



RE-SPACING  
**MENSTRUUAL**  
**NARRATIVES**

RAZEENA P R

## *Re-Spacing Menstrual Narratives*

### *Menstrual Seclusion as Freedom in Namita Gokhale's *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters**

Sohini Sengupta

#### *Abstract*

*Over centuries, menstruation has evolved from a normal bodily function to a tabooed topic stigmatizing women and restricting their mobility. This chapter would explore the differential, and subversive discourse developed in Namita Gokhale's novel *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory* and Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Crow Eaters* which flips over the forced segregation of the menstruating woman as a dynamic space for her recuperation, paradoxically liberating the maverick female self from the authority of socio-cultural norms. The menstruating women characters exiled by the traditional notion of their ritual impurity are barred access to familial surroundings and material resources. However, they make alternative journeys of interiority and introspection empathetically transforming their exiled ambience into an emotional/intellectual space "of one's own". In tandem with the rituals associated with menstruation in mountain communities, Gokhale's novel further highlights the protagonist forming a communal bond of female solidarity, amidst the gendered space of nature in her quest for body positivity. It leads to repositioning and rethinking the exiled space forced by menstrual taboo into a holistic period" crusading towards female empowerment. The novel also initiates Helene Cixous' insistence of *L'écriture féminine* where women's writing is negotiated through the corporeality of the female body, confronting the phallogocentric suppression of specifically women's narratives. At the same time, it inverts the mystification and culture of shame associated with menstruation and female sexuality.*

**Keywords:** *Menstruation, Menstrual Taboo, Shame, Female Solidarity, Sexuality*

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