In the foregoing chapters of this thesis, a detailed discussion of the treatment of the problems of marital disharmony, husband-wife conflict, tussles and failures in love in the novels of Namita Gokhale had been made. Alongside it other contemporary women novelists like Shashi Deshpande, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai and Shobha De have also been taken up to show how these women writers are also so deeply concerned with the same problem of relationship of the sexes, and how marriage that became the heaven of conjugal relationship has become a battleground of disparate personalities, mainly caused by sexual politics, traditional outlook versus modern enlightenment, the tendency to change and challenge the male oppression, marriage institution that empower man to enslave women, and sexual liberation of women. In all her
novels Namita Gokhale attempts to deal with the sour and bitter taste of unfulfilled love and failure in marriage. An examination of the situation in which man and woman are entangled in difficulty it is revealed that it is not the woman only that troubles and disturbs the stable and harmonious relationship between a husband and a wife or between two lovers. Namita Gokhale wants to say that the domination of the male over the female, the rigid gender role and sexual politics of the patriarchy are responsible for a woman’s unspoken and entrenched pain and suffering in Indian society.

The issue of marital misalliance and disharmony in the novels of contemporary Indian women writers has become endemic and quite compelling although their approach to the same subject varies. The problem of unhappy marriage pervades all through the major novels of Shashi Deshpande. The resentment and anger against the male supremacy on the one hand and uncompromising attitude of the young, educated, self-assertive women on the other hand are the main causes for the clash between husband and wife. Jaya, Saru, Indu are examples of independent women who are, however, dragged down into pain and agony of failed and unfulfilled marriage because either they do not want to surrender their individuality just to hold the position of wife-hood or they are victimized by power relations. Temperamental incompatibility, communication and emotional gap and lack of sharing and understanding
between the husband and the wife push the marital relationship off the track, finally they crash along the road. Anita Desai’s *Cry, the Peacock*, *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* and *Fire on the Mountain* are stories of women who suffer underhand treatment by their insensitive husbands, of which some are dubious and capable of double-dealing. Nayantara Sahgal’s *The Day in Shadow* and *Storm in Chandigarh* give expression to the plight of women who are treated by their husbands as mere possessions and not persons. But Som and Inder have a firm belief that wives should be under their full control physically and mentally. Saroj’s loss of virginity before marriage and Simrit’s frigidity in bed hurt the husbands who consider the wife’s sexuality as their occupied sphere. As a result, marriage verges on the inevitable fall. Shobha De, too, presents husband-wife disintegration as a common trait for the high-class social group whose chief concerns are money and sex. As there are no moral inhibitions in her men and women, marriage often loses its meaning because marriage is truly a matter of convenience, not based on understanding, fidelity and emotional make-up.

The previse of the thesis are that a healthy marital relationship is and can be developed through the true companionship of both husband and wife. Conflict naturally comes when one of the couple is not true and faithful to the other. However, the reasons for failure in love and marriage in Namita
Gokhale’s novels are manifold. Interference of the male head of the family in matters of matchmaking, the caste distinction and consciousness in the selection of spouse, the inferior position of women as a sexual object are the underlying features that deter the smooth running in man and woman relationship. Very often, this leads to adultery and incest when expectations fade into complete neglect of the fair sex by the sexual counterpart.

Namita Gokhale brushes aside the traditional concept of sexual morality. Mismatching often precipitates sexual perversion to which women are frequently subject. The novelist strongly reacts against the prolonged subjugation of women by men in the name of feminine morality. For women sexuality is the primary and its having been suppressed by the unhealthy forces of society, institution, and morality causes female tension and mental problem, which cannot be solved by any means other than extramarital relation.

In Indian patriarchy, morality refers to the inhibited and controlled sexual behaviour of men and women. Good morality means strict adherence to the established conduct of what is to be done or what is not to be done. In such conservative Indian society, female sexuality is kept hidden under a veil and it is explored by the male only when he feels the need. Women are also cautious themselves not to receive any unwanted remark about their morality. They
always have the fear that no one will take them as wives in the marriage market if they cannot produce a clean and smooth biodata of their character. So women mould their character to please men.

Young feminist writers of the Indian soil embrace the sexual liberty as a mode of new morality. In Namita Gokhale's novels, we have encountered female characters who dare to confront the unpleasant criticism from the male-dominated society. Her women Priya and Paro are prototypes of new morality. Their concept about love and marriage shows the changing attitude of the younger generation in matters of human-relationships. They seek for the same right and liberty the male community is enjoying in a patriarchal society. They are asking a big question "why women are so afraid of men and the society?". All women in this world seem to live just for their men and not for themselves. She accepts his courtship to fill his heart with love and romantic dreams; she gets married to him to procreate his heir, she lives with him not to make him feel lonely. In sharp reaction to it, both Priya and Paro do not think that marriage is their destiny. They are not tradition-bound women, for they have a different mission in life. They get married for luxury and comfort and not for making a family rooted in harmony and understanding. That way they are not inferior to their husbands who are always in the lookout for new pastures. They will live with their husbands as long as they are happy and not betrayed. They
do not have the fear to break the marriage when they are caught red-handed of their promiscuity. From the feminist point of view, women's infidelity is a kind of revolt against the male domination. Both Priya and Paro have this rebellious tendency in their heart of hearts. They think that getting sexual freedom is getting liberation from the bondage of moral code established by patriarchy. They want to destroy the superior feeling of men through the weapon of sex. Female sex is a symbol of power for them.

One can see how Namita Gokhale unfolds B.R.’s womanizing behaviour that baffles and hurts both Paro and Priya. Thus, the problem arises when the two women destroy the peace and harmony of their own married lives as well as that of their male partners. Paro’s adulterous relation with innumerable men can be viewed as a prototype of free woman. Priya also makes fun of B.R.’s married life as well as her own marriage to Suresh by her infidelity. So, both Paro and Priya forsake their marriage in response to the cynicism of their men. Namita Gokhale displays her protagonists’ uninhibited and uncontrolled sexuality as the vindication of their strong resentment against the lopsided traditional values of Indian patriarchy. Through Parvati’s premarital relation with Salman Siddique, the Muslim boy and her incest with Raju, the younger brother of Lalit, Namita Gokhale is exhibiting the outrageous spirit of an independent woman. She castigates the effect of caste system and its
inconvenience in matters of marriage. It is the conservative and the orthodox Hindu tradition that makes Mukul’s love for Parvati a fiasco. So, Mukul marries a widow, half-Burmese and half-English just to prove how strongly he reacts against Indian caste system. On the other hand, Parvati’s marriage to Lalit is a gross form of alienation between the two, and their scuffle and the tragic end of their married life with the premature death of Lalit show the wrong decision of the patriarchal authority. Namita Gokhale’s *A Himalayan Love Story* tells the story how a woman’s life is just as valueless as anything is when she remains without a mind to be taken into consideration. She is just a non-entity, the lost soul, the lost identity.

While dealing with the problem of marital conflict Namita Gokhale encompasses people from every section of Indian society. *Gods, Graves and Grandmother* builds up a beautiful saga of people belonging to lower strata of the society. The rootless people, who dwell in the slums and on the footpaths, face high risk of instability and insecurity in marriage as they lack the sense of strong family bonding. Gudiya-Kalki marriage is one of them. Only love and infatuation sans proper food, clothing and shelter cannot make a firm and lasting relation between the married couple. Moreover, people like Kalki who are orphans and bastards lack emotion, reasoning sense of responsibility etc. They only have the biological instincts of desire, hunger and craze for material
comfort. Such people, who are struggling to feed their own stomachs doing odd jobs, consider marriage a burden and hindrance to their independent life. So Kalki becomes hostile to Gudiya after their forced marriage making the latter disappointed, suffocating and lose faith in marriage. Here, it is apt to note what Kanupriya has written in her research paper “Violence and Loneliness in Nayantara Sahgal’s Major Novels”:

Woman suffers not only by man’s act of physical violence, but she is often emotionally hurt and crippled through his arrogance, cynicism and indifference. However, men wield power over women through terror. This blocks the road to the communication between the partners in marriage.¹

So, it is not surprise when Gudiya dispatches Kalki off to Bombay just to get rid of his physical abuse. What Namita Gokhale intends to say is that women sometimes prefer the peace and harmony of single life to living together with a good-for-nothing husband amidst chaos and conflicts. For those people who have no family background, no identity, no roots, no morality, love and marriage become a farce. This is entirely a different issue of love and marriage whose foundations are weakened by a sense of insecurity, lack of healthy family background and existential problem.
In addition, husband-wife conflict and failure in love and marriage naturally sprout from the clash between male-ego and female pride. Adultery and incest are the outcome of this clash thereby sowing the seed for broken marriage. In Namita Gokhale’s novels all marriages seem to fail because her women do not like to toe the line of the traditionalists and conformists. A marriage is successful if the wife does not raise any question to whatever her husband is doing. If the wife assumes her husband’s happiness as her own happiness and her husband’s sorrow as her own sorrow, then she can guarantee her marriage a success. In order to make marriage a success the wife will and should be supportive to her husband, and she should silently and continually scarify her self, joy, individuality to be an inseparable part of her husband’s life and experience. But, in contrast, very often the husband conceals his own fault and puts the blame on woman when there is misunderstanding in their relation. Men think that wives should be loyal, faithful, sacrificing, enduring while they are free to do anything they want. It is because men have been conditioned for centuries with the patriarchal concept that ‘men make houses women make homes’. Any attempt on the part of women to alter or reverse this given role will disturb the equilibrium resulting in conflict, disintegration and failure in marriage.

Through the tragic story of Shakuntala, Namita Gokhale is showing the plight and predicament of a barren woman in a family where the position of a
wife is honoured only when she bears sons. Srijan neglects Shakuntala just because she is unable to conceive his child. It is because of this fear that forces Srijan to lure another woman into his arms secretly so as to get a son, an heir. Namita Gokhale is strongly displeased with such narrow-minded attitude of Indian male toward barren women. That is why she makes Shakuntala elope with another man regardless of her long-awaited pregnancy. What she does is to devalue and demythologize the act of conception if the woman has to suffer rejection, humiliation, deception and desertion of her husband for not becoming a mother. Shakuntala cannot forgive Srijan for destroying the peace and harmony, hopes and aspirations of her married life. So she abandons her husband, pollutes her body and destroy her own life becoming a fallen woman. Regarding Shakuntala tragic life a critic rightly comments:

In fact a woman is not only the symbol of zeal and beauty but also the symbol of great toughness. But still the fact remains that she has been treated as subsidiary. Therefore, she has been considered as the object of pity.²

A traditional minded person may think Shakuntala’s renouncement of wifely status, material comfort, rich husband as an act of madness and foolishness. But in this act of madness Namita Gokhale reflects the stubborn and
uncompromising aspects in the nature of a sensitive woman. In addition, by the
delineation of such a woman character as Sakuntala Namita Gokhale is able to
destroy or deconstruct the myth of motherhood by which a woman is free of the
patriarchal concept that by making a woman mother man is able to exert power
over woman, and thus perpetuate domestication of woman. To be a woman free
of the myth of motherhood is to achieve woman’s free will.

Namita Gokhale’s women deserve a thorough study as they hold the
centre stage in the structure of each of her novels. They attract the attention of
the readers by their way of expressing their pains, dreams and problems hopes
and desires. Her women characters have been endowed with the tendency to
fight against the male oppressions. So in characteristics and in manners, Namita
Gokhale’s women belong to the group of ‘New Woman’. They are mostly
untraditional and want to deconstruct the conformity of the patriarchal society.
They struggle to safeguard their individual identity and to go parallel with their
male counterparts.

Love and marriage cannot fasten a woman to the feet of an inconsiderate
and haughty husband. So, in Namita Gokhale’s novels most marriages end up in
separation, divorce and death except the marriage of Suresh and Priya which is
also totally void of emotion and understanding. There is nothing like stability or
constancy in love and marriage for each of the pairs – Paro-B.R, Priya-Suresh, Gudiya-Kalki, Parvati-Lalit, Rachita-Anand and Shakuntala-Srijan. So in Namita Gokhale’s novels we do not find the stereotypical storyline of two lovers falling in love and uniting in marriage. The Cinderella story of meek and submissive girl chosen by a Prince Charming as his wife with the ending ‘they lived happily ever after’ goes in contrast to the ending of Namita Gokhale’s novels. Most of her stories are tragic with the evocation of the feelings of pity and fear for the pain and suffering of her women protagonists. As long as there is complexity of inferior/superior position between the sexes, the class and caste distinction in the society there will be conflict and disintegration in the human relationships causing failure in love and marriage.

Such is the vision of Namita Gokhale, a novelist with a distinct character and sensibility of being a feminist under in her own right. She is burdened with the strange and multifaceted dimension of women’s problems woman face in a traditional Indian society, where social and economic forces taking place change the attitude, mind and preoccupation of both man and woman. Women need to exist in face of the changes and thus they have felt the necessity to comply with and counter the changes the traditional angel like woman picture a stereotype. Some of them – in the gallery of women characters – act overtly in sexual matters corresponding to the demand of the moment for each of them is
a dancer dancing to the tune of the time. That way, and this is why Namita Gokhale tends to hold the ground with a spirit of contemporaneity on the Indian literary scene.
NOTES
