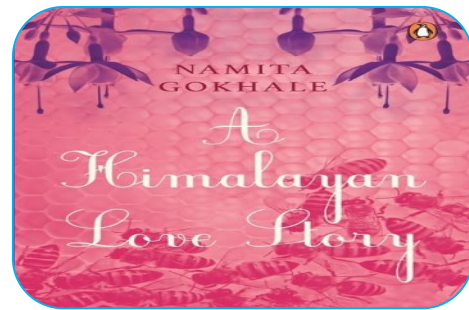




**EMBRACING ROOTS: INDIAN CULTURAL VALUES IN
NAMITA GHOKHALE'S A HIMALAYAN LOVE STORY****Dr. Vikram Singh****Assistant Professor, Dept. of English Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.****ABSTRACT:**

Some research work has undoubtedly been carried out on the theme of feminism, love, sex, bold woman, and modernism in the novels of Namita Gokhale (born 1956) but the issue of cultural values is still lying unexplored. Culture is any social group's set of customs, beliefs, and practices. Every community and social group's behaviour is determined by a set of cultural norms that they have adhered to for many generations, if not centuries. These social groups are made up of individuals who belong to a certain area, or they can be made up of people who practice a particular religion, set of morals, or culture. India has a very extensive cultural legacy. Because of imperialism and the ongoing process of globalization, the rich cultural diversity of India is also impacted by Western civilization. Indians are no longer connected to their ancestral lands and traditions due to their blind pursuit of Western culture. It has led to issues with rootlessness, alienation, and identity crises. Literature and culture have a direct relationship since culture and cultural values are integral to every person's existence. Amish Tripathi aptly remarks, "What is it that makes India special? What is it about our ancient culture that still animates how we live today? What can we learn from our ancestors? And equally importantly, in what way can we be critical of our ancestors?" (xxv).

**KEY WORDS:** *theme of feminism, love, sex, bold woman, and modernism.***INTRODUCTION**

Commonly accepted norms in a society are values that provide guidance on what is right and wrong. Core values, often known as dominant cultural values, have an impact on and reveal the fundamental characteristics of a given community. What "ought" to be is reflected in values. Values are connected to a culture's conventions. They point out what ought to be deemed good or wicked. The definition of happiness in real life is greatly influenced by cultural values such as patience, humanity, and honesty. The most powerful motivational factors for an individual are their cultural values. Cultural values help us build a better interaction with our environment and strengthen the power of our minds. Indian culture is full with idealism, and anyone who adheres to its ideals must restock his mind with the powers of integrity, propriety, and honesty. It offers a framework for the gathering, safeguarding, and dissemination of the knowledge, wisdom, and experience required for all social structures to operate. Aurobindo avers, "The values of a culture are recaptured for each generation by a subtle process of re-interpretation, re-integration and adaptation when the culture is living; the promising young men and women of the generation receive the impact of its fundamental values. The sensitive and the vigorous

among them become each a human laboratory, which purifies the fundamental values relating them afresh to"(9).

Due to her deep immersion in Indian culture, Gokhale's examination of cultural values becomes reviving when we examine the nuances of the events and circumstances she portrays in her body of work. Indian mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik notes in his 2006 book *Myth = Mithya: A Handbook of Hindu Mythology*, "Seasons come and go. Cultures rise and fall. Values change. Standards change. Worldly truths seem conditional, relative to space and the opinions of people... Purification of the *chitta* leads to enlightenment. With enlightenment comes *ananda*, tranquil bliss" (145). Mrs. Gokhale sees changing socio-cultural values taking centre stage and the traditional pillars of society collapsing. She is a pioneer in the movement to overthrow the antiquated socio-cultural framework, support individual liberty, and fiercely oppose any arrangement that attempts to stifle the uniqueness of the human condition. As such, she sees superstitions and traditions as instruments of oppression, and her frustration is directed directly at deeply ingrained patriarchal institutions. She adamantly rejects any ideology that denies people their due respect. She advocates for the establishment of strong principles that can help people sail across the complexities of life, rather than repressive institutions. Her faith is based on reason and common sense, and she exhibits her conviction that every person is created equal. She supports equality, which is essential to civilized societies. Even those on the periphery of society have significance of their own, regardless of wealth, status, nobility, or circumstance; whether one is a pauper or prosperous, highborn or marginalized, virtuous or disreputable. Gokhale's mission is essentially to elevate people's hopes, dreams, and aspirations. Her support of cultural values encourages people to be unique, particularly women. She presents herself as a champion of equality, harmony, and acceptance by exhibiting these ideals.

A Himalayan Love Story, which celebrates women's unwavering courage and resolute determination in adversity, shows how strong Indian cultural values are bringing people together and lending a helping hand to those in need when things get tough. In the novel, Parvati's maternal uncle kindly arranges their affairs and gives them a house with a rented shop. A different incident, in which a former teacher writes to one of his students asking to return from abroad, perfectly captures the essence of Indian cultural values. The student leaves his family behind and returns to India to complete the tasks assigned by his mentor. This incident serves as a striking example of how cultural values are expressed. These values are essentially what set humans apart from animals. The intricate depiction of the interaction between modern cultural dynamics and customs and beliefs can be found in *A Himalayan Love Story*. The novelist struggles not only to depict the difficulties that women encounter but also to creatively represent the difficulties that contemporary women face in our society. Dorothy M. Spencer maintains that the Indian English novel is a great source for "a systematic study of cultural contact and cultural change, with Indian world-view... to increase their knowledge of adulteration process" (11).

If one reads Gokhale closely, one finds that she draws inspiration from deeply rooted cultural values to create a distinctively Indian essence through her deft combination of setting and characters. The novelist, deeply rooted in cultural ideals, establishes herself as one of India's leading literary figures through her evocative exploration of loss and fatalism. She has the uncommon capacity to pay close attention to detail and accurately capture life's subtleties. The story revolves around Mukul Nainwal, a local boy who visits Nainital in his youth, and the alluring Parvati, a stunning young woman. Nainital serves as the story's backdrop. Parvati and Mukul Nainwal alternately tell the story from their respective points of view. Gokhale has a remarkable grasp of people's lives and personalities. The majority of the characters are drawn from everyday life, which heightens the realism of the narrative. The novel explores Parvati's life as she grows up in Jeolikote, a popular tourist destination on the way to Nainital. Her mother's uncle, Hiranand Joshi, the principal of The Manava Public School in Nainital, is the only surviving relative after her father passed away from tuberculosis when she was just one year old. Parvati felt empty inside since her childhood. She regrets, "When I was a child, I would look at other faces, at their ordinary expressions 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" (Himalyan 3).

Living in Jeolikote, they take up residence in a home given to them by her uncle, who also gives them the authority to receive rent from his grocery store. He fulfills his obligations to them despite some hostility, demonstrating Indian cultural values. After her father's death, Hiranand Joshi is the one who helps them. Although her mother is not entirely convinced about the choice, she enrolls in school based on Masterji's advice. Like her classmates, Parvati is naturally curious. Her dream is to own a cow, so she and her mother come up with a lot of different ideas about how to get money for it, but none of them work out.

Parvati is a young girl full of ambition and determination who aspires to be wealthy. Parvati answers her mother's questions regarding the pile of pine cones, "I am going to build a palace, a palace of pine cones. We can even live there. It will be warm and cozy in winter, and if I paint the pine cones golden everyone will think we are very rich"(13). She is portrayed as a determined young girl who defies her mother's wishes to collect pine cones. Once, as she gathers the pine cones into a pile, a furious drizzle turns into a hailstorm, forcing her to hide under an oak tree. Here, she meets a strange woman who jumps out of the branches of an oak tree. This tall, thin woman smells strange, like tobacco mixed with some foul animal smell that makes Parvati sick to her stomach. Fearing for her life, Parvati tries to run away, but the woman catches her and says, "You silly girl, you are young and pretty just now but remember, soon, very soon, you'll become just like me! ... your teeth will fall away, she whispered, and your hair too! I was young and pretty once but look at me now" (15). It is almost as if Parvati's mental state is predicted by her insane state. Parvati is shocked to see the insane woman in such a pathetic state. Parvati can't help but be haunted by the woman's words, which keep coming back to her, "I'm a tree, I'm not a flower any more. That's the only way." Parvati feels shocked and admits, "The terror of that afternoon has remained coiled in my heart, and through every hour of my life, I have been aware of it. That was the day I realized I was doomed. I had nothing to gain in my life; only to lose. I would become like her. My hair would fall off, and my teeth as well, for her madness had called out to mine" (15).

Parvati is seeded with madness by the insane woman. The woman's appearance is incredibly shocking. Parvati understands that her beauty will eventually fade and that she may end up looking like an insane woman. Parvati is shocked to discover that her mother and the tenant, Shrikrishnji, have an affair, and she realizes that people put on a lot of masks in their lives. Distressed beyond measure, Parvati laments, "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 flesh, their true nature unmasked" (15-16).

Despite their similarities, Parvati, who is initially averse to accepting reality, decides to think that her mother and the woman seen with the tenant are two different persons. She eventually learns to accept the fact that the woman is her mother and nobody else's. After that, Parvati starts having really scary dreams. She acknowledges, "I began to have nightmares. I would wake up, trembling, drenched in sweat, and toss and turn in bed until the dawn broke. I had a recurring dream where I was bound and gagged and thrown deep into a steep cliff at midnight. The feeling of weightlessness, of falling, of hurtling through space, would overcome me and I would awake with a thud" (18). These kinds of things are not acceptable in Indian culture. As Parvati learns of her mother's dishonest acts, her behaviour changes dramatically. She stops attending classes and stays inside. But when Shrikrishnji closes his store and heads for the plains, something good happens. Her mother later develops tuberculosis and is admitted to a Bhowali T.B. sanatorium. Parvati is surprised by her feelings because she knows that her mother's death will bring about a significant change in her life. She is waiting to move in with her uncle, observing, "I knew that she was going to die and I was deeply shamed by my lack of sorrow. I was worried and watchful, but I had no grieving to offer. I knew that my life would change after she died. My uncle's house was a Sahib's house with servants and sofas, and I looked forward to the day I would get to live there" (21).

With everything changed, Parvati is extremely happy and continues her education at G.G.I.C. Her uncle shows her his condolences, demonstrating the kind of support that is typical of Indian culture when provided by family members. She is treated with respect by her teachers and instructors in the school. Parvati's first meeting with Mukul takes place in Masterji's home. Masterji has a particular place in his heart for Mukul. Parvati muses, "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" (22). Even though Parvati's life has completely changed, she is still shrewd enough to see the real in everyone around her. She feels that the housemaid at Masterji's place is real, not faking. She admires Salman, her teacher of history, even though she can see through his façade. Even though Salman is a Muslim, Parvati's attraction to him is so strong that she has a covert physical relationship with him despite knowing that he violates society's norms and that Masterji might not approve. She knows very well that no matter how good a history teacher Salman is, Masterji cannot approve of their love. Parvati understands that Salman's love is fleeting and concealed by a mask, but she finds joy in their relationship. Parvati rejects religious feelings and sticks to customs while keeping her relationship with Salman going. Her position appears to be in line with the ideals of liberty and self-determination. She believes, "My view of tradition and religion was influenced by hers [mother]. The fact that I was a Hindu Brahmin girl and Salman, a Muslim did not, therefore, strike me as any impediment to our union. However, although he was most enthusiastic about getting his hands on me whenever possible, Salman never talked of future or a life together. We were playing a shadow game, and the most precious ingredient of our passion was that both of us sensed that it was not permanent" (29).

Gokhale depicts Parvati's emphasis on Salman's need for discretion. She tells him to control his feelings, saying that Salman might lose his job if Masterji finds out about their relationship. When Salman leaves, Parvati is not saddened because she knows he is only here temporarily. She notes, "I was stoic, even relieved, about his departure. A part of me had recognized the risks I was taking. My encounter with Salman had quelled some silent hunger within me. I felt triumphantly normal, and indeed the next few years were probably the happiest in my life" (31). Then, even though Mukul Nainwal truly loves Parvati and even makes an effort to meet her after she gets married to Lalit, she starts to flirt with him. Mukul first encounters Parvati in Hiranand Joshi's home. Mukul and Chandran, the protagonists of *The Bachelor of Arts*, are comparable. Similar to how R.K. Narayan demonstrates how Chandran is so enchanted by Malathi's beauty that he falls in love with her. Gokhale demonstrates Mukul's initial love for Parvati in a similar manner. She is beautiful, and there's something about her that appeals to him. Though Parvati does not listen to Mukul at that moment, he thinks of her constantly. He tells her uncle that he wants to marry his niece, but he won't let him because he worries about miscegenation. Mukul now lives up to the aspirations of the Hiranand Headmaster and achieves a mediocre level of success. However, he will always remember Parvati, the only woman he has ever loved. It serves as a gauge of Indian cultural values as well. However, Parvati does not find the idea of marrying Lalit particularly exciting, and she is unable to disagree with Masterji's choice. We are taught in our values that the decisions made by our elders are for our welfare. She says, "Masterji had decided that I was to be married to Mukul's best friend, Lalit Joshi. It was not that I disliked Lalit, in fact, all in all, I rather liked him. But Masterji could not be expected to understand that I was a woman, and Lalit was, in my eyes, still a boy... but I was hardly in any position to contradict Masterji or his decision. Lalit was a Brahmin like me, our horoscopes and our Gotras matched: we were not related to each other, as was so often the case with Kumaoni Brahmins. Moreover, Masterji wanted me off his hands. He had done his duty and it was time for me to do mine" (31-32).

Parvati marries Lalit while keeping in mind the cultural norms, but their union is unhappy. Constantly keeping her distance from Parvati, Lalit starts to experience constant tension and constipation. Although Parvati disapproves of his habits, she finds great joy in other family members' praise. She says, "After our marriage, after I became Mrs. Lalit Joshi, I realized that the stubborn hostility that Lalit harboured towards me could not have developed overnight; it had its roots in those happy days at Wee Nookee: he must surely have hated me even then. Gradually, this hatred seeped osmotically into our system, and became both a verdict and judge" (34). Parvati is living a tense and

hostile life. She continues, saying, "I had been married for over a year, but we were not nearer to consummating our marriage, and by now I had become reconciled to the idea that we never would. 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" (35-36).

Thinking in this way demonstrates how Gokhale allows Parvati, the novel's protagonist, to embody cultural values. Lalit is envious of Mukul since the two of them treat her like royalty and show her respect. The silence is brooding and bitter, the days passing. Raju, Lalit's younger brother, moves from Bareilly, and Parvati starts to enjoy his company at night when she and Lalit are living a lonely life. While Lalit sleeps by himself in his room, Parvati believes it is acceptable for them to share a bed in the kitchen with Raju. She says, "[H]e was an allay, he was like me, we were both lonely, our needs possessed us, and we made uncompromising, uncomplicated love" (42). She further says, "... soon we fell into the habit and learnt to maintain our faces in the daytime. I felt safe with Raju. He was an allay. I could bank on him. He was, after all, not a stranger, he was my husband's brother, he was family. I reassured myself that this was no betrayal" (43).

It is demonstrated that Parvati does not view having sex with her husband's brother as immoral. However, Parvati is an Indian woman, so it is improper for her to enjoy Raju's company. However, Parvati feels content in this relationship and her complexion brightens once more. She maintains an exceptionally high level of well-being even after Raju's departure. She now starts to smile, and when Lalit notices, he assumes that she is grinning in his direction. As Lalit starts praising her food, Parvati and Lalit develop a strong understanding. Parvati says, "We had the two of us suffered so much misery together that we were both relieved by this sudden reversal of fortune. We did not mock or question it, but timidly went along with the tide of happiness. Lalit was after all, my husband. He earned for me, I cooked for him; we had been friends in our childhood. We could become lovers, confidants, allies" (44).

But when she finds out that her husband is close to passing away, all of her hopes are dashed by the terrible outcome. Lalit passes away from tuberculosis before receiving the necessary medical care. After some time, Parvati becomes pregnant and gives birth to a daughter. Parvati's breakdown and widowhood have been met with no sympathy. As Mohan explains her role to Mukul, he says, "She was abandoned, Mukul. She was in a bad shape and no one wanted to have anything to do with her suffering ..." (138). Parvati's uncle sends her to live with Lalit's family after becoming weary of her gloomy quiet and progressively shoddy housekeeping. However, they are unable to support a widow and her child financially, so they send Parvati to the asylum in Bareilly. Nobody can assist her, and she is alone. However, Mukul, who is in love with Parvati, is typically delicate, modest, and focused on finding a profession or other career. Hiranand Joshi has a soft spot for Mukul, who satisfies his desires and upholds the Indian values of a pupil who is always willing to obey and serve his teacher.

Hiranand Joshi feels very upset and sick for several days after he gets her married to Lalit. However, he fulfills the aspirations of Hiranand Headmaster and rises to prominence in Hong Kong. He weds Adeleine, a Burmese woman who is half English and half Burmese. Mukul is destined to go back to Nainital until he receives the letter from Masterji and realizes that he has given Mukul all of his academic and material achievements. To honour Hiranand Joshi's final desires after he abandoned his home and other obligations to Mukul, Mukul travels back to Nainital. He feels a mixture of remorse, wrath, and agony when he thinks back on his life. He remembers Lalit, his current miserable situation, his college days, Parvati, his father, and Hiranand Joshi. He remarks as he considers Hiranand Joshi, "I should have killed him and strangled the constipated matchstick of a body, smashed his cerebrum, destroyed the tyranny of gratitude by which he bound us all. But we were all beaten and bribed and exhausted, even Lalit to whom he had gifted Parvati. Now it was her daughter Irra who was burdened with the same charity. At least she seemed aware of its price" (114).

Although Mukul believes that Hiranand Masterji is the reason he cannot marry Parvati, he forgives him for the peculiar justice that Masterji has bestowed. Mukul is appreciative of Hiranand Masterji for shaping his goals and aspirations. Mukul has been sought after by Masterji, who has also shaped him into the ideal gentleman. Mukul holds Hiranand Masterji in high regard since he has dedicated his entire life to promoting education and the moral and physical advancement of the hill

people. Hiranand is a fervent supporter of Western empirical philosophy. He wrote letters to Jawaharlal Nehru expressing his opinions about modern India and believing that science is the actual religion of the country. Indian tradition holds that a guru is almighty and always looks out for the welfare of the community. He also sent George Bernard Shaw a letter about evolutionary socialism. Mukul recalls a time when other students hated him and accused Masterji of being his accomplice, and he had to suffer greatly as a result of Hiranand Masterji's intrusive attentions. He proclaims, "I never told Hirananda Headmaster of the pain his attentions caused me. I remained pathetically grateful for the occasional communicative look, the private pat, the sharing of information and opinion, the belief in a future, the mere sanctuary of a home" (120).

He believes that because Masterji is equally as unlovable and unloved as Mukul is, Hiranand Master has decided to love him. Masterji gives everything to Mukul because he has such unwavering faith in him. Mukul has traveled the globe. He is now employed as an international civil servant in the Hong Kong Crown Colony, having achieved his greatest dream. Mukul appears to be a prosperous and content man, yet on the inside, he is dissatisfied and lonely. He feels that he is fatherless, in search of meaning, and weighed down by the guilt of having inadequate parents. All caste prejudices that are pervasive in society are beneath Mukul. He disagrees with Masterji's choice regarding Parvati's marriage. However, he tells Mohan that he would have felt embarrassed to present his mother to Adeleine and his mother-in-law Elaine, who is English. He is aware that his mother will disapprove of his union with Adeleine. Mukul is portrayed as a hopeless romantic who is incredibly alone. And something compels him to meet Pasang Rampa, the Tibetan girl when he sees her. He says, "Again I was overcome by the same uncontrollable lust. I wanted her more than I had ever wanted any woman before. I looked hungrily at the moist red mouth" (152).

Gokhale demonstrates Mukul's inability to restrain his libido and his desire to enjoy Pasang Rampa's company. His bodily cravings are out of control, so one night he spends in Pasang Rampa's chamber with her to appease his body. However, at that moment, he feels as though he is lost in the dark of his sexuality, a jungle. "I watch amazed as my whole life flashes before me. I am dying, I do not exist, I have left myself to enter her. And it is over. I light a cigarette in the dark. I am breathing heavily, and my hands are shaking. I feel as though I have been incarcerated in a dark cavern, I crave light and air. My body is satiated. And my spirit? It is shamed" (186). Mukul further accepts, "It was almost as though I were fated to meet the Tibetan girl again. In retrospect I cannot understand my behaviour with her or why I went to her room at all" (155). Mukul regrets his actions and yearns for Adeleine, his wife. Mukul realizes that the body is a beast. He also harbours deep-seated guilt. Mukul is a victim of an unresolved childhood romance even though he truly loves Parvati. The last letter from Master Ji is how he found out about Parvati's madness. He states, "I had always known, of course, that Parvati was prone to depression: her playful gaiety alternated frequently with long silent spells, when her eyes would darken and take on an even more terrifying beauty than when she was happy. I could remember her sitting in the garden till the shadows lengthened, staring her palms. I used to timidly try to cajole her out of the inwardness" (136).

Gokhale demonstrates that although Mukul married a widow named Adeleine, their union was sombre and unhappy occasion. He still feels alone and has dreams about Parvati. He recalls meeting Parvati when he went to visit Masterji's home. Mukul is completely aware of his obligations and what is best for Irra. He says, "I realized that she was the daughter of the only woman I had ever truly loved, and that I had no option but to be responsible for her" (111). Mrs. Gokhale frequently offers a glimpse of the moral principles that permeate Indian society and culture. Mukul is compelled to meet Parvati after learning that she has left the Ranchi psychiatric hospital and is presently in Nainital. He is afraid of Parvati, even if he dreams of her. He consents to, "I was by now so used to thinking of Parvati as a motif that it came as something of a shock to realize that she was still around, and in not a very pleasant way. My mouth felt dry and there was a constriction in my throat. I was not at all prepared to cope with Parvati in the flesh. She was a memory, an emotion. She was entangled in the idyll of my youth. I felt that she had no business to intrude upon my middle age now" (177).

Mukul adores Parvati, but Gokhale demonstrates that he does not want to accept the truth. He holds a very special remembrance of Parvati in his heart. He had to meet her even if he is agitated and anxious. As he says, "This unpleasant and unnecessary complication would have to be dealt with firmly, and I foresaw a tiresome time ahead... I was inordinately nervous, dreading at every moment a knock on the door and Parvati's arrival" (Himalayan 177). Mukul is shown as being extremely confused. He travels to Nainital because he aspires to fulfil Masterji's final desires. Although he is prepared to assist Parvati's daughter Irra, he notices a significant internal shift after meeting Parvati and says, "I felt a primal social revulsion. It was a mistake. She was an impostor. I suspect her of sanity. I had never loved her" (Himalayan 184). Mukul gets enamoured with seeing Parvati in such a horrible shape. He loves her so much that he brings Parvati and Irra to Relax Inn even though he feels like he has never loved her before since her cousin Pushpendra's wife Abha isn't ready to have them in her home. Despite feeling useless, he wants to aid Parvati. He comments, "I have reached the age when one's own mortality is an uncomfortable but inalienably established reality, a faint but factual presence lurking like a particle of dust in the peripheral vision of one's soft contact lenses. I am forever hearing of yet another friend who had had a coronary. Yet, so relieved was I that nothing worse had happened to Parvati that, asking no questions of anybody, I rushed the two of them into my room" (195).

When he can't do anything to aid the people he loves, Mukul gets imprisoned in a condition of helplessness. He acknowledges that he wishes to be Parvati's slave. "Her feet were not well cared for, but they had remained small, fair and pretty. They reminded me of the feet of the goddess Lakshmi. I wanted unaccountably to fall at her feet, to kiss them, to be her slave, to die for her. I could picture her sitting in a calendar frame upon a lotus, on a tiger, on a peacock. Her face was battered and blue and bruised, yet a smile played upon her lips, a smile of mysterious interaction with sorrow and acceptance. She was my Durga, my Kali, my Saraswati" (197).

For Mukul, however, contentment can only be found in hindsight. He is content, but he needs to return since he owes his wife some obligations, which he must complete. Thus, he assures Irra that he will always support her in the event of difficulty. However, he expresses timidity and guilt by saying, "My cheeks were burning in shame, but the orphan in me, the resentful dependent, was determined to bluster his way out of accusation and responsibility. Even the thought that I hadn't been good enough for her mother to marry slithered in. I tried not to acknowledge it, but it knocked at my mind nevertheless" (199). He further remarks, "I felt rejected and used. They were treating me like tourist. I was nearing the end of the story, of my part in the story. 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" (201).

Gokhale reveals how Mukul's circumstances prevent him from living the life he desires. He genuinely loves Parvati and Irra and wants to stay for their assistance because he considers them to be his obligation. Thinking along these lines reveals Gokhale's struggle with cultural norms. Nonetheless, he also owes obligations to his spouse. Feeling lost, he starts to reflect on his own life. He is unable to recognize himself, "I thought of myself, of who and what I was, and the self I was leaving behind. I thought of Parvati and of Irra, and the other lives I was abandoning. They assumed in my mind a formal, official shape. There was nothing I could do for them. 'Country conditions do not permit.' I noted mentally, as I closed the file" (206). Mukul tells himself that although he experiences enormous disappointment in love and enjoys himself, he believes that his life has been completely substituted. Gokhale uses a strong, realistic style to distinguish almost every character. Parvati's daughter Irra is a pragmatist, solemn, and honest. When Mukul inquires about her thoughts on Pooran, she says, "Pooran Daju cannot be trusted. You had better be careful with him. I am alone in the world, you know, so I have learnt to be careful. Perhaps people in the plains are even worse" (110). Mukul considers himself accountable for Irra's well-being. Gokhale portrays the predicament of a fatherless girl whose mother is insane and who is dependent on others through Irra. Mukul says, "I realized she might grow into a very beautiful woman if only she were allowed to" (175). Thus, we see that some pertinent issues arise from the analysis of the novel. Why is it expected of a woman to live in the socially acceptable circle? How come she can't enjoy life as a free man? Why can't a woman follow her desires and make her own

decisions? Why is it forbidden for a woman to look for her identity? Indian society is deeply rooted in all of these questions. All these questions are answered by Gokhale when she advocates the adherence of Indian cultural values.

Cultural values have been crucial to humanity's progress in Indian society. They have established some guidelines for the direction of human life and emphasized certain norms. They have also promoted certain rites, customs, and ceremonies that have a clear influence on human life. "If culture can be defined as the sum total of all that is reflected in the life of a people, their thought process and outlook of life and their needs, aims and aspirations, then this best expressed through the arts and betterments of a country" (Agrawal 210). Gokhale's novel portrays the image of her cultural pattern, which she is deeply ingrained in. The novelist is fully aware that certain values of love, fraternity, tolerance, truth, and kindness are ingrained in ancient Indian culture. Mrs. Gokhale emphasizes the timeless principles of our traditional Indian culture, as well as their importance and significance in life, either overtly or covertly. She has also documented the conflicts and accusations brought forth by modernism.

The difficulties that Gokhale's female protagonists encounter are portrayed. She also shows how unwaveringly they address them at the same moment. She seems to be saying that with courage and hope, even the most difficult issues can be solved. One of the best tools for dealing with others is self-reliance. The strongest battles can be faced and prevailed over with determination and fortitude. The Indian way of life and culture are based on these principles. The writer strives to maintain these cultural ideals alive and vivid through a variety of characters in her works. Through her works, Gokhale elucidates her intense interest in the ascent of women, who have been portrayed as the victims of the social mores that pervade Indian society. Studying Gokhale's *A Himalayan Love Story* reveals how strong Indian cultural values are; when we start to fall apart socially, culturally, or mentally, our principles emerge and offer a helping hand to pull us out of the terrible crisis.

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