

## Chapter- II

### The Himalayan Love Story

*The Himalayan Love Story* by Namita Gokhale goes deep into the psyche of its characters and brings out that women characters in the play, particularly Parvati, are the victims of circumstances and these women characters suffer a lot because of the circumstances. But at the same time these women characters are in a state of transition. They would like to come out from the shackles of male chauvinism and because of this transition they have made their presence felt in the so called phallogocentric world.

Woman is considered a weaker sex in society and that is why it is deemed that she needs a protector because of her weakness. Man used to be a protector but now this patriarchy stands for the ownership over the seed and therefore he is not limited to a person but he has become an institution and a mindset and in this way he has become the oppressor rather than the protector. As Jasbir Jain says:

The journey from protector to oppressor is not a sudden one even though the history of development and human progress has accelerated this shift. As men and women have moved from one stage to another, from the nomadic to the agrarian, to industrialism and capitalism, and as means of sustenance and methods of governance have changed, the concept of purity of lineage and property have also emerged tightening the hold of the patriarch. This journey is marked by remarkable irony that with the growth in human freedom and wisdom, there have been a corresponding shrinking of women's space

Women's space is shrinking and with this women are mistreated and exploited on the basis of different- different customs and rituals (Jain 14).

Namita Gokhale like modern psychologists observes and analyses various shades of conflicts that she observes in society in her novel *The Himalayan Love Story*. The characters which are picked in her fiction are from different level of society. Particularly she confirms the fact that she analyses the difficulties and problems of female characters.

*The Himalayan Love Story* from the perspective of women. She depicts human passion such as false pride, greed, anger, jealousy, vanity, lustful conduct and perverted love in her fiction *The Himalayan Love Story*.

As far as truthful characterization of her female characters is concerned in the novel, she can be compared to Keats. With her keen insight and knowledge she finds out the truth of her female characters whom she describes very intimately. With the projection of her suffering female characters she would like to redefine the feminine role in our so-called male chauvinistic society. She does not want to see the female characters suffering and twisting. She wants to see her female characters in a luminous light.

Love seems to be a dominant theme in her novel. With this theme the novelist wants to show the hardships of female characters. They are made victims on the name of love. But even then some female characters are shown struggling to break the culturally or traditionally imposed identity on them by asserting their sexual needs and thus they are covertly or overtly trying to establish in this phallogocentric world. It

can be said that Namita Gokhale is the champion of feminine psychology. Relationship ends in failure in her fiction but this is not the end of their lives. They try to overcome these problems and hardships by declaring their individuality and independence. The female characters in the novel are full of loveliness but this loneliness also offers an opportunity to get over the problems and hardships. They think a lot and introspect about what has been done in the past and finds comfort and tries to find out the new way to come out from the traumas, injuries and depression of the life. Another thing that female characters face in the novel is death. Death occupies an important place in the novel and changes the course of action in her novel. In the novel central characters face the death of their near and dear ones.

In the very beginning a sense of emptiness exhibits, when Parvati, the protagonist of the novel, declares that people are not what they appear and they always try to hide the innermost emotions and feelings. Parvati says in her inauguration words:

I have always recognized that I carry an emptiness inside me, although I did not at first understand it. When I was a child, I would look at other faces, at their ordinary expression of laughter and sadness and tears, and wonder at the ease with which they juggled these masks about. All I ever felt was a constant festering sense of anger and unease. I felt trapped inside my skin and bone and circumstances, and for this reason I began at a very early age to avoid people (Gokhale3).

Parvati grows up in Jeolikote which is situated on the road to Nainital. She stays there with her mother in a two room set which is given by her maternal uncle. Unfortunately she is unlucky enough not to have her father who has died because of

tuberculosis. The surrounding of the place, where they live, is extremely splendid but their innermost feeling is completely different from their situation. Parvati remains in a state of fear-stricken from her childhood in Jeolikote. Sometimes she has the fear of rabid dog, other time she is terrorized with man-eating tiger. Once she goes to jungle to collect the fire wood and encounters an imaginary evil spirit and at that moment she feels terror-stricken.

In Jeolikote Parvati is living with her mother in a two room set given by her uncle, Hiranand Joshi. He has to give them the house because he would like to perform his duties as a brother; otherwise their relation is not good. Parvati recounts:

We had nobody who sent money orders to us. My father had died of tuberculosis when I was a year old. I had no brothers and sisters. Our only living relative was my mother's stepbrother, Hiranand Joshi, who was, as I have mentioned, the principal of a school- the Manava Public School- in Nainital. He was a mean and humorless man whom we hated. He despised us in return...(Gokhale5).

Parvati's mother is illiterate. She is not given education because she is a woman and to be educated for a woman is not necessary. Not only this she is married at the age of thirteen and when her husband is only thirty two he dies of tuberculosis and she becomes widow at a young age. Parvati says:

My mother was completely illiterate. She had been married at the age of thirteen to the second son of well-to - do family of Almora, who had quickly spent his entire fortune on gambling and other addictions. When at the age of thirty two he was afflicted with tuberculosis, there was simply no money for his treatment. Mercilessly, he had died without much ado...(Gokhale5-6).

Although Hiranand Joshi insists that Parvati be given education but her mother is against this idea. He sends letter over letter requesting Parvati's mother for Parvati's education. She gracefully accepted the letters but no action has been taken by Parvati's mother as far as imparting education is concerned. She opines:

'It would be different if you were a boy,' she would say angrily, '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 double curse, to be first born a woman then get straddled with another female to provide for!'(Gokhale6)

Almost whole the work is done by women in the Himalayan region. The males are just to supervise what has been done or how it has been done. These males of the area don't do any work they leave the whole work for the fare sex. She here finds the demarcation of roles of sexes and their works. Namita here compares the males and females and thus provides a glimpse of their crushed life where female does the whole work and male sits and observes. He never does anything and always expects the work to be done by the female. Even the male doesn't bother about rearing their young children. Parvati's mother says:

Bees interested me, particularly the segregation of the sexes and the clear demarcation of their roles. I could make sense of it and relate it to my surroundings. Our Pahari men were always crowding around the local tea shops, playing cards or purposefully spitting out tobacco. They were the drones who gratefully left the labor to their women, the thin, hardly *ghasyarans* who balanced incredible heights of fodder and fuelwood on their heads. Personage like Lata sah's mother, with her gold and glass bangles and

her appetite for leftover balls of wood, were the queen bees... they never collect pollen, nor have they any other responsibilities in connection with providing for their young (Gokhale10-11).

Parvati and her mother are living in extreme poverty and when winter begins it worsens their condition because they have to purchase coal and other things that are needed in winter and thus their funds run away in winter and they face the chilling winter. Parvati says, "We huddled next to each other at night, but it was no use. Our teeth would chatter in the cold, and we would console each other by talking about how much colder it must be in Nainital"(Gokhale12).

One day when Parvati is collecting the firewood for the kitchen then she encounters an evil spirit who terrorizes Parvati about her future and Parvati suddenly realizes what she is going to be, "That was the day I realize I was doomed. I had nothing to gain in life; only to lose. I would become like her (evil spirit). My hair would fall off, and my teeth as well, for her madness had called out to mine" (Gokhale15).

During this course of her life she is growing up in Jeolikote she is getting younger day by day. At this moment she observes minutely her mother. She says, "Her skin seemed to regain an earlier, remembered sheen, and the fine nest of wrinkles around her eyes all but disappeared. Her gait, too, had changed; there was a rhythm to it that nobody who knew anything about these things could have missed" (Gokhale 12). One day when Parvati returns home, she finds that her mother is not at home. When she goes down to the Kirana shop and finds it also locked. But when she is turning back suddenly she hears scurrying sound coming from within. First she suspects about the mice but later on she observes that it is not the sound of mice and

other things but it is the sound of her mother and lecherous shopkeeper Shrikrishanji. One day she finds herself balancing precariously on a pile of rubbish, peeping in through a broken side window and says:

I have never understood why, but I was not at all surprised to see my mother in Shrikrishanji's arms. They seemed very happy and intimate together. There was a lot of ticking and giggling and laughter. The shopkeeper extracted a liquor bottle from his coat pocket and glugged a good part of it down. Then, only half-jokingly, he offered it to Mother. To my absolute horror, she took it, and, giggling like a schoolgirl, actually put it to her lips and drank. My world was shattered. People were not as they appeared. There was another life behind their masks. These cavorting figures were no better than ghosts- they belonged to a nightmare. I shut my eyes tightly, willing them to disappear, but they were no wraiths; my mother and our tenant stood before me in the flash, their true nature unmasked (Gokhale16-17).

At this spot Parvati feels alienated. She feels that people are not what they appear. They often disguise and they do not want to show what they are in reality. Such is the case she discerns when she encounters her mother. When she sees her mother in Shrikrishanji's arms she gets disturbed. She feels loneliness but she never shows her aloofness to her mother. On the other hand Parvati's mother who is indulged in amorous activities with the shopkeeper does not give much attention to her daughter. She gives much attention to herself. As Parvati says, "Her skin seemed to regain an earlier, remembered sheen, and the fine nest of wrinkles around her eyes all but disappeared. Her gait, too, had changed; there was rhythm to it that nobody who knew anything about these things could have missed" (Gokhale12).

Parvati's father dies of tuberculosis when Parvati is just one year old. Since then Parvati and her mother are living in a two-room-set given by Hiranand Joshi, her maternal uncle. She does not have any brothers and sisters. She is the lone daughter of her parents. In such kind of situation it becomes very difficult to a lady to survive. Her mother does not have any source of income so that she can survive. Her brother has given them a two room-set and below it a shop which is hired by Hiranand Joshi. He timely gives them rent and with the help of that rent she survives and drags her household somehow. Financially she gets help from her brother who lets them collect the rent of the shop but she also has bodily needs because her husband has died so many years before. When she encounters Shrikrishanji a feeling of love arises in her heart. She does not think about anything and indulges in amorous activities to fulfill her innermost desires. She is living in such kind of society where there is an iota of chance of remarriage. Even when a woman becomes widow she is not allowed to take part in marriage which is considered an auspicious occasion, how can we expect from such society that will allow Parvati's mother to indulge in such sort of love making. But she flouts each and every set rules and regulation laid down by our so called good society. She indulges in love making whenever she finds time. Not only this Parvati also observes through the peep hole that her mother is drinking alcohol which our society thinks is made of phallocentric world but Parvati's mother does not think about this and drinks. Once Parvati defines:

Then I heard the unmistakable sound of a woman's laughter. Because I had never before heard my mother laugh, I did not realize at that time that it was her...I have never understood why, but I was not a all surprised to see my mother in Shrikrishanji's arms. They seemed very happy and intimate together. There was a lot of tickling and giggling and laughter. The



shopkeeper extracted a liquor bottle from his coat pocket and glugged a good part of it down. Then, only half-jokingly, he offered it to Mother. To my absolute horror, she took it, and, giggling like a schoolgirl, actually put it to her lips and drank (Gokhale16).

At this stage, like a traditional girl, Parvati feels alienated because of her mother's activities and her mother who is extremely orthodox in giving education to her daughter is utmost modern when she loves the shopkeeper and Parvati feels shattered and thinks that people are not what they appear. They have a mask through which it is too difficult to discern. Parvati is too disturbed that she would like to soo away the scenes but time and again they appear before her like a nightmare and she sees her mother and the tenant in the flesh.

Parvati suffers a lot because of her mother's behavior. She feels alienated and aloof but surprisingly her mother is too busy in love making with the shopkeeper that she gives a little heed to her own daughter. She is enjoying her life to the full and on the other hand Parvati is suffering because no one takes her care. Things begin to heal only after the shopkeeper's departure. After his departure once again her mother loses her shining and lustful gait as Parvati says, "After his departure, things began to heal between my mother and me. She began to look as she had used to: the lines around her eyes returned, and she was suddenly older, thinner, more fragile than she had ever been" (Gokhale19).

Parvati's mother falls ill suddenly and because of poverty she is not sent to any hospital. They rarely visit Nainital where Hiranand Joshi lives. But this time she finds no option left and goes there. Like a dedicated brother he comes in her rescue and sends her to the TB sanatorium in Bhowali. But after some time her mother leaves

the world and Parvati's life also changes with this. She is shifted to Hiranand Joshi's house at Nainital. Hitherto Parvati who is a traditional girl gains modernity at Hiranand Joshi's house where she becomes friendly with some students and teachers who generally visit Hiranand Joshi who is a principal. Parvati of Nainital is completely different from the Parvati of Jeolikote. She not only becomes friendly with Mukul Nainwal but she sees herself through his eyes, as a beautiful young woman. Parvati says about herself at one place:

The Parvati who had lived with her mother in Jeolikote had receded deep into the past, and a merry young creature had set up camp inside me... I was preoccupied with my physical self. I blotted my lips with geranium petals to make them red and bought myself an eyebrow pencil to augment my scanty brows. I even tried to induce a beauty spot on my right cheek, using a combination of black ink and eyebrow pencil... (Gokhale 22-23).

Parvati is modern girl now. She does not think about future and past. She is in dire need of love and at that moment she sees Salman Siddiqui who teaches history to the senior classes and dazzled by his beauty. When Parvati pesters Masterji for help with her history homework then Masterji who does not have time to teach directs her to seek help from Salman Siddiqui who likes to teach history. One afternoon Masterji leaves them alone in the drawing room at Wee Nooke to pursue the study of history. At that moment Parvati reveals what happened in her own words:

Salman did not put up any pretence of teaching of teaching me; he pulled me into his arms and we tumbled into a long, passionate kiss. My whole body seemed to soar into a new, separate plane of being. The texture of Salman's mouth in mine, the thumping of our two hearts, united for those few minutes

into a single beat- nothing in my life, no previous joy or pleasure, had prepared me for my first kiss. I was caught completely unawares by the devastating bliss. Eating a sweet squelchy gulabjamun, biting into a fresh fragrant apple, clambering up a khumani tree, with the blue sky above and the hard pliant branch beneath my legs, pretending I was riding a horse- nothing in my meager experience of physical pleasure had ever predicted such ecstasy... by now entire body was afire, all discretion had abandoned me. I clung desperately to him (Gokhale24).

Like her mother who makes love to Shrikrishanji, the shopkeeper Parvati also makes love to her history teacher Salman Siddiqui. Like a bold modern girl she does not think what she is doing and what is her future with Salman but she goes on to do it just to satiate her desires like her mother. She does not want to live in dreams now she considers herself free from all social restriction and live life on her own terms and conditions like a demystified girl. Although Salman Siddiqui does not talk about the future with Parvati but even then Parvati does not want to leave him. She also knows very well about their future. She knows that both of them are playing a shadow game and they also know that there is nothing in the relationship but even they would like to drag on the relation. As Parvati says:

However, although he was most enthusiastic about getting his hands on me whenever possible, Salman never talked of a future or of a life together. We were playing a shadow game, and the most precious ingredient of our passion was that the both of us sensed that it was not permanent (Gokhale29).

After some time Salman disappears secretly and no one know where he has gone. One day she comes to know that he has gone to Bombay but Parvati does feel

so much because she is well aware about this happening one day. She also thinks that their meeting is just like a shadow and now this shadow has gone to some forgotten place. After his departure to Bombay she indulges in the activities of flirting with Mukul Nainwal who is the student of Hiranand Joshi. Like a modern girl she does not remorse at the loss of Salman but immediately she seeks love in Mukul Nainwal. He now appears a balm to her heart. She also enjoys with the company of Mukul Nainwal and Lalit Joshi like a modern girl. She goes to cinema and enjoys picnic in the company of her these two friends. She is inclined more towards Mukul Nainwal than Lalit Joshi but she feels a set-back when she comes to know that she is going to get married with Lalit Joshi whom she considers a boy and she deems herself a woman. But she tolerates all these things brave heartedly and gets ready to marry with that boy whom his maternal uncle chooses the best match for Parvati. Although inwardly Parvati has feelings for Mukul Nainwal but she does not oppose her maternal uncle Hiranand Joshi. As Parvati says, “Masterji wanted me off his hands. He had done his duty, and it was time for me to do mine” (Gokhale32).

A great set-back Parvati feels when the spouses meet after marriage. They cannot consummate their married life. She once says:

At night we slept beside each other on the narrow bed like hostile strangers. Sometimes by accident his hand brushed against mine, or my leg would entangle with his. We both treated such chance encounters with cold courtesy... life within the fabric of a joint family was so tightly enmeshed that the opportunities for us to know or understand each other were extremely limited (Gokhale34).

After some time Parvati and Lalit Joshi settles in Bareilly and Mukul is planning to visit Bareilly in the course of an official tour and he hopes that he can spend some time together. But her spouse cannot tolerate all this and when he sees the letter written by Mukul he gets angry as she says:

His handwriting quickly changed to an unfathomable rage. This look in his eyes when he turned to face me made me wince, and his slap sent me hurtling across the small room. Parvati suffers a lot because of Lalit Joshi. He found the letter lying on my dressing table. The expression of delight when he recognized Mukul's handwriting quickly changed to an unfathomable rage. The look in his eyes when he turned to face me made me wince; his slap sent me hurtling across the room. I fell over the cheap wooden settee; as I struggled to get up he made for me again. 'How dare you!' he screamed, his eyes dilated with anger and hatred. 'You prying whore!' (Gokhale35).

After that particular incident a sense of physical and bodily fear takes hold of her and she starts sleeping on the floor. Even after over a year she is no nearer to consummating the marriage and at that moment she realizes that she will never consummate the marriage. A week after when Mukul arrives, a woman in Parvati asserts her to look beautiful and Mukul's arrival is a balm to her heart. Now Parvati is so broken that she cannot help thinking her past when she was just like a princess and Mukul and Lalit were just like pageboys. She says:

I thought of those long-ago days in Nainital, when the two of them had attended upon me like pageboys and paid me homage; when I was a princess and Salmlan my prince. Which one of us would have foreseen this corruption of hope and happiness? (Gokhale 36-37).

Mukul visits and Parvati becomes happy but this happiness is short lived. After his return to his new posting, the same things resumes again between Parvati and Lalit. Parvati now spreads her matting out to the kitchen and he makes no comment on her new arrangement. A married woman is assigned so many duties in India which are to be performed decently by woman. If she flouts the rules and regulations of the assigned roles, she is deemed a bad woman. It is said by our so called phallocentric world. As far as these duties are concerned Parvati performs all duties without speaking even a word. Her maternal uncle Hiranand Joshi timely reminds her about all these duties by writing letter. 'I trust' he wrote, with a note of prophetic warning, that you will never show that over-masculine attitude to life which your dear departed mother sometimes demonstrated.

She feels so alienated and depressed in her life that she does not bother about her looks. We get hurt when we see that her family members do not care for her. They do not pay any heed to her as she says:

They did not notice, for instance, that I had grown slatternly about my looks; I no longer took the trouble to oil my hair or to comb it down. I was increasingly indifferent about my clothes and the soles of my feet had become so cracked that I found it difficult to even walk around the house (Gokhale39).

Life seems to her extreme burden on her heart and mind. She accepts everything like a traditional woman. She is broken inside. No one comes to console her. Even at this stage the condition is this she feels safe in Lalit Joshi's house when he eats her cooking. She remains like a strange and mute animal in his house that does not comment but bears each and everything. But at that moment Lalit's younger brother Raju reaches Bareilly. He has reached Bareilly in search of a job but

unconsciously he gives happiness to Parvati. When he finds Parvati lying on the floor of the kitchen, he is least surprised and responds, “Is this a lover’s quarrel or has my respected brother’s hatred of the fair sex finally asserted itself?”(Gokhale40).

Once again Raju visits the kitchen and makes love with Parvati. She was longing for the physical love since her marriage. This physical love resuscitates a new Parvati in her. She is desperately waiting for the love. She reveals her love making in these words:

Time stood still as he lay down beside me. I felt his cool skin against my face. I gasped in terror as our breaths met. Then, strangely, I was revived, resuscitated; boldly I reached out and held his hand. We lay together and stared at the cobwebs on the ceiling. The harsh moonlight that streamed in from the skylight lit them and made them beautiful. An urgency invaded my body; I looked at his tender young face, which was not a mask, he had not then the smell of the other; he was an ally, he was like me, we were both lonely, our needs possessed us, and we made uncompromising, uncomplicated love (Gokhale42-43).

Parvati who was so forlorn and lonely starts grooming herself to look beautiful even after Raju’s departure. She starts combing the hair and sings songs to herself when she washes the clothes. The cracks on her hills get cured. But her happiness comes to an end very soon when she comes to know that her husband Lalit is suffering from tuberculosis. By the time he becomes patient of tuberculosis she starts loving him. She takes care of him in those hard days. She faces heart crushing scene when doctor says, “Your husband has what we call “galloping consumption”. There is very little medicine science can do for this condition. We can only advise

complete rest- mental and physical rest”(Gokhale46). After that Parvati plans to treat him at Bhowali sanatorium. She tries very hard to raise money but before money can be collected Lalit takes his last breath. The already heart- broken Parvati now feels more forlorn and inwardly broken. She has no one in this world who she can say hers. Two things simultaneously happen at this juncture. One is Lalit’ death and another is Raju’s marriage. Lalit’s family does not want to postpone Raju’s marriage but unfortunately she is denied to take part in the auspicious occasion of marriage because of being a widow. Being a widow in the world is curse that Parvati faces. She is sent to Hiranand Joshi’s home. While making tea for Hiranand she becomes faint and when she is taken to the hospital, it comes fore that she is pregnant. But by this time she has gone mad. Once Parvati laments:

I wept a lot, sometimes I screamed. The doctors came again. They could not understand what I was saying. I was calling out to my mother, I needed her but she was not there. The nurse came with injections. Hiranand Headmaster looked sterned and disapproving. ‘You have baby to think about, Parvati,’ he said sternly. ‘You must try to get well.’ The medicines made me sleep. I ate a lot. My body was bloated beyond recognition. Sometimes I laughed without reason (Gokhale49).

All these incidents clearly prove that Parvati cannot bear the traumas of her life. Although she tries her best to overcome these traumas like a bold lady but ultimately concedes defeat and goes mad. In the very inception of the novel we see that Parvati is a meek type of lady but later on she transforms herself into a brave, bold, assertive, and modern woman who does not think a lot over each and everything. When she loves Salman Siddique, she does not think about her future with him. When he goes to Mumbai leaving her alone, she does not bother about his



missing. She starts flirting with Mukul and forgets Salman. She makes love with Raju and does not take it seriously. He becomes the biological father of the girl whom Parvati gives birth, but she takes it light heartedly. All these incidents evidently prove that Parvati is a modern girl and then she becomes a modern wife who performs adultery. But ails Parvati is the series of death. From the very beginning to the end death occupies her life. This series of death moves her inwardly. Eventually when she loses her homosexual husband, then she feels heart-broken and finds her all alone and finally she becomes so. She tries her best to prove herself as a modern woman but the circumstances don't allow her to live her life happily and finally we see that she goes mad bearing all the traumas of her life.

As far as feminism is concerned in Indian context, still Indian women are languishing. They still try to be the equal partner in each and every field but the patriarchal set-up doesn't allow them. As Lorna Hutson says:

'Women' wrote Jacob Burckhardt in 1860, 'stood on a footing of perfect equality with men' in the culture of the Italian Renaissance. There was, he went on to claim, 'no question of "women's rights" or female emancipation, simply because the thing itself was a matter of course...The same intellectual and emotional development which perfected the man was demanded for the perfection of the woman (Hutson1).

On the basis of above minute observations it can be delineated that women want equal status, equal opportunities, and all and sundry things equal to men. They try to seek freedom and justice and thus they will be able to grope an idyllic state for themselves. In such an idyllic state they can assert their dignity and freedom. Once they get this state they will observe equal rights, and equal opportunities and if this

happens then it will be considered that their dignity is honored and they get for what they are aspiring(equality and dignity).

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