

EXPLORING SELF-DISCOVERY AND SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF ANITA NAIR AND NAMITA GOKHALE

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Citation: Pushpa Ragini et.al (2023), Exploring Self-Discovery And Societal Expectations In The Select Novels Of Anita Nair And Namita Gokhale *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 29(4), 2213- 2215

Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v29i4.7008

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

A person's life course is shaped by their approach to circumstances, problems, and the prospects associated with their assigned function. This paper does a thorough examination of Nair's *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress* as well as Gokhale's *Paro: Dreams of Passion* and *Gods, Graves, and Grandmother*. It examines the thematic worries of self-discovery, self-realization, individuality, and personality in the books written by Anita Nair and Namita Gokhale. Nair's literary works highlight the difficulties faced by women who strive for independence and self-realization within established societal structures, whereas Gokhale's books explore the clash between personal ambitions and cultural standards in modern-day India. It explores how these authors show the journey of their main characters as they achieve the demands of society and their own personal difficulties. Both authors use their distinct narrative techniques to depict people's journeys towards self-awareness and satisfaction, highlighting the thoughtful impact of embracing one's true identity. It also highlights the significance of self-actualization and independence in attaining personal growth and satisfaction, providing readers with vital understanding of the details of human nature and the process of creating one's identity. Nair and Gokhale make a substantial contribution to modern Indian writing with their compelling storytelling, exploring issues that are universally relevant and transcend cultural and temporal boundaries.

Keywords: Self-realization, Self-actualization, Individuality, Autonomy, Societal expectations, Quest for identity, Personal growth, Identity formation.

Introduction

Individual's course of life is determined by how they deal with circumstances, challenges and expectations from the role one has to play. Societal norms are a very important part of one's life, a person is supposed to exhibit a certain attitude, do certain duties and obligations for the role they play. While dealing with these complexities one forgets his/her own desires and wants. And there comes a time when realization hits to find out for the individual self. This individual is somebody who may or may not agree with societal expectations. This individual wants to add certainty or meaning to life by fulfilling his/her desire, by discovering true identity and that is when the question of self-realizations arises. Self-realization knows about the truth of which we are, our desires and wants and what we expect of ourselves. It is an inward journey which questions existence, it is the battle which one has to face for self-expression; it is about searching one's roots and purpose of life. It talks about the struggles that one has to face on the path of attaining true meaning and understanding the value of life. Navigating the themes of self – realization, self – actualization and the quest for identity in the novels of Anita Nair and Namita Gokhale provides with the captivating insight into the discovery of individuality, community expectations and expedition towards personal fulfillment where human experiences are considered by authors. Both the authors, through their individual narrative styles and themes, hunt through the complexities of human nature, culture and the complexity of identity formation.

Anita Nair is a well-known Indian author. She is famous for her portrayals of characters and the conflicts they have with themselves. In the novel *Ladies Coupe* (2005), the author explores the journey of the protagonist, Akhila and her self-realization. Akhila is middle – aged woman struggling with societal expectations and family obligations. Here she takes on a solo journey by train in a lady's coupe where she

meets different women each with a story of their own. Akhila has a piece of her own to add to each story. Throughout her life she has always provided for her family but now wants to live her life as per her choices. Listening to the story of these women, she is able to realize that her search for freedom is not something unusual.

The novel *Mistress* (2006) in the backdrop of Kathakali, the story moves around the writer Christopher Stewart, Kathakali dancer Koman the central character and Radha who is the niece of Koman. As we delve into the novel, the complexities in the relationship between the characters are unfolded. Following the narrative of Koman, his love for Kathakali art is seen also his relationship with different women and how it shapes his journey of life. His decisions and actions show impulsiveness and lack of foresightedness. Overall, he emerges as someone with depth, passion and vulnerability how is searching for identify and fulfillment in his complex relationship.

Talking about Namita Gokhale, her novel *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1987) dives into the theme of self – actualization. The novel is set in Delhi, the protagonist Paro, a young woman in conflict with desire for identity and the social conventions; she also has personal ambition. Taking contemporary India as the backdrop, here Gokhale depicts the journey of the character Paro, who is on the path of self-discovery as she investigates between the demand of tradition and modernity. In the world of Paro, the author offers introspective complexities and interaction which delve into desires and social expectations. Paro navigates her own sexuality and creative side for self-actualization and autonomy. Gokhale also incorporates folklore and mythology to enrich the novel. The character of Paro illuminates the limitations of traditional femininity against rebellious spirit and determination that Paro has.

Another book namely *Gods, Graves, and Grandmother* (1994) depicts the life of women in Indian society through the protagonist Gudiya and her grandmother. Coming from a rich background all of sudden Gudiya has to face drastic change in her life which leads Gudiya and her grandmother to Delhi. The novel is set around the contemporary Indian Society theme. In the course of the novel, we discover the character of Gudiya who deals with all the circumstances and finds her own place, develops strength while dealing with all the hardships and gradually comes to recognize her own desire, aspirations and courage to break from societal expectations. Gudiya comes from place of privilege has to face hardship and then from here to the journey of potential and strength within to overcomes challenges and create own path. Understanding of self is very important as it helps in adding meaning to life and helps in reaching one's potential as in the case of Gudiya.

Anita Nair and Namita Gokhale shed light on the importance of self-actualization and independence in achieving personal growth and satisfaction through the main characters in their writings. Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* and *Mistress* explore the trips of girls and artists looking for freedom and identity amidst traditional constraints, highlighting the fights and victories of self-discovery. Namita Gokhale's *Paro: Dreams of Passion* and *Gods, Graves, and Grandmother* cope with the conflicts among individual ambitions and social norms, depicting characters who direct the complexities of current Indian society.

Conclusion

By addressing issues that are universally relevant, Anita Nair and Namita Gokhale transcend cultural and temporal boundaries, making a significant contribution to modern Indian literature. Their compelling storytelling and exploration of timeless themes ensure that their works resonate with readers across diverse backgrounds, cementing their place in the canon of contemporary Indian writing. Self-awareness, self-actualization, individuality, and autonomy are deeply embedded inside the novels of Anita Nair and Namita Gokhale, imparting deep insights into the connection of private desires and societal expectancies. Both authors, concluded their awesome description patterns, underscore the implication of self-know-how and the courage to challenge societal beliefs to achieve personal attainment. This paper outlines a fascinating exploration and the complex journeys of self-discovery and self-realization undertaken by the main characters and highlighting the intricacies of navigating one's desires within a cultural framework. This exploration of human nature and identity formation is both enlightening and thought-provoking, providing readers with valuable insights into the complexities of the human experience. It emphasizes the profound impact of embracing one's true identity and the transformative power of self-discovery and self-realization. Through the lens of Anita Nair and Namita Gokhale's works, readers gain a deeper understanding of the human condition and the process of crafting one's identity in a complex and ever-changing world.

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