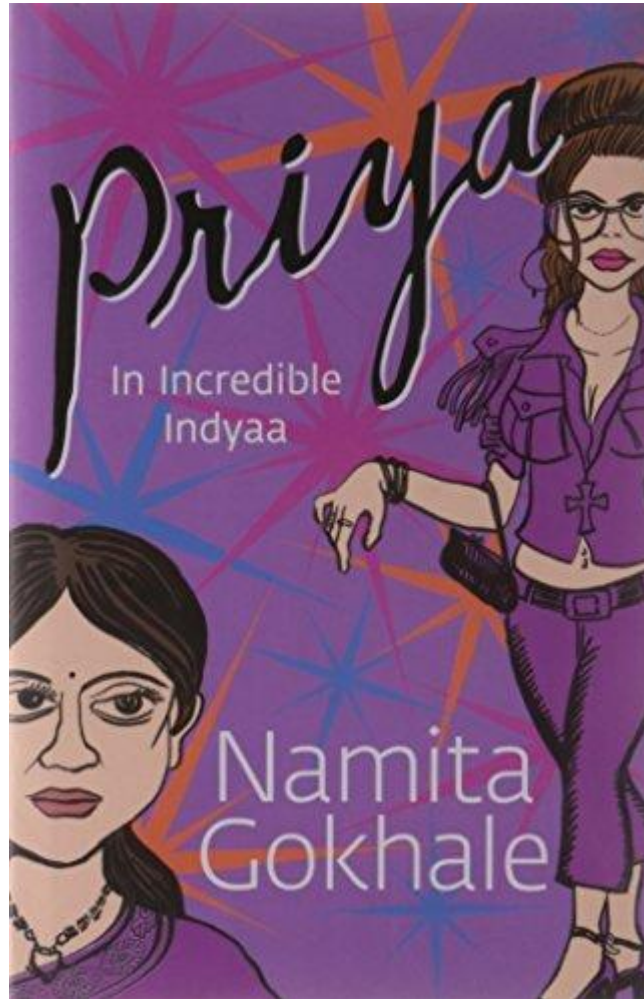


Glimpses of Contemporary Political Trend in  
Namita Gokhale's *Priya in Incredible Indyya*

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**Abstract**

The novels of Namita Gokhale evoke strong fame and furore among the critics and the readers by virtue of their female characters. The heroines of her novels defy social norms, exercise mental balance, accept challenges, assume new roles and face crises to assert their individuality. In *Priya in Incredible Indyya*, Gokhale deals with the fortunes of middle class woman against the current to ascend the social ladder. She captures the issues of women

empowerment, new attitudes and family relationship in the era of post-Information Technology. Besides the novel also offers insight into the present day political scenario in India, a minor theme which easily eludes the attention of readers.

**Key words:** Namita Gokhale, *Priya in Incredible Indyya*, contemporary India, political trend.



Namita Gokhale

Courtesy: <http://festivalofindiainthailand.com/>

### **Politics in Creative Fiction**

Politics is a field which offers myriad scope for individuals to serve the nation in unique ways. It requires sense of duty and commitment on the part of people who dare to venture into it. Unfortunately, politics has become a profession these days and politicians take pride in calling themselves as chief executive officers. Politics has become the last resort of self-centrics to cast their evil spell. This article highlights the events of the novels which stand testimony to the existing state of affairs in Indian politics.

### **Using Religious Images – Priya’s Experience**

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Gokhale uses the images of Lord Krishna and Arjuna to drive home the decay and decadence in Indian politics. The central character of the novel, Priya is a middle class woman who has propelled herself to become the wife of a lawyer turned politician, Suresh Kaushal, Minister of State for Food Processing, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Canneries. While searching the steel cupboard for a wedding gift, she comes across the statuettes of Krishna, the charioteer discussing the dictates of duty to Arjuna. Lord Krishna, in the Indian epic, *Mahabharatha* is a symbol of righteousness. Lord Krishna is the close aide of Arjuna, one of the five brothers of the Pandava family. During the Kurushetra battle between the Pandava and the Gaurava families, Arjuna refuses to fight against his kith and kin. Lord Krishna preaches Arjuna the nature of duty and the need to perform them objectively. Enlightened by the teachings of Lord Krishna, Arjuna proves his prowess in archery and wins the battle. The teachings of Lord Krishna form the treatise known as *Bhagavad Gita* in Hinduism.

Gokhale subtly remarks that such statuettes are a stock gift to politicians. The statuettes are intended to infuse sense of duty and dedication to serve the mass without fear or favour and pride or prejudice. The irony lies in the fact that the statuettes fail to introduce any such noble thoughts in the minds of the politicians. Pathetically, they are stashed into the cupboards among “unofficial” ( p.14 ) gifts.

### **Politics and Film Industry**

In India, politics and film industry are two sides of the coin. Indian film industry continues to play a major role in transforming the face of the nation. The industry has produced many actor-turned politicians who live in the minds of the people. But, the dream industry has rotten in its attitude beyond redemption. Namita Gokhale records her discontent over both politics and film industry through Ved Saheb, an eminent Bollywood veteran. At the wedding party of Paro’s son Aniruddha and super model Sujata Sethia (Suzi), the ever-green hero remarks: “Politics is entertainment” ( p.28 ). The sweeping statement throws light on the drooping hope, complacency and lack of seriousness in the stance of adorned personalities of the film industry on politics.

### **Food and Politics**

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Another eloquent attack on politicians and their policies is exemplified by Gokhale through Suresh Kaushal. The Food Processing Industries Association organises a felicitation ceremony for him. While travelling in the car, Suresh reads a speech to his wife which he intends to make at the ceremony. In the course of his speech, he sings in praise of fast food, dreams of mega food courts, fancies modernization of slaughter houses and conceives of cold storage chain. Priya who is well-balanced contemplates on his speech and reflects with social responsibility thus: “May I bring to your notice that villagers in Orissa, in Kalahandi and places like that, feel privileged to eat just an occasional snack of roots and mango kernels?” (p.34). Her observation puts the honourable minister in tight corner and to embarrassment who finally yields saying: “Of course I know of the imbalances in the patterns of our agricultural development. ... I’m not being insensitive” (p.34). Suresh Kaushal’s speech represents a wide gap between the reality and the needs of the people. The speech echoes the voice of contemporary politicians who promise to build castles in air. The speech symbolizes present day policy makers’ art of rhetoric and verbose rather than respect for grassroots life.

### **Influence of Money**

Gokhale modestly criticises the growing influence of money among the politicians to lure the vote bank. Election as a process of choosing people’s representative has lost its sanctity to money power and muscle power. Politicians unleashes countless money to woo the mass. Rallies are organised mobilising scores of party workers by the use of black money. Political alliances are formed unscrupulously sacrificing party policies. Alliances take shape for vested interest instead of national interest. Politicians are confident of influencing people at the eleventh hour with appropriate freebies. All these dirty tactics require money which makes the election process a mockery and a flourishing trade. Priya’s pragmatic approach to her son’s to political career chiefly summarises Gokhale’s concern against the role of money in politics in these lines: “Kush will need cash if he has to contest an election – politics is an expensive business. It needs capital. Even a Rajya Sabha seat costs money. A lot of money” (p.102 ).

### **Agrarian Society as the Chief Victim**

Gokhale attacks attempts of modern day politics to make agrarian resources and agrarian society as the chief victims. Poor states rich in natural resources are the targets of multinational

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companies in the name of special economic zones (SEZs). Politicians vie with each other to lavishly throw away thousands of acres of agricultural lands in the name of job openings. The irony lies in the fact that about 90% of land acquired from farmers remain unused for the setting up of special economic zones. The dispossessed and depressed natives resort to radical actions demanding reversal of policies. But such people become the objects of mockery and targets of government agencies. Their ideals are shattered to pieces as they are applied to an imperfect social order.

### **Tussle Between Politicians and Farmers**

The continuing tussle between politicians and farmers is represented by the idealist Avinendra, the son of the Minister of State for Industry who is the friend of Priya. She affectionately calls him as Lenin for his Marxist leanings. Lenin organises the ‘Donkey March for the Dispossessed’ plodding a hundred donkeys from Jantar mantar to India Gate in order to draw the attention of policy makers. He was sitting astride a donkey carrying placards saying “We Are Not Donkeys, Give Us Back Our Rights, Give Us Back Our Land” (p.93). The Donkey March is symbolic of the pressure on the agrarian community, marginalized landowners and the dynamics of poverty. While popular newspaper editorials of *Indian Times* and *The Clarion* lauds Lenin for his bold initiative, the honourable Minister of State for Food Processing Suresh Kaushal condemns him saying “joker Lenin ” (p.93 ) with scorn and envy. Lenin represents the ongoing conflict between people in power and people in poverty. Through Lenin, Gokhale has implicitly interwoven a contemporary complex issue over which leaders and farmers lock horns.

### **Lip Service to the Constitution of India**

Indian politics is governed by a set of vigorous norms laid down by the Constitution of India. In spite of checks and balances, Indian politics continues to play truant torn between corruption, chaos, charisma, stability, instability, glory and gloom. Through her novel *Priya in Incredible Indyya*, Namita Gokhale as a dispassionate onlooker portrays the nonchalant contemporary politics in its true colour sans satire.

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