

**Patriarchy And Marginality Inflicting Women In Githa
Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces Of Night***

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Abstract

Literature always reflects social interactions prevailing at the time when the author is evolved in the process of dialectics between society and culture. GithaHariharan's novel focuses on feminist elements and portrays the marginalize women in Indian society. *The Thousand Faces of Night* is a story of three women Sita, Devi, and Mayamma. The characters have witnessed the plight of Indian women and the sick social structures. The author traces the battles of women in her relationship with men and society. It is the story of Devi's quest for a self-image. The theme of women's existence, survival, and identity emerge prominently, and the patriarchy described by GithaHariharan is an outcome of her serious investigation made into a systematic mode in the novel. It portrays women as weak individuals, longing for love and understanding. They are the victims of their gender.

Keywords: Feminist, Social Structures, Men, Society

Literature is the expression of the thoughts of society. The progressive ideas of a fictional genius spread through his/her works of literature. GithaHariharan is one of such ever-memorable celebrities. She is one of many Indian female novelists who have shown courage and commitment. She is a severe and sensitive writer who has taken sensitive issues of

women in reality. Githa Hariharan's novel *Khushwant Singh* says, "Hariharan writes anguish, pain and anger about what is happening to India."

Githa Hariharan's novel is preoccupied with the problems of women, individuals, and society and also concentrates on communalism and concerns of a minority in the facially dominated culture where Hindus and Muslims indulge in riots and innocents are subjected to untold sufferings. In the very first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*, she highlights patriarchal brutality and how women have been marginalized in the Indian society in the name of tradition and custom.

Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* is a story of three women Sita, Devi and Mayamma. The novel is essentially a women-centered saga. Devi, the primary character is representative of the present-day modern intellectual women. Devi's mother, her mother-in-law Parvatiamma, Mayamma, the old family retainer, Uma and her grandmother are other female characters. The novelists trace the battle of women in her relationship with men and society. It is the story of Devi's quest for self – image. The theme of women's existence, survival and identity emerge prominently in the novel. It portrays women as weak individuals, longing for love and understanding. They are the victims of their gender.

Carol Gilligan argues that a woman's "identity is defined in a context of relationship and judged by a standard of responsibility and care. Feminists believe that there are different traits and values for men and women. Care, nurturing, tolerance, sensitivity, empathy, and self-sacrifice are feminine qualities. While autonomy, individuation, power, careerism are masculine qualities. The female characters are considered inferior to male traits and also devalued. And so daughters brought up in a patriarchal culture think themselves as inferior and subordinate to them.

Patriarchy, almost by definition, also exhibits androcentric and meaning that is male-centered. A woman's role is defined continuously by her relation to men in her life. She is a daughter, a wife, or a mother; she is never a simple woman. The positive qualities like care, empathy, tolerance and selflessness in a person bring happiness in life and at the same time, they are essential for human development. But these qualities are used against women and they are devalued. The goodness and kind-heartedness of Sita and Mayamma are overlooked in the novel and they suffer mutely.

In *The Thousand Faces of Night* Devi is conditioned by her mother, Sita, and her grandmother to fulfill her gender role in the patriarchal society. Devi's mother Sita in the novel is victimized. Sita, being married at the age of twenty-one, goes to her in-laws' house with the desire to be a perfect wife and daughter-in-law. Sita has succeeded in being an ideal wife, mother and daughter-in-law, but at the cost of self-sacrifice, one day her father-in-law could not find flowers in front of the god for performing morning prayers. The flowers were not picked even though the floors were not swept. He roared with anger at Sita, "Put that veena away. Are you a wife, a daughter-in-law?" (30) Sita in her pride and passion, pulls away from the strings of her veena and never plays it again. He burns all her photographs in which she poses with her veena. Sita performed her duty as a woman at the cost of the death of the artist in her.

Mayamma is an old housekeeper in Mahesh's house. She is illiterate and is the greatest sufferer in the novel. She never complained of her grief and suffering. She is tortured by her mother-in-law for not bearing a child. At last, after long prayers, she gives birth to a baby boy. Her husband one day, takes all the money and leaves the house. Mayamma's anguish and sufferings increase after her husband deserts her. Women like Mayamma continue to sacrifice and live a tortured humiliating life because they have no option, no way out. Mayamma is given shelter by Parvatamma, Devi's mother-in-law and works as a family retainer. Her life is full of unhappiness caused by physical and mental suffering. She has "allowed everything to happen all and everything on her, never complained because she felt that the success of life for a woman dependent on her ability to endure and to live bravely facing the odds in this male-dominated society."

Sita and Mayamma had many difficulties in their self-development. Both of them have experienced sorrow and discontentment in their life. Devi is a rebellion and is not a passive acceptor of the traditional norms of society. She imagines herself as a strong woman. "I lived a secret life of my own. I became a woman warrior, a heroine. It was Devi. I rode a tiger and cut off evil, magical demon's heads" (41)

Devi always gets indifference from Mahesh, when she wants to do something to get away from her loneliness. He fails to develop an affectionate bond with her. Devi refuses to suffer mutely like Mayamma and leaves Mahesh and elopes with Gopal. She realizes that Gopal is also a benevolent despot, who cannot see beyond either the passion of rage or the various masks of her discrete lives. Devi at last, returns to her mother.

Though Githa Hariharan has focussed on the marginality and subjugation of women, she has allowed her protagonists to strive and survive with dignity and determination and flight with all odds of life. Githa Hariharan has presented the women who dared to go beyond the limit set for them. Her novels talk about feminist sensibility as an onslaught on patriarchy, gender crisis, and androcentrism as a result of this voiceless become voiced. We get glimpses of this fact in the lives of the characters such as Devi who is representative of modern intellectual women who eschewed patriarchal monopoly on the one side and Mayamma, Sita, Mangala, adopt the existentialist heroic posture to confront the ordeals of life, on the other hand.

Patriarchy means the 'rule of the father in a male-dominated family.' It is a social and ideological construct that considers men as superior to women. Patriarchy is based on a system of power relations in which men control women's production, reproduction and sexuality. Patriarchy is 'father being the head of the family.' The method of patriarchy has prevailed in our society right from the ancient Vedic period. Githa Hariharan has carefully shown the Indian social system and has depicted the patriarchal system in her novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night*. It is a fiction that advocates feminist ideology. In the story, three women characters Devi, Sita and Mayamma, are all in the crunch of patriarchy. In India, the super cultural sense of today is based on patriarchy. The caste system and patriarchy are related to these cultural standpoints. Women's progress in society is not from myth to truth but from legend to the tale which has caused awe and terror in the community.

The Thousand Faces of Night is full of complex problems. Devi's attempt to change old ideas into modern concepts miserably fails. Devi's character stands for the victim of cunning patriarchy. The novel is an example of women's sufferings in the patriarchal cultural matrix of traditional Indian society. The patriarchy in Indian society has exploited Indian women and kept her in the corner of Indian culture and has kept her in a used situation. The cogitations made by Githa Hariharan are authentic, realistic and very much fearless. Her significant works wake up against this patriarchal system and demand social justice for women. Thus the patriarchy described by Githa Hariharan is an outcome of her serious investigation made into a systematic model.

The history of human civilization is replete with female devaluation and marginalization. Religions all over the world to have promoted male dominance. Githa Hariharan has portrayed the social-cultural twin construct whereby there is a co-existence of deification and

subjugation at the same time. She has voiced the deprivation and oppression of contemporary women. Devi is unable to place herself in the male-dominated social set up, either in the form of a submissive wife or a rebellious lover. She tries to retreat from the stereotyped role of an Indian wife and search for herself as an alternative identity.

Devi's grandmother tries to link the mythological characters to the real-life women, Devi herself finds it is complicated to do so. She feels that it is challenging for women in real life to rise to such heights of heroism and courage and seek an identical image of themselves... The author has tried to debunk the aura that surrounds mythical characters and shown clearly through the personality of Devi how reality shatters the dreamy world of myths. Perhaps this marginality of woman and quest for identity finds vent through the escapist dreams that Devi often visualizes. Githa Hariharan has tried to draw parallels between the text and the intertext in the form of Devi's cousin Uma and Amba, Uma is not able to take revenge on her ill-treatment and marginalization. Women have been dependent on men in every society.

In spite of the waves of the entire world, women have been marginalized in Indian society in the name of tradition and custom. The Indian social and familial structure gives primary importance to the reproductive ability of a woman. Githa Hariharan has highlighted this through all the leading characters. Devi and Mayamma are characters belonging to different socio-economic backgrounds. But despite the fact, both have to face embarrassing situations in their lives, because of their inability to bear a child.

Githa Hariharan throws light on a variety of poignant and heart touching issues and problems through her novels. All the protagonists in the story, whether from the text as well as intertext, have been victimized in such a way that their individuality is under constant suppression, wherein breaking free from those chains have been the crux of their existence. Githa Hariharan has shown the marginality and tradition of all the textual as well as intertextual characters, but has shown their revival. She has not merely concentrated on the struggle and quest for woman, but has shown how they overcome the predicament and seek salvation.

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