

# The Validity of the Novels of Shobha De and Namita Gokhale in the Changing Scenario

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## Abstract

Shobha De and Namita Gokhale are not the newcomers in the field of writing. Both artists have been the journalists, so they know the art of writing. Through their novels they answer a very important question, “How to live?” In this male dominated society their female characters are making their own place and proving that they are not mere subordinates to men. According to **Mary Wollstonecraft** rather than mere ornaments to society or property to be traded in marriage, women are human beings deserving of the same fundamental rights as men. **Virginia Woolf** asserted in “**A Room of one’s own**” that how patriarchal society prevented women from realizing their productive & creative potential, so they need freedom. But in the name of women liberation or freedom both Shobha De and Namita Gokhale don’t allow illicit or extra marital relationship.

**Keywords:** Virginia Woolf, Mary Wollstonecraft, how to live.

## Introduction

Because both of the artists have completely neglected the facts of two world wars, Shobha De and Namita Gokhale are quite aware of their limitations and never follow the example of Vladimir Nabokov and George Orwell. Both these writers don't represent political concepts like imperialism, magic realism, fascism, Nazism, Leninism, etc. since they don't want to blend politics and fiction in their works. Political ideologies like idealism, individualism, utilitarianism, Stalinism, post-colonialism, etc. are not given much weight by them at the same time. They are not propagandists, since towards the end of their books; they have no desire to have their opinions to be adopted. The fundamentals of The Gita, can be felt in the novels like **Shakuntala: The Play of Memory, Gods, Graves, and Grandmother**. In the Gita, Lord Krishna exhorts Arjuna to maintain his freedom and objectivity in order to put an end to his suffering. On earth, one must consistently work out of love. Everyone has been given specific tasks to complete in the given circumstances, and inactivity is not permitted. Lord Krishna informs Arjuna that because mankind are strangers on this planet, it is not their permanent home. The illusions of one's parents, relatives, and friends extend beyond the self. In **Shakuntala: The Play of Memory**, Shakuntala's brother is taught that death is just as real as life. In her works, Namita Gokhale promotes virtues such as honesty, forbearance, non-violence, tolerance, luck, mercy, prudence, kindness, detachment, etc. She condemns lechery and greed at the same time and violence, deception, ego, pride, rage, lust and possessiveness, among other things. In her writings, Shobha De also makes reference to the ridiculous outcomes of possessiveness, ego, pride, lechery, intolerance, greed, manipulation, deception, etc. Despite accepting the ethical function of art, they should not be seen as preachers or saints. In actuality, their works provide answers to the question, "**How to live?**" They never display a

disregard for moral principles.

Namita Gokhale has lived a life of sorrow since her husband's death. She has never surrendered to the obstacles. For her, life is everything, and death is nothing. As a journalist, she has her own style and is selective about the subjects she writes about. She naturally refuses to follow the publishers' orders because she has her own preferred topic. She creates novels for today's audience. She fully understands the art of narrative development, the distinction between flat and round characters, and the significance of direct and dynamic conversations because she is an artist. She is aware of the value of portraying reality realistically because she has read a variety of novels. She is aware that epic served as the inspiration for the work. She, too, like Shobha De, has lived in major cities like Bombay, Lucknow, Delhi, etc., making her familiar with urban residents' hardships. She is aware of the disparity between the rich and the poor without a doubt. She has shared moral tales with the public, much like Richardson and Jane Austen. She has discussed sex in her writings, just like D.H. Lawrence. She has experience writing social comedies, much like Jane Austen did. She paints readers' sympathies for the plight of the impoverished, much like Dickens did.

In **The Book of Shiva** Indian mythology is a subject that attracts Namita Gokhale. She is intrigued by the Puranas, the Vedas, and numerous Lord Shiva-related stories. She mentions the principles of Dharma, Arth, Kama, and Moksh. She considers Lord Shiva to be the supreme spiritual force as she seeks His blessings:

**Let us meditate on Lord Shiva, the supreme ascetic. He wears the crescent moon on his forehead, from which flows the celestial river Ganga. The river represents the ceaseless flux of time and is the embodiment of the nurturing life-force. Shiva's body is smeared with ash and a tiger skin is girt around his loins. Of his four arms, one carries a trident, one an axe and other two are set in classical mudras, granting boons and removing fear.**<sup>1</sup> (BS, 5)

She states in The Book of Shiva:

**I am writing this book as an act of devotion, not presumption. The mythopoetic mind assign attributes of a saguna, qualified god, is therefore completely different from the non-attributes of a Nirguna, non qualified god. Hindu divinity gives us an infinite variety and hierarchy of gods and goddesses to worship and aspire to, so that we may seek the version of Saguna reality most suited to the accidental permutations of our personality and situations.**<sup>2</sup> (BS, 7)

Namita Gokhale shares Pythagoras' belief in the rebirth and soul-transmigration theories. She witnessed the suffering of prostitutes in Bombay. She mocks hypocrites, just like Pope and Swift. She stays within her comfort zone and shares her experiences with her readers, just like R.K. Narayan. Namita Gokhale writes unconventional books. It is commonly known that she has refused to pen a single word solely for artistic purposes. She recognizes the novel as a genre, which is why her writings entertain while also imparting knowledge. She shares her mission with the public through her novels. She examines the modern social circumstances and environment as a 21st century artist. She rebels against prevailing ideas about slums, poverty, prostitution, disease, parliamentary democracy, the wealth gap, etc. as a rebel.

Her books promote her life philosophy, which aims to improve the world. She piques peoples' interest in the core social, political, and economic issues facing modern civilization. Shobha De was aware of her limits from the start of her literary career. **A Room of One's Own by Virginia Woolf**, however, teaches her a lot. She has her own method for developing narrative skill, just as Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, George Eliot, Mrs. Gaskell, the Bronte Sisters, and others. Once she had received a request from **David**

**Davidar** to write her memoirs. She never intended to put down her life's recollections because she was over 50 at the time. As she is penning her autobiography, she experiences-

**I was readying myself to turn into a monster. It was going to happen the moment I took up my standard writing pad, scribbled the date on the first page, muttered a short prayer to “Ganesh” and wrote the first words. Something awful would happen to me. It always did. And for the next year, I’d become insufferable. For a woman a book in progress is like a secret lover she has to hide from her family. Steal time to go back to. Dream about. It’s a guilty secret she can’t share with anybody. There is a sense of regret- you can’t make love to a book to talk to it. And yet the secret thrill of each encounter provides a high. The book makes you feel desirable, sexy, beautiful, interesting. It’s better than the best sex.<sup>3</sup> (SM, 2)**

Here, she tells her readers about her experiences:

**I don’t know how others are affected by the process but I become an intensely obsessive and preoccupied person. I feel resentful of each second taken away from the writing ritual. My existence is consumed by the act itself. It gets to a point where the pressure is physical, not merely mental. An unbearable pain reverberates through the entire body. The mind starts racing faster than the fingers can keep up. That in turn becomes a cause for frustration. A sense of desperation and urgency dominates every walking hour. I can’t concentrate on anything, not even crucial conversations. So much concentration takes its toll.<sup>4</sup> (SM, 3).**

Conflicts assist them to develop their concepts. They depict both the external and internal personalities of many persons. However, they are successful as artists by examining the emotions, fervour, and conflicts of their society. They describe the mentality of the modern, educated women of liberated India as feminists. Shobha De and Namita Gokhale depict the socioeconomic environment of today as they experience it. They typically like to read books and write for periodicals. They are very aware of the past and present because they are realists. After all, the past is unrecoverable. The past cannot be relived. However, the past occasionally comes back to haunt them. Shobha De reveals:

**I’d been so busy living in the present, the past had been all but obliterated. I had no time for it. No real interest in it. My attitude had consistently been forward looking. I’d arrived at fifty in a flurry, with a surge that was still propelling me at breakneck speed towards my tomorrows. Fifty, so different from forty.<sup>5</sup> (SM, 9)**

They accept life's brutality and do not fear man's world since they are mature artists. Why to be vain and foolish? Why should we feel tired in this foul world? Why not move forward in hopes of a great future? Shobha De opined:

**I wasn’t frightened. Not at all. Just as I’d only recently overcome my life-long fear of the dark and no longer needed a night-lamp in the room. I felt ready for the remaining stretch. I was willing to give it my best shot- never mind how I placed. The victory stand had ceased to be important. I used to desperately want to be there on it- and only in one position, the top place of frequently succeeded in getting to. The top- comforting, comfortable and on-so-familiar. I’d been spoilt. I’d started to believe it was the only spot for me. Foolish, vain, arrogant, it didn’t matter anymore. It was not resignation or fatigue prompting me to acknowledge this. Rather it was sweet acceptance.<sup>6</sup> (SM, 10)**

Shobha De once said:

**I’m certain I’m repeating the patterns myself. My children insist I’m suspicious of all their friends and actively hate them. It’s true I’m not the “Hello Beta. How are you darling?” kind of mom. I**

rarely welcome strangers into our home. It takes me a long time to accept stubble-faced, earring-wearing young men in tattered jeans- and I don't care whether they are from the top university in the world, with a string of impressive degrees to their names. I tell myself I'm being horrible. But I don't change.<sup>7</sup> (SM, 29)

They understand the value of concision and expansion because they are journalists. If something unimportant occurs, they skip months or even years. When anything significant occurs, they go into great detail about it. They are never inspired to produce lengthy novels.

In their novels, they criticize those who act carelessly. They frequently wonder, "**What is the purpose of art?**" Will the public like whatever they write? They pique people's attention in the social, political, and economic issues that face society and persuade them of the worth of moral principles through their realistic depictions. They critique life as they are artists. They assert that inflation is increasing. In general, they claim that India has advanced greatly economically. But the government has been unable to stop the price increase. Sambhunath Mishra serves as the vehicle through which Namita Gokhale parodies Indian politicians in **Paro: Dreams of Passion**. Much like Bharati Mukharjee and V. S. Naipaul, they speak out against profiteering, fierce rivalry, expanding capitalism, poor economic planning, and social disintegration,. Namita Gokhale has earned a solid reputation as a proponent of secularism. How can morality be imparted to the underprivileged? She discusses members of many religions in **Gods, Graves, and Grandmother** in order to make a point about the value of action and liberty.

### Conclusion

Shobha De and Namita Gokhale can thus be praised for their imaginative reading and writing. They retain the causal relationship between cause and consequence in their writings. They never add unnecessary characters only to fill up the pages of a book. They make their case for women's equality for a variety of reasons. Adopting the Buddha's philosophy, they hold the belief that self is above both suffering and pleasure,. Their writings clearly bear the influence of classical literature from ancient India. They are outstanding artists of the twenty-first century because they inspire readers to consider current events. They make connections between literature and mythology, culture, and society.

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