Things to Leave Behind by Namita Gokhale, published by Penguin Random House India in 2016, ISBN 9780670088355, 320 pages, price ₹499.

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In *Things to Leave Behind* Namita Gokhale presents the story of the mid nineteenth century to early twentieth century. It traces the lives of three generations of women, Durga, Tilottama daughter of Durga and Deoki daughter of Tilottama. Together these women show resilience, loss, memory, marriage, widowhood and quiet defiance against the sacred backdrop of lake Naina devi and the colonial transformation of the Kumaon hills. Analysing these stories through the lens of Blue Humanities this novel unveils how water acts as an active cultural agent and historical archive that shapes human lives and creates mythic meaning, site of drowning desire, archive of violence and living presence that refuses to be fully claimed or left behind. Materially the lake shapes destiny. Durga, mother of Tilottamma, drowns in its waters and the green darkness haunts the daughter for decades, despite being scared of the lake she couldn't really leave the lake behind even when she moves to Almora. Later Deoki and her daughter experience her erotic and artistic awakening beside the water of Panna Lal. Deoki sits naked and still when the English painter William Dempster paints her, he turns her into liquid " I am the color of water when it is flowing reflecting the sky, the trees, the rocks". The body and the lake merges shame and representation are all mediated by water. The finished painting becomes a portable memory of the lake that transcends time and geography. Gender becomes inseparable from the novel's aquatic imagination. For women Lake is shown as a site for danger,imagination and possibility. It claims mothers, mirrors daughters and becomes the site where colonial and locals compete for dominance.

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Things to Leave Behind is aqueous, sensuous, reflective, mythical and historical. She presents mythic time, colonialism, and intricate psychological detail with the fluidity of water. The novel shows the ancient story from Manaskhand when Vishnu's discus disintegrated the body of the goddess Sati her eyes fell in the Gandhamadma ranges and became the lake of Naina devi, this isn't decorative mythology. The lake became tirtha sthal, a site where the divine meets earth and as an all seeing presence that continues to witness. The local pahari people treat it like a sacred place, honoured with prayers and held it with deep reverence. Whereas the Britishers looked it as a place for real estate, a picturesque source of delight. Also through the eyes of character we see the lake is never of one colour or one meaning. It is blue,green, fog grey. It holds the eyes of the goddess, the bodies of the drowned, the reflections of the hangings and the light of double rainbows. We see characters throw stones into it, sit by it in old age and eventually decide what must be abandoned and what refuses to be left behind. In the end we see Tilottama sits in fog so thick that sky, lake and land became one texture. After a moment the cloud settles and she sees water as it has always been unchanged, all seeing and still holding everything. Through characters and nuances Gokhale has beautifully shown how water can be lethal and sacred, frontier and mirror, catastrophe and continuity. The characters who live beside it are shaped and influenced by its currents literal and metaphorical even when they try to walk away. What they leave behind in some way remains in some form in the water that continues to reflect the hills and the sky. The lake doesn't merely reflect the lives of women who circle it across generations; it actively plays a vital role in framing their lives, holding their losses and continues to exist after they are gone. From the perspective of blue humanities, *Things to Leave Behind* act as a reminder that some places remember us longer than we remember them, and that the things we try to leave behind may continue to float, just beneath the surface, waiting to be seen again. It also shows that a lake is never a fixed space, it is a living archive that accumulates myth, colonial violence, grief and quiet acts of defiance.