



## Hollowness of life in A Himalayan Love Story

Urmila Sharma<sup>1\*</sup>, J. K. Sharma<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor of English, PIG. Govt. College for Women, Jind, Haryana, INDIA

<sup>2</sup>HOD, Department of English, B. M. U. Rohtak, Haryana, INDIA

\*Corresponding Author Email: [urmilvashishta1976@gmail.com](mailto:urmilvashishta1976@gmail.com)

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**ABSTRACT:** Namita Gokhale has contributed for the upliftment of human life. Through her pen, she has diagnosed the problems of contemporary society which are the result of degradation of human values. Today man and woman both are economically and socially sound but moral degradation has shattered the real motive of life. The objective of this paper is to explore the fact that moral values are not the fetters of life but they give rise to those dimensions which take life to a new height. Parvati's life exhibits the negative aspects of hollowness. How the emptiness made Parvati 's normal life to embark upon the wrong track. At an early age a child imbibes only humane aspects but as he grows, his surroundings inculcate in him the selfish motives. Parvati was also an innocent child who used to build the palace from pine cones. For imbibing desirable and undesirable habits, the family and society both are equally responsible. Here, the aim of Namita Gokhale is not to tell a fiction just for entertainment. The novel motivates us to think the value of true relationships which is hidden inside the story. The novel expounds the significance of emotions, sentiments and values in life. Namita Gokhale has tried to assure her readers that materialistic world is not the goal of life. Man is born with a definite purpose and to get it, he has to think beyond the worldly attachment and illusions.

**KEYWORDS:** Hollowness, Embark, Humane, Inculcate, imbibe, dimensions

Freedom from threats to personal reliability makes a person self centered as we observe in case of Parvati in *A Himalayan Love Story*. If a person is composite of body, mind and spirit, then why the evilness of lust dominates upon the mortal life. *A Himalayan Love Story* is a story of a girl Parvati who carried the hollowness in the inner core of herself. As the story starts, the very first sentence of Parvati reveals the trait of her personality.

" 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 expressions of laughter and sadness, tears and wonder at the ease with which they juggled these marks about." (Gokhale 3)

The initial part of the story is narrated by Parvati herself which is evidence of the impact of suppressed feelings of a mother Parvati's mother was an illiterate woman who had

been married at the early age of thirteen and became a widow after a few years of her marriage. Being an illiterate woman, her attitude towards the girl education was stereotyped. She imagined only about Parvati's marriage. Parvati's uncle, Hiranand Joshi bought a shop for their financial help. Through Parvati's mother, Namita has explored a physically and emotionally change in a woman due to the sexual gratification. The physical change in Parvati's mother was a sign of the basic need of healthy physical relationship, that can't be ignored.

" Her skin seemed to regain an earlier, remembered sheen, and the fine nest of wrinkles around her eyes all but disappeared." (Gokhale 12)

One cannot ignore the past. It always resides in the memories having connection with conscious and unconscious mind. A man always learns from his past actions and experiences and does not try to repeat former



mistakes as there is a great role of past in shaping the future. Human brain always makes predictions about future. Human brain can easily reduce the gap between experience and expectation. Parvati had never heard her mother's laugh. When she found her mother in the arms of Shri Krishan ji, the shopkeeper with a liquor bottle. All these were beyond expectations. For the first time she came to know that people were not so simple as they appeared. There was another life behind their masks.

“I would hear the sounds of scuffling and the woman's laugh and Shri Krishan ji's voice sounding oddly different behind the locked doors. An all-consuming curiosity took possession of me and one day I found myself balancing precariously on a pile of rubbish, peeping in through a broken side window. ” (Gokhale 16)

A person's character is considered as the essence of his life. The impact of loss of ethics and values are the prime factors responsible for the degeneration of the society. The need is to expose the causes of the loss of ethical and moral values which has been explored by Namita Gokhale in her novel *A Himalayan Love Story*. Parvati's world got demolished behind the mask of her mother. The double-faced life of her mother proved as a nightmare. Keep watching this face of life behind the mask became an obsession and due to this continue obsession, Parvati started to learn how dissembling spirit can overpower a person. The same obsession made her to have intimacy with Salman. After the death of her mother, in her uncle's house she came in contact with Salman Siddiqui, a teacher of history. It was the old possession inside Parvati that did not disallow Salman for pulling her for a kiss.

Both Salman and Parvati were playing a shadow game which was not permanent. He was an employee of Masterji and was playing a game with his niece. Parvati told Salman the need for secrecy. It was the same trick of Hide and Seek that Parvati had used in case of her mother in order to keep the mystery of her mother's relation with tenant. Her relation with Salman was just a time pass. He left her without saying anything else. Parvati did not show any disappointment on his departure. Their relationship was not based on love, it was their lust which was a bonding thread. Next to Salman, she enjoyed flirting with Mukul Nainwal Though Mukul had real love for Parvati and even he came to meet Parvati after her marriage with Lalit. The first time Mukul met Parvati in the house of Hiranand Joshi.

Parvati's marriage was fixed with Lalit, Mukul's friend. After marriage Parvati's life became a hell. The inner hollowness which she tried to fill and pacify with Salman become a huge pit. After marriage she came to know the real fact about Lalit that he was a homosexual. Perhaps it was a punishment for Parvati for having illicit relations with Salman before marriage. She also took it as a sin of her mother as her mother too had extra marital affairs with the tenant.

"I wondered if this was God's punishment for my sluttish behaviour with Salman, or if the sins of my mother were being visited on me".(Gokhale 36)

When she saw her husband Lalit having looked at Mukul, his friend with hunger in his eyes. Parvati was shocked. She recalled her first great shock which she received in terms of the deceitful face of her mother, when she stumbled for the first time on hearing her mother's laughter in Shri Krishanji's arms. Even after so many years and after knowing the reality of her husband she did not reveal anything to any person of his family. Lalit's family was a joint family but she was tormented and convinced with the circumstances which her fate had given her. "I had lived like a prisoner of war, constantly spying on the habits and inclinations of my husband" (Gokhale 37).

Lalit kept a obstinate distance from Parvati and she began to suffer from constipation and speechless tension. They slept beside each other but like strangers. Parvati found it difficult to adjust to the barrenness of her married life. In fact, she started to introspect her own self, revealing mysteries that were never known to her. The same theme is projected by Anita Desai in *Fire On The Mountain* in which the character Nanda Kaul is selected by her husband not for the sake of love but to show others. It was clear that Lalit concealed something from the time of Wee Nooke, when Lalit, Mukul and Parvati was in a bond of friendship. Lalit disliked Parvati because he was an evident of Mukul and Parvati's affair. Perhaps he didn't want his dear friend Mukul to love someone else.

Namita Gokhale advocates the notion that unwanted relationships based on compromise cannot pacify anyone else. Nothing fruitful can be obtained in life with a false and emotionless relationship

Idealism and factual life, both are different aspects. Namita Gokhale has not tried to bridge the gap between them. She has honestly explored whatever is true. The deepest psyche of Parvati is exposed to us when she comes in contact with other characters of the novel. Parvati's relation with her mother, with Salman, Lalit and Mukul reveals her true character. Namita Gokhale doesn't talk about idealistic aspects of life, she simply reflects the situations and develops the story. Modern time is the time of technology and modern men and women are facing an era of moral crisis. The hollowness in life is a result of the crisis of values. Parvati's mother spends her time with Krishna ji. Her relation with a shopkeeper exposes the hollowness in life of a widow. Parvati's father died when she was just a child. How difficult it was for a lonely and poor young mother to look after her daughter. But society has nothing to do with all these questions. This novel is actually concerned with harshness that disturb the marital life of Parvati.

After the death of Lalit, the hollowness of Parvati convert her into a crazy woman. Sometime she wept and cried terribly even the doctors were not able to understand what was going on. She reminded her old days with her mother and totally lost in herself when Raju, her brother-in-law and his wife came to visit her she laughed at Raju. There were so many secrets hidden in her laughter. There was a time when she was physically attached with Raju to fill the gap between a wife and a husband. Her laughter reflected a relation between past and present life of Parvati.

“When Raju looked at me his face went white with shock. Guilt and repugnance battled on his face. As for me, I laughed gaily. Masterji looked at me sternly. ‘Why were you laughing like that, Parvati?’ he asked me after they had left. ‘What were you thinking about that was so comic? I started laughing again the laughter felt good. It released me, it shook the black fog that had settled about me, like the soot on the walls in our Kitchen in Jeolikote . The laughter gurgled up anew.” (Gokhale 50)

This truth of life reflects the silence of their burden and sorrows. That’s why Parvati tried to find happiness in the same way as she found it easy just like her mother. The illicit relationship due to which her mother felt happy, the same kind of relationship became the purpose of her life. From her childhood, she knew only one fact that people live with their masks. She took physical pleasure as the only way to fill her emptiness but she was wrong. We are human beings and humanity is the basic instinct. A person cannot live a emotionless life. Parvati’s madness is a proof of the fact that one cannot move on without true relationships.

" The study of man is not a matter of individual virtues and vices. It is auspicious for man to unite himself with his own race and develop human friendship with the members of his own genus. This is necessary because the universe represents an expression of divine knowledge. (VHPTP) 28)

On the other side there are Salman and Mukul. Salman is shown as a character who only took advantage of Parvati. Raju, Lalit's younger brother was a man who always thought about himself. He knew the mystery of relationship between his brother and bhabhi but in spite of having any sympathy for his bhabhi, he himself took the chance. On the other side there is Mukul who had a fatuation for Parvati, before marriage, he performed the role of a page boy for her but never dared to ask Masterji for her in marriage. It was perhaps not his true love rather it was just an attraction. Had he been in love with Parvati, he would have never allowed Lalit to marry her. He knew that Lalit is a homosexual and he can never lead a normal married life. Why didn't he stop Parvati? Why didn't he tell Masterji that Parvati would never be happy with this marriage? Actually, his love was not true. It was his attraction for Parvati. Even after a long time, when he returned Nainital again he imagined Parvati only for his lust.

" I dreamt that Parvati & I were swimming in the lake. We were naked. The green slimy water enveloped our newborn bodies, absolving them of lust or regret. ". (Gokhale 56)

His marriage with Adeleine was just his compromise. He was a very complex man even though he did not attend the funeral of his mother as he did not want to introduce his mother to his wife, Adeleine. As he says

" I had been abroad when my mother died. I did not return to her funeral. I would have been ashamed to introduce my mother to Adeline or to my English mother-in-law, Elaine". (Gokhale 79)

Through the relationship between Mukul and his wife, Namita Gokhale has exposed the false relationship of modern man and woman. Mukul was a romantic person. He indulged with Tibetan girl just for the sake of pleasure. But at that time he felt that his sexuality was a jungle and he was lost in the dark. In the end of the novel, he went back to his wife and stepdaughter leaving Parvati and her helpless daughter. There was a time when his happiness was hidden in the dreams of Parvati but it was the time to go back because he had some responsibilities toward his wife and was bound to fulfill them so he promised Irra, daughter of Parvati that he would always help her whenever there would be any problem but he felt ashamed of his decision. Mukul found himself in such a condition that he could not do what he wanted. He wanted to stay for the help of Parvati and Ira because they were his personal responsibilities. On the other hand, he had responsibilities towards his wife too.

“I was a passenger in a boat which was nearing the shore, the boatman jostling for space, intent upon arrival, wedging his way through the other boatmen in their empty boats, awaiting custom office.” (Gokhale 201)

Mukul felt his responsibility for Irra's welfare. Through Irra, Namita Gokhale shows the plight of a girl who is fatherless and whose mother is insane and she is dependent on others. Mukul remarks "I realized she might grow into a very beautiful woman if only she were allowed to"(Gokhale 175) Mukul was torn between a desire to forget the woman who had rejected him and the perception of his past passion, he lost in the conflict between sympathy and passion, and thought to help Parvati and her daughter Irra. Namita Gokhale presents Irra as an intelligent and careful girl who had the ambition to be a doctor. She had no feeling for Mukul, when he was going to leave them. She knew that he had to go. Irra knew that Parvati could be happier outside the asylum and so she suggested Mukul to sell her property.

Namita Gokhale’s faith in astrology has been explored in the novel, Parvati is shown as talking about a plunging headline in her palm and that headline was an ample sign of insanity as Mukul remarks:

"Mental illness runs like a secret rivulet through the genetic pools of Kumaon. No one is secure from its visitations. From where could Parvati have got that plunging line in her palm?" (Gokhale)

In this novel, degradation of values is shown on the part of a mother, brother, friend as well as a husband. In the novel, we find no trace of true love that is necessary for living a healthy and happy life. Feeling of loneliness and hollowness is prevailing in the whole novel. The characters of the novel are shown as fulfilling the gap of emptiness with the hunger of lust. This is the crisis of ethical aspect of life.

“Ethics and science have their own domains, which touch but do not interpenetrate. The one shows us to what goal we should aspire, the other, given the goal, teaches us how to attain it.” (ISVF 1)

The degradation on the part of a mother changed the life of the protagonist, Parvati. She tried to follow the path as shown by her mother and she also selects physical pleasure

more than anything else. Society can't run with such a thought as Parvati had. If we don't know what is right or wrong it means we are leading a life full of waste.

There is a purpose of our life. We are born not to live with the desires of lust but to live a meaningful life. Namita Gokhale has shown her protagonist as a sufferer because she protests the code of ethics. There is no ethical morality in her behaviour. She goes against the values. Parvati also prefers death instead of being in the prison of marriage. The fact is that only with the spiritual strength, Parvati could live peacefully and fight to overcome her hurdles. But she relishes the failure of mind. She fails to pretend the role of a daughter, a beloved, a wife, a sister-in-law, and a mother. In the words of Vanamala Bhawalkar:

“Marriage being a religious rite to last lifelong, there was no scope for Divorce.”(WITM 171)

A person remains confined to himself if he desires to get freedom from threats. He hardly has any concern for their dear and near ones as we observe in case of Parvati. If a human being is considered as a composite of body, mind and spirit then why there is a silent hunger of lust only. In the novel all the characters are shown as betraying each other for the sake of this lust. A mother to her daughter, daughter to her mother and employer to his master, a friend to his friend, a brother to his brother, a husband to his wife and wife to her husband. Can such a dual faced life enhance the quality of life. Our insensitive attitude towards values and norms has disturbed our spiritual health and that is the root cause of the hollowness in life. The crisis of ethics has transformed the whole span of life as we see in case of Parvati. The barrenness inside a human being always drives him towards the wrong things. The depressed sexuality is also highlighted by Namita as one of the causes of this hollowness. Lalit was a victim of this depressed sexuality. He could not have open dialogue about his sex matter. Lalit could never reveal his inner suffocation to his family and his wife. He also applies the need of secrecy in case of his conjugal relationship.

“The truth can be verified only when human being attains unity and universality. To attain these two objectives, the human being should develop goodwill for all the living beings. This thought has ignited a stream of ideas, believing in equality, equity and welfare.” (VHPTP) 29-30)

Here, the aim of Namita Gokhale is not to tell a fiction just for entertainment. The novel motivates us to think the value of true relationships which is hidden inside the story. The novel expounds the significance of emotions, sentiments and values in life. Namita Gokhale has tried to assure her readers that materialistic world is not the goal of life. Man is born with a definite purpose and to get it, he has to think beyond the worldly attachment and illusions.

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