their lower status in the society as slum-dwellers and prostitutes, Grandmother, Gudiya and Phoolwati personify strong women. They exercise their power to uphold the
centre stage in their relations with society. When the novel opens, we find Gudiya and Grandmother taking a shelter in Delhi slum after they have been left alone by Riyasuddin Rizvi, the beggar whom they accompany to come to Delhi. It has been mentioned in the previous chapter that Grandmother and Gudiya belong to a family of prostitutes. Due to an unfortunate incident in their Kothe, they have lost all their belongings and become destitute. But Grandmother will never take it lying down. She always uses her positive outlook on life and her innate resourcefulness to start a business for living. As she is too old to be of service to her clients and her granddaughter Gudiya is too young to get deflowered, Grandmother plans to earn money by constructing a shrine under a peepal tree. Here Namita Gokhale is presenting the Indian scene in which people, especially the Hindus, construct shrines and temples with a motive to earn money from the religious minded devotees. She ridicules and mocks the religious institutions in Indian society through Grandmother, a Muslim by birth, but acting as the pious widow of a Brahmin priest. If the occasion demands, Grandmother does not have fear nor guilt when she changes her religion from Islam to Hinduism. Through the character of Grandmother, Namita Gokhale is showing the fearless and self-assertiveness of the ‘New Woman’. The rapid progress and prosperity of the temple mark the grand success of Grandmother’s business of life.
Namita Gokhale creates Grandmother quite in contrast to the traditional Indian women who are generally meek, dependent and submissive. Though women are weak physically, in intelligence and wit they are not inferior. They can defeat mighty and macho men by their wit, reasoning and strong mental power. Sundar Pahalwan is a character Namita Gokhale employs to enhance the personality of Grandmother. He is the Dada of the slum area where Grandmother and her temple flourish. He demands tax from every dweller of that area and keeps all of them under his control by his muscle-power. He threatens Grandmother to beg if she refuses to pay him the tax for occupying the ‘jhuggi’. But Grandmother is not afraid of him. With full confidence in her presence of mind and her strong determination to fight the male power Grandmother counterblasts the threat of Sundar Pahalwan saying “Seize our money, Pahalwanji, but spare our self-respect. I am the widow of a Brahmin, my husband was a priest, guard your tongue or else a virtuous woman’s curses may follow you!”

Instead of paying tax to him, the Grandmother wins his heart to become her devotee and protector. Similarly she makes the man from the Municipal Corporation, who comes to demolish the temple, fall at her feet begging for her forgiveness. Namita Gokhale gives the minutest detail how Grandmother administers the temple. With an iron hand Grandmothers keeps the temple in perfect order assigning specific chores to her devotees. It indicates Grandmother’s autocratic leadership which is a rare case in Indian society
where women are kept in secondary position in every walk of life. One sees Akka hold the highest position in the family hierarchy after she has become a rich widow in Shashi Deshpande’s *Roots and Shadows*. Similarly, no one in the temple can do anything without consulting and seeking the approval of Grandmother. A woman can be as strong as a man. Women writers who use feminist politics deconstruct the hierarchy, and the fixed point is decentred while bringing the marginalized in the centre. As Shiva, the Hindu God, possesses a third eye in his forehead, it is believed that Grandmother also possesses a third eye at the back of her head. By mentioning ‘the third eye’, Namita Gokhale is comparing Grandmother even with the Hindu male-God in wit and tact and visionary power. Grandmother is very alert and tactful and she can tackle every difficult situation by her pious looking persona and her presence of mind. Her popularity as a great saint spreads throughout the city through her skill and newly gained power. She has healing and mystic power much to the benefit of all. Many people from different places come to ‘Mataji Ka Mandir’ with full faith and devotion to seek her blessing. The selling of colour postcards of Grandmother with ‘Om’ printed across them in gold embossed lettering outside the temple gate proves Grandmother’s attainment of the position of God woman. Though Grandmother is uneducated and illiterate she surpasses even Pandit Kailash Shastri who is a scholar and well-versed in
religious rituals and astrology. Pandit Kailash Shastri accepts his inferiority to
Grandmother when he says:

I can sense that she is an extra ordinary woman with remarkable sidhis ... If even the dust from her mind were to settle on an ordinary mortal like me, I would become a better and cleverer person (GGG, 58-59).

Being a Muslim who does not know much about Hindu beliefs and philosophy Grandmother used to keep a long silence as if in meditation whenever she is in trouble of finding out a right solution to the problems her devotees bring to her. She used to say everything in vague generalization so that her devotees can interpret it in their own way. It is a tactics she always uses to maintain her present avatar of sainthood. Gudiya, who knows her Grandmother well, says: “She had by now perfected the art of presenting confusing abstractions as exalted philosophy and converted her lack of specific religious knowledge into a gnostic strength” (GGG, 67). Even though she acts as the pious saint of Hindu, Grandmother does not believe in superstitions about the lunar eclipse that everyone should keep indoors at night so that the evil aspect of Rahu, as he swallows up the moon, does not contaminate or defile them. At night she and Gudiya come out of their hut to enjoy the peace and solitude of
the night while all her disciples are indoors. In spite of her old age and spiritual
dignity, she does not pay any heed to astropredictions. She is modern in thought
and outlook that she allows Gudiya to join the school trip to Simla without any
comment. When Gudiya is restricted to go to Simla by Pandit Kailash Shastri,
the astrologer cum priest of the temple, just because the date fixed for the trip
falls on an amavyasha day, Grandmother expresses her dislike of the idea. She
says: “If one were to start listening to these astrologers, the second foot would
never follow the first. I am ready to undertake any journey on a Amavasya
night” (GGG, 71).

Grandmother is a new woman of the modern age in the sense that she is
practical and is able to solve existential problem. She does not waste her
valuable time on unreasonable and improbable thinking. She is a human being
of flesh and blood who wants to take part in a highly competitive world of fame
and fortune. In quite contrast to her present identity, Grandmother reveals her
past ambition to Gudiya:

When I was your age ... I wanted to be a film star. There were no
sound. I wanted to be like Zubaida or Jayshree. But look at me
now – a holy woman! Truly, no one can understand the ways of
God! (GGG, 51).
Grandmother has the female potential to adapt to the present situation if it gives her personal gain. If the condition demands, she can transform herself from a sensuous woman of corporal world into a spiritual one. She leaves no trace of her past life in Kothe. In the eyes of everyone, she is a pious widow of a Brahmin priest. That is why Pandit Kailash Shastri says “she is a saint, an embodiment of Shakti” (GGG, 62). By her strong personality, self-determination and tactfulness, Grandmother reaches the zenith of spiritual height. As Raju in R.K. Narayan’s The Guide becomes a real saint too by compulsion, Grandmother becomes an incarnation of ‘Ma Shakti’ who comes to bless the mortal world. Her popularity is so vast that her death becomes a big event in the whole city of Delhi. People from various places rush to pay their last tribute to the divine woman. Gudiya gives us a vivid description of the day: “There was stampede. The police had to be called in to contain the mob” (GGG, 74). Further she adds: “Grandmother’s death and burial were reported in the Evening News, and a vernacular magazine sent a journalist and a photographer to cover the event” (GGG, 80).

From a mere Kothewali who has struggled to live by doing a dirty trade of selling flesh, Grandmother earns love, respect and devotion from all classes of people in the later period of her life. She becomes a great soul that even a marble statue of her in life size is erected in the premises of ‘Mataji Ka Mandir’
with a great ceremony and people cheering “Mataji Ki Jai” (GGG, 172). Her creation is untraditional and cannot be likewise treated as a stereotype.

Gudiya is another woman the novelist creates with an attempt to show self-assertiveness of an independent woman. Even though she belongs to the family of slum dwellers, she dreams of becoming a strong woman of name and fame. For Gudiya, fate is not destiny. Fate makes her to be an illegitimate child born to a prostitute by an unknown client. She is not upset when her mother elopes with a beggar leaving her alone. As her Grandmother puts on a new identity of a pious Brahmin discarding her old self, Gudiya also resolves “to change my name, my identity, my very self” (GGG, 127). She does not like her name ‘Gudiya’ as it signifies a little girl of no importance. So he calls herself ‘Pooja Abhimanyu Singh’, a royal sounding name to uplift her social status into the kinship of feudal lords. To suit to her new identity, she picks up from a junk shop, a discarded photograph of a noble looking man with a waxed moustache to be her father. She is so convinced by her adoption of new parentage that she proudly introduced the framed photograph of the unknown man as her father adding further that her mother is dead. She mingles fiction with fact as she pleases and feels more confident of what she is doing. She does not resist anything when Kalki, her Prince Charming, deflowers her because he is her object of desire. Even though she dreams of becoming a rich woman, she is not
excited to hear about Madam Roxanne Lamba's will. She conducts with dignity and grace keeping in mind her royal blood of Thakur Abhimanyu Singh and declines the offer of Cyrus and Mr. Lamba indicating that she is not a needy underdog to receive charity.

When her married life with Kalki becomes dull and lifeless in contrast to her rosy dreams of love and romance before marriage, Gudiya puts a brave face in front of Phoolwati. She can not admit her marriage a failure since Kalki is her own choice. She refuses when Phoolwati constantly urges her to return to her house. Her words "some vestigial shards of pride kept me away" (GGG, 216) prove Gudiya's self-respect and stubborn personality. When Kalki turns from Prince Charming into a drunkard and wife-beating husband who harasses and tortures his own wife every night, Gudiya does not submit her spirit to the brutality of her husband. She does not make herself a silent sufferer of physical abuses and ill-treatment of Kalki. So she "resolved to find a way out of the intolerable situation" (GGG, 217). On hearing the story of Lila how she gets freedom from the family ties after the incident of her throwing all her gold ornaments into the grave of Grandmother, an idea strikes in Gudiya's head. Returning home from the temple, she suggests her husband Kalki to try his luck in Bombay. In order to meet the expenses she disposes of all her jewelleries to a neighbourhood jeweller. Then she buys Kalki a one-way ticket to Bombay and
bids him goodbye. For Gudiya, bearing the pain of loneliness and separation is much better than living together with a cruel and good-for-nothing husband. So she “accepted Kalki’s departure with resignation, and even a degree of relief” (*GGG*, 223). Their separation gives her the way to get rid of Kalki who used to assault her sexually with full right and authority of a husband provided by marriage. Gudiya changes from a romantic girl who has given her body and soul instantly to her dream boy to a grown-up woman who experiences the bitter taste of married life. She remains self-possessed and strong-willed even after she has lost her beloved husband. The growth and development in Gudiya into being an independent woman in the midst of woe and pain is reflected in her words:

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. Every day, gradually and imperceptibly, his hold on me lessened (*GGG*, 245).

In spite of his handsome mien, Kalki can not hold the centre-stage in Gudiya’s life. From the day Gudiya dispatches him to Bombay, he totally disappears from her life without leaving a trace. Gudiya remains in control of herself and her affairs with other people. She does not show any sign of weakness and is
ready to face the unknown future without any male support. When Pandit Kailash Shastri offers to read her hand, she refuses. She gives her reason: “There was nothing about my future I any longer wanted to know about. I was ready for whatever came my way” (*GGG*, 233).

Gudiya peacefully and merrily adapts to her new life with her two years old daughter Mallika under the generous supervision of Phoolwati. She has no time to brood over what she has lost. She learns to carry on her present life with a firm determination. Thus in Gudiya one sees the unfailing trait of a woman with a weak womanly holy but inside it is hidden the heart of a lion. When a husband becomes a liability and a threat to her very existence she wisely gets rid of him in a manner that seems very honest. But at least she is successful in doing away with the most unwanted man. In so doing the character of Gudiya is never like a tradition Indian woman who is bound to her husband by a bond of marriage. Betrayal of one’s heart is not to be forgiven. Her decision is very bold and she does not repent what she has done. This posture of Gudiya guarantees her dislike of the conformist view that a woman should always touch her husband’s feet for protection and sustenance. In her own right she is a brand of the ‘New Woman’.

Phoolwati is the widow of teashop owner Shambhu. She appears in the novel only after the death of Shambhu but holds a special place in the
development of the story. She is also projected in the image of ‘New Woman’. Her relationship with Shambhu makes a reversal of the dominant husband and submissive wife. She has a commanding personality and better knowledge of business than her husband Shambhu. She is afraid of nobody. Regarding herself and her relation with Shambhu, she tells Gudiya:

Your grandmother used to call me an avataar of Durga. Even when that Shambhu used to get drunk and threaten to beat me up, two kicks on his bums would settle him and teach him some manners (GGG, 106).

So Phoolwati turns upside down the patriarchal concept of wife-beating as a mark of superiority. She does not mourn the death of her first husband Shambhu as she has already known his lusty and rakish behaviour. Instead of wailing and fainting as a stereotypical wife should have done at the death of her husband, Phoolwati rejoices Shambhu’s murder saying “He got the death he deserved” (GGG, 188). She expresses her desire to reward the murderer for doing her a big favour. The status of widow does not make her feel weak and helpless. She displays a great skill in handling the situation in business and in public affairs that within a short time she expands her business and increases her earning. Her association with Grandmother and Gudiya can not be treated
as a selfish woman seizing only the opportunity and benefit so as she can survive in the surrounding of the temple. There is a genuine affection and cordial relation between her and the temple. She is exceptionally careful about the well-being of Gudiya. It is she who forces Kalki to marry Gudiya when the latter gets pregnant with the child of the former. She does not like to treat woman as a vessel to empty the seeds of man when he feels the need. She wants the man to take the responsibility for his action. But she knows that Kalki, a bandwallah, is not a suitable match for Gudiya even though they tie the knot of marriage almost by compulsion. So, she suggests Gudiya to return to her house. She says: “The child will have a legitimate father now. Your Kalki has served his function. You can’t waste your life like this, Gudiya, with these bandwallahs” (GGG, 216).

Phoolwati does not believe that marriage is the destiny for woman. She can not agree with the patriarchal norm that once a woman gets married she has to serve her husband until dead whether she is happy or not in her married life. For Phoolwati, what is important is happiness and freedom to grow one’s individuality. Phoolwati’s powerful personality can be seen in her dealing with Sundar Pahalwan, a slumlord who exercises territorial right over the slum dwellers of Delhi. In front of her, Sundar seems to be losing his aggressive tendency. Gradually, she arouses his love and admiration for herself. Eventually
he reciprocates her feelings and finally proposes for marriage to her. But Phoolwati agrees to the marriage proposal under certain conditions only. They are - firstly, he will build a pucca house for her, the ownership of which will be irrevocably hers. Secondly, he will allow her to continue running her business as before and, thirdly, he has to treat Gudiya as their adoptive daughter. Consequently Phoolwati moves in the pucca house as a legal wife of Sundar. Marriage does not make Phoolwati submissive to her husband. It does not diminish her free-will and independent way of life. She can spend a large amount of money on a wild shopping spree, buying anything and everything that looks expensive, luxurious and colourful. Instead of grudging Phoolwati’s extravagant expenses, Sundar is amused. “He was a most indulgent husband, and no cost or effort was spared to make Phoolwati happy” (GGG 182). Here, we can see the difference when we remember Monisha, the meek and docile wife who receives harsh scold and rebuke from her husband and in-laws for using some money of her husband without informing him first in Anita Desai’s novel *Voices in the City*. Thus Phoolwati exhibits new breed of woman who demands equal footing in husband-wife relation. A critic writes: “She can effectively put on end to the marital victimization and oppression. She need not follow the dictates of Manu, subjugating herself to her lord and master. Her identity and herself can be kept intact.” 15 How to handle a powerful husband is not the only thing Phoolwati masters. When Gudiya discloses the story of gold
coins her Grandmother has buried under the peepal tree, she draws out a plan to recover the treasure. Sundar is full praise of Phoolwati’s ingenuity and wit. He says:

No one in the whole of India can match my Phoolwati for brains. M.A., B.A., Ph.D. She is cleverer than all that ... If they made may Phoolwati the Prime Minister of India, she could solve all the problems of this country (GGG, 191).

Even though she is the owner of a small tea-shop that sells flowers, coconuts and incense sticks near Grandmother’s temple, Phoolwati never feels herself low and inferior to anyone. During Gudiya’s stay at Madam Roxanne’s house, she comes to meet the former wearing an expensive silk sari, a thick gold necklace and holding a leather handbag. She deals with Madam Roxanne and her husband Mr. Lamba on an equal footing without in the least being self-conscious of her humble economic and social status. When Mr. Lamba indicates his dislike for the idea of his wife adopting Gudiya at Sharp House saying that there is to be no exchange of money in case if Gudiya stays with them temporarily, Phoolwati retorts with a show of dignity and self-respects:

‘Don’t worry about your money on your account. We may not be rich like you, but we do have our izzat. By the grace of God, our
Gudiya is not short of money’. Extracting a wad of money from her new patent leather handbag, she counted it out note by note and handed it over the startled Mr. Lamba. ‘Let me know if you require any more’, she said, triumphantly snapping shut the shinning brass clasp of her purse (GGG, 93).

Phoolwati emerges as a ‘New Woman’ who can hurl words to the menfolk if they treat her as if she were at the mercy of others who would support her. Her association with Sundar Pahalwan, her second husband, gives her material gain, but it is her share benefited from her partnership in business with him. She is not grief-stricken when Sundar is shot dead. She neither screams nor weeps but calmly and quietly drags the dead body inside her house. She behaves like a brave woman of noble blood when the calamity happens in her life. It is not that she does not love Sundar. Sometimes she feels the tendency of weeping when the fond memory of Sundar comes upon her mind. But she controls herself and continues to live as a strong woman. A woman of her ilk is rare on the scene of Indian writing in English.

Other minor characters projected with the same target of identifying ‘New Woman’ are Mrs. Roxanne Lamba and Lila. The latter is an old woman who is graced with a son, a daughter-in-law and grand-children attending to her
needs and orders. When the temple of Grandmother flourishes, she comes to offer prayer and finally becomes the most trusted follower of the spiritual Grandmother discarding her home and family and settling down in the temple premises. She becomes a perfect spiritual devotee of Grandmother through the enunciation of her personal belongings. From the day of her throwing all her gold ornaments into the grave of Grandmother, her son and daughter-in-law lose interest in her without her fortune. So she becomes independent from the bondage of family and goes on pilgrimage without any care and worry in life.

Mrs. Roxanne Lamba is a rich Parsi woman who is doing social work and serving the cause of education by being the Principal of St. Jude's Academy for the Socially Handicapped where children from slum and footpath dwellers come to acquire knowledge of learning. She is eager to nurture those brilliant students who are promising and have vital spark to grow into becoming even an I.A.S. officer. She convinces Gudiya many times to move in her house so that the latter can receive proper education and learning. When Gudiya turns down her suggestion, she does not give up. She leaves a will before her death that writes some portion of her inherited fortune is to be equally parted to Gudiya and the St. Jude's Academy for the Socially Handicapped. This indicates Mrs. Lamba's power and ability to use her own money as she wishes.
She is not dependent on her husband economically or for decision-making. Only Mr. Lamba bathes in luxury and comfort with Mrs. Lamba’s wealth.

Parvati in *A Himalayan Love Story*, inclines to be discussed under the category of the ‘New Woman’. She somehow manages to defy the marriage institution and caste distinction in a rigid patriarchal society. In spite of her Brahmin birth, she does not hesitate to have physical intimacy with Salman Siddique, a Muslim boy who teaches her History. Even though she knows there is no future together with this Muslim boy, she continues to play the temporary game of love with him just for fun and pleasure. That is why she is not devastated when Salman leaves India for America without giving her any information. Her incestuous relation with Raju, Lalit’s younger brother can also be viewed as a rebellious act against her arranged marriage to Lalit Joshi. So she makes crumble the patriarchal notion of modest daughter and faithful wife. Her courage to indulge in pre-marital and extra-marital relations puts her to the category of the ‘New Woman’ who is always intending to deconstruct the patriarchal impositions regarding female morality. Though she becomes a weak and pitiable creature by the later part of the novel due to her insanity and madness, Parvati cannot be treated as the stereotypical image of woman as meek, submissive and insignificant.
Another character in the novel that reflects the embodiment of the 'New Woman' is Ira, Parvati's young daughter. Although Ira is a little girl of teenage, she has the potential to draw future plan and take the right decision for her own life. She is quite aware of her unfortunate life. She has not seen her father when he is alive. Moreover, she is deprived of love and care of a mother as her insane mother is to be kept in a lunatic asylum. She knows that she has to look after her own life and her mad mother as she has no one who can take care of them willingly and lovingly. She wants to make herself a burden neither to her maternal uncle Pooran nor to paternal uncle Pushpendra. So she is very careful in dealing with such people. She says to Mukul: "I am alone in the world, you know, so I have learnt to be careful." As she has learnt the hardships of life from the very early days of childhood, she acts as a mature woman when Mukul comes to Wee Nook to settle the will left by Hiranand Joshi. She is grave and serious in look and in manner. One night when Parvati makes a fuss in Pooran's family by walking stealthily out of the house to the street to get attacked by a drunkard and then arrested by a daroga, Ira searches for her mother in the bazaar and then to police station without the least fear of the darkness of the night and indecent people. Though she wishes Mukul to sort out things before he goes, she accepts his sudden departure for Hongkong without resentment. With an authoritative tone she lets him know her plan about selling the landed property left by Hiranand Joshi to meet her mother's
maintenance and care and her academic expenses. She even expresses her ambition to become a doctor. Her strong and firm determination does not fail her even when she becomes an outcast who has no one to lean over. When Mukul asks her who will look after Parvati, she replies with full responsibility that she will. When Mukul again persists who will look after her, she simply says "The money will" (AHLS, 201). Irra believes that money is the sole necessity in a man's life. Money can buy security, happiness and comfort in life. She believes that as long as she has money in her hand she needs no one for support. She does not think herself helpless and weak. She looks forward for a bright future of becoming an independent career woman, a lady doctor.

In *The Book of Shadows*, Rachita Tiwari's escape from the city of Delhi to lead a life of recluse in Ranikhet, one of the Himalayan foothills, can be treated as the new woman's yearning for an independent life without any tension for decorum and dignity in a society. The acid attack by the sister of her fiancé Anand in revenge for the suicidal death of the latter seems to diminish the spirit of Rachita, a College Lecturer in English Literature. Being an educated woman Rachita has a stand of herself in the intellectual group of people. She ignores the traditional view that wife should be younger, more weaker than her husband. So she chooses Anand, a much younger boy, to be her fiancé. More than this, she has the audacity to indulge in physical intimacy
with the husband of her best friend. Because of her inconstancy there is a conflict between Anand and herself and consequently the former dies hanging himself from a ceiling fan. Rachita calls Anand’s suicide as an act of stupidity and she further says that she does not regret it. The acid attack by Anand’s sister has completely destroyed the normalcy in the life of Rachita. But Rachita says “even though my beauty has departed, my vanity has not”\(^{17}\)\((BS, 71)\). Her taking refuge in that remote house in Ranikhet is an act of revolt against the hostile world of city dwellers who are always keen to hear the sensational story of one’s personal life. But she further takes a firm decision to face the cruel reality with courage:

It is not my body which has betrayed me – it is I who have betrayed this body. My abandonment of courage has been no less treacherous than Anand’s. Courage is not simply a virtue, it is the testing point of all virtues at the highest conflux of reality. I will venture unafraid into the future, with my body, with my mind, with my spirit\((BS, 219)\).

So, Rachita declines the idea when her sister suggests to remake her facial structure through plastic surgery. She chooses to have the scarred face permanently because she has resolved to abandon the materialistic world of
glamour, fame and sensuality. The last line of the novel "I think I know that I will remain" (BS, 232) indicates that Rachita will remain the rest of her life in that remote house in Ranikhet.

Zenobia is the most daring student in Rachita’s classroom for English Honours. She expresses her views and concepts and even mentions her boyfriend to her teacher without the least feeling of embarrassment. She comes to Ranikhet accompanying with her boyfriend Pashu to visit Rachita and stays the night in the house where Rachita is living alone. She dares to sleep with Pashu in the presence of her teacher Rachita. She makes him feel safe and secure in her company even though he is a deformed young man who has a club foot. Among the classfull of students she is the only girl that can be taken as a typical example of a bold and independent woman next to Rachita.

In her Shakuntala: The Play of Memory, a recent novel, Namita Gokhale attempts to project a new woman quite in contrast to Shakuntala, the submissive and weeping heroine of Kalidasa, who accepts the exploitation by men as her ill-fated lot. Though the novel is set in the Medieval period, Namita Gokhale’s Shakuntala is different from the stereotypical women of tradition-oriented Indian society. From her childhood, Shakuntala has seen the discrimination between a male and female child through her mother’s preference and favour
for her first born son Govinda. The mother unconsciously follows the way of marginalization of women because she herself has been conditioned to accept the traditional custom by the male-dominated society for ages. As girls are instructed to learn household drudgery while boys are given the best education, Shakuntala helps her mother in housework unquestioning. She is groomed only to become a faithful wife when she gets married. Before her marriage her mother always stresses the importance and the demands of chastity in a woman’s life. Her mother warns: “Never forget, the vessel of your virtue is like the urn of water you balance on your head ... You must not spill even a drop as you carry it home”.  

In the midst of restrictions and recommendations laid down by patriarchy upon women, Shakuntala grows up into a high-spirited, imaginative and adventurous girl. She is restless to see the world, to wander with the freedom of birds and clouds. Even after she has been married off to Srijan, a wealthy merchant, Shakuntala’s adventurous spirit is still lurking in her mind and body. She says:

I knew there was more inside me than the limits of my experience dictated. I thirsted for glimpses of new lands, people, ideas. It was as if the move from my mother’s home to my husband’s – the
half-a-day journey from one village to another – had suddenly made the impossible possible. A man’s equal in bed, why could I not desire what men enjoyed: the freedom to wonder, to be elsewhere, to seek, and perhaps find ... something? (Shakuntala, 48).

When Srijan brings home a beautiful woman from his business travels, Shakuntala loses all her control of anger and rage. The double standard of the male society that keeps women within the confines of marriage while they enjoy the freedom to do whatever they wish without questioning can be seen in Srijan’s involvement with Kamalini. It hurts the feminine pride and vanity of Shakuntala. Unable to bear the mechanical love and care of her husband, she keeps herself away from her home wandering in the woods, chatting with fishermen in the riverbank and neglecting the duties of a woman and a wife. To those people who do not understand the inner turmoil of Shakuntala, her behaviour is quite unwomanly and unnatural to be a wife of a rich family. To the patriarchal view Srijan does nothing wrong in his duty as the master and husband. The author dictates the moral code of Manu through the mouthpiece of a priest in connection with Shakuntala, a woman in general:

‘Look at your feet, Shakuntala’, the priest said solemnly, ‘The soles of your feet are decorated with red alta. The toe rings
indicate your contentment in marriage. Your anklets weigh down your feet to keep you rooted in your home and family. Men are the masters of women. Your father protects you in childhood, your husband protects you in youth and your sons protect you in old age; a woman is never fit for independence, that is not the way of the world. You are fortunate to be a rich young woman, without cares or worries. Never forget your good fortune. It is not auspicious’ (Shakuntala, 103).

But Shakuntala can not be happy with the false pride of a rich wife while her husband dishonours her by bringing another woman in her household. The rebellious tendency of the ‘New Woman’ against the male force for treating woman as an object of lust and reproduction and nothing more than this is found in Shakuntala also. She cannot tolerate her husband’s conspiracy and covert manner with Kamalini to befool and delude her. So she elopes with Nearchus, the Greek traveller whom she meets by the riverbank of Ganga carrying the seed of Srijan in her womb. She assumes the new name ‘Yaduri’ and discards the hill, the big house, the comfort and luxury – everything, which are in connection with Shakunala, the wife of Srijan. She travels with the stranger from place to place, and days and nights. She joins wild parties and drinks wine with men. She takes her changed identity and circumstances with
ease. When Narchus says coarse words to her, she does not protest because "They confirmed my discovery that I was a fallen woman, and something in me exulted and rejoiced in being so" (Shakuntala, 130). Further, she says: "The world was a wild and wondrous place, and I was glad to be free and alone and travelling its surface with this Yavana who had seen and known so much" (Shakuntala, 134). From a wife, Shakuntala is now little more than a whore. But she deliberately chooses such life of dishonoured woman because it gives her immense freedom from social morality that favours only the male. Now she belongs to no-one and no-one belongs to her. She, by the end of the novel, leaves Nearchus too to move on in her quest for freedom and liberation and finally meets her death in the city of Kashi.

Namita Gokhale focuses her attention on her female characters to personify the 'New Woman'. The new woman comes forward in every territory which is formerly reserved for males. With a challenging spirit she even surpasses her male-counterparts in social and business affairs. Germaine Greer, in her wide-read book The Female Eunuch, alerts the male society that many new breeds of woman are upon the earth. She writes:

There are female body builders whose pectorals are as hard as any man's; there are women marathon runners with musculature as
stringy and tight as any man's; there are woman administrators with as much power as any man; there are women paying alimony and women being paid palimony; there are up-front lesbians demanding the right to marry and have children by artificial insemination; there are men who mutilate themselves and are given passports as statutory females; there are prostitutes who have combined in highly visible professional organizations; there are armed women in the front line of the most powerful armies on earth; there are full colonels with vivid lipstick and painted nails; there are women who write books about their sexual conquests, naming names and describing positions, sizes of members and so forth.19

To mark the difference between the tradition and modernity in thinking and outlook, Namita Gokhale presents some conformist women like Parvati's mother in A Himalayan Love Story and Shakuntala's mother in Shakuntala: The Play of Memory. Parvati's mother thinks that giving education to her daughter is a wastage of money as girls have to leave their parent's house at the time of marriage. In a patriarchal society where primary importance is given to the boys as the heirs and successors of family line, girl are considered a burden in the
family as they always get married off with a large dowry. Such traditional view toward a girl child is reflected in the words of Parvati’s mother:

It would be different if you were a boy ... then you could earn and provide for me in my old age. But all you are going to do is get married to some no-good, and take my gold champakali necklace off with you as dowry. It’s a double curse, to first be born a woman, then get straddled with another female to provide for! (*AHLS*, 6).

In *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory* also we have seen the importance and preference given to the boys in a family in matters of providing education and bringing up. As a girl child Shakuntala does not get formal education while her brother is taught Sanskrit, Philosophy, Grammar etc.

Interestingly, we have seen a sharp difference between women of the past and women of today’s generation. As an attempt to subdue the male-domination, Namita Gokhale has given the importance to women in her most novels. All her women protagonists show their liking to have a girl-child instead of a boy. Priya in *Paro: Dreams of Passion* dreams of having a lovely daughter when she gets pregnant. After her unfortunate miscarriage, she tries to
adopt a girl from an orphanage to be her daughter. Paro’s son Junior is presented as insignificant, shadowy, negative and neglected creature. In *Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, Gudiya gives birth to a girl called Mallika, and Parvati of *A Himalayan Love Story* has a strong daughter, i.e. Ira. In *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory*, Shakuntala also frequently talks about her unborn daughter as if she is only her confidante. In our Indian society where the news of dowry death, bride burning, wife-beating, rape, female-infanticide and female-feticide threaten the women community, Namita Gokhale summons all the hidden powers of women to confront the male-superiority. To conclude the study of Namita Gokhale’s women as the representation of the ‘New Woman’, we can cite what Subhas Chandra has written:

Thus we notice that Gokhale effects a paradigm – shift in the position of her women who are autonomous and do not depend for their survival, as Manu postulates on their fathers, husbands or sons. They have the requisite strength to face life with all its ups and downs: they are cast in the mould of the New Woman who solves her problems herself and is assertive, practical and resilient.\(^{20}\)
NOTES


15 Subhas Chandra, *op. cit.*, p.17.


17 Namita Gokhale, *The Book of Shadows* (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2001), p.71. All subsequent references to this edition will be referred to as *BS*.
18 Namita Gokhale, *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory* (Viking: Penguin Books India, 2005), p.40. All subsequent references to this edition will be referred to as *Shakuntala*.
