

Q. Identity Crisis in Namita Gokhale's "Shakuntala: The Play of Memory".

OR

Q. Explore the idea how the women have engaged in their own enslavement n liberation.(2019)

Namita Gokhale in her novels has depicted the problems and difficulties faced by her female characters and has shown how they tackle these adverse situations. Her novels reveal her keen concern for the welfare of women are the central characters and the narrative is primarily concerned with what is observed, felt and experienced. Gokhale's novel Shakuntala : The play of memory, presents the protagonist, shakuntala as a victim of cultural conditionings prevalent in Indian social set-up and also portrays her varied responses to the society she lives in. The novel reveals the woman's quest for self-identity, an exploration into the female psyche and efforts taken by the protagonist for self-assertion.

Gokhale in her novels has not only portrayed women who are suffers but also who try to break the set traditional norms. **Shakuntala** , the central character and narrator of the novel, was neglected in her childhood, as her mother is all focussed on her son. She yearns to be learned like her brother who becomes a Hindu saint, learning the scriptures. She gathers knowledge by talking and wandering in the mountainous regions of India. Her spirit and mute courage served as an impetus to the challenges confronted by her. Long before her mother died she had for given her for her nagging, her unspeakable partiality to her **brother, Guresvara**. She swallowed the pain and jealousies like a bitter potion, a medicine which strengthens. In spite of that she provided comfort to her brother against the fear of demons.

Shakuntala was hungry for experience and had a quest for knowledge. As a child this desire unfolded itself when she wished she were a kite. Which could flutter in wind and view all the lands below. Her marriage to **Srijan** had made impossible to maintain. Suffered by social custom, hungry for experience, she left home and family for the company of a Greek horse merchant, **Nearchus**, whom she meets by the river Ganga. Together they travel far and wide and surrender to unbridled pleasure, as Shakuntala assumes the identity of **Yaduri**, the fallen woman. Here again Shakuntala is shown to have broken the convention where by traditionally an Indian married woman is expected to be loyal and faithful to her husband till her death. But Shakuntala in her quest for identity, experience and knowledge breaks the traditional norms. Here the novelist seems to suggest that if a woman desires, she can choose her own path.

For her now, the world was a wild and wondrous place. Together they travelled and reach **Kashi**, the destination that Shakuntala had always ached to arrive at. They had to stay in foreigner's quarter which were located on the other side of the river. Shakuntala adjusted herself to the changed circumstances with ease.

Shakuntala now felt regret and desired to return in the Mountain,her home, which she mentioned as her real Kashi.With an unfulfilled desire to return in her home dies in Kashi, the city of her longing.A thorough study of Gokhale's novel shows her perceptive portrayal of secret depths of the human psyche. Her novel constitutes a broad, encompassing feminist vision which visualizes a rightful place women in the patriarchal society. It deals with a psychological study of her female characters inner state. It provides a panoramic view of the development of feminist issues related to women, and embodies a new vision of feminism. She wants women to be self-sufficient for living with self-respect. Women in her novels emerge as individuals challenging their existential survival. She has been successful in catching the whole woman alive in terms of feelings, intellect and emotions.
