CULTURE AND TRADITION IN GITHA HARIHARANS "THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT"

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The structure of *Thousand Faces of Night* is rather traditional. The English word "tradition" comes from the Latin tradition, the noun from the verb trader ere or trader. It was originally used in Roman law to refer to the concept of legal transfers and inheritance. Traditions may also be adapted to suit the needs of the day, and the changes can become accepted as part of the ancient tradition. Tradition changes slowly, with changes from one generation to the next not being seen as significant. Thus, those carrying out the traditions would not be consciously aware of the change, and even if a tradition undergoes major changes over many generations, it would be seen as unchanged. Indian woman is brought up in traditional culture. It has been observed that, "Basically, culture offers a lot to the distinct fields of human existence. It stands as a set of accumulated oppositions too, with regards to its literary and scientific perspectives. Sociology may put it forward as the institutionalized modes of living of a specific group of people where as literature takes culture as a cluster of diverse values". (Padmini)

The Thousand Faces of Night is a reflection of such diverse values. Though the writer's individual talent should be rooted in the tradition of a particular society and culture, the real strength of the modern literary imagination lies in its evocation of the individual's predicament in terms of alienation in her own society. This is a typical feeling expressed by Devi about her mother. The traditional set mind of Indian women is reflected in interesting way. She must be credited for depicting such characters. Devi is not interested in marriage she accepts the proposal because she does not want to hurt the feeling of her mother. The

mother "weaves a cocoon a secure womb." Awakening feminine consciousness is the major objective of depiction of typical characters in these novels. The Thousand Faces of Night is the narrative that constantly challenges expectations about what it is to be a good wife, mother, and woman. The entire characters move around, social realities of Indian women. About the crux of the novel it has been rightly pointed that, "One of the important concerns in The Thousand Faces of Night is how women deal with the sanction of space in the Indian society." (Paul 108)

In Indian, marriage is not an independent affair of a young man and woman but affaires of the families of both the partners. Arranged marriages have long been the norm in Indian society. Even today, the majority of Indians have their marriages planned by their parents and other respected family-members. In the past, the age of marriage was too young. Each of the marriage is marked by silence; silence is a symbol of oppression, while liberation is speaking out, making contact. Contact is what matters. A woman who lies or who is silent may not lack a language, but she does not communicate. They have been seeking to strengthen their relation that already exist or create new relations though matrimonial alliances. This leads to an elaborate restrictive control on the sexual and marital norms. One of the defects of this type of arranged marriages is that the parents give importance only to the social and economic status of the partners. The intellectual personalities of the bride and bridegroom play hardly any role.

Despite the spread of education, the Hindu family structure still continues to be traditional, especially with regard to marriage. Even the educated people in India prefer arranged marriages. The traditional system of arranged marriages with the consent of and in consultation with the young partners seems to be an ideal type of marriage for the Indian society. Marriage arranged to please everybody except the principal patterns in the union doesn't mean companionship. It excludes human warmth, caring and understanding.

Man and woman need each other's love for maintaining a harmony in their physical mental health. The maladjustment between the husband and wife leads to various problems. The dissimilar tastes and interests of the couple if not spanned in time may lead to unhappy situations. No couple can remain united, unless there was a spiritual rapport between them.

Indian society is traditional and caste based. The system of patriarchy has prevailed in our society right from ancient Vedic period. The epics, 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' also express the feeling of patriarchy through different angles. In this novel carefully showed Indian social system and has depicted the patriarchy system in her novel, The Thousand Faces of Night. Her depiction of

patriarchy is based on her clear social inspection and realistic social analysis. In this work The Thousand Faces of Night is a fiction that advocates feminist ideology. The theory of feminism is based on revolt against patriarchy prevailing in human society. Patriarchy is an important character of Indian society because Indian social structure is deeply rooted in customs and traditions. Woman is a mirror of society and societal expressions to be accepted as women are part and parcel of family culture. This space search has been truly demonstrated by her novel. Subordination of women is due to patriarchal system. The logic of male theory is a base behind the logic of patriarchy. The male mind is considered as superior to the female body, therefore in the marriage market it does not get the same status as the male mind. Male dominated features also appear in literature. Patriarchal power politics prevails in every traditional society and family system as well. Women's priorities are neglected by men in their marital life. In The Thousand Faces of Night, three women Devi, Mayyamma, Sita are all in the crunch of patriarchy. Male bias of Hindu men helps women to see their culture through their own eyes. This is what the novelist evokes in this novel. The study of this feminist novel also shows how these differences are focused. Cultural structure in life has perpetuated patriarchy.

In India the cultural super sense 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 myth to myth which has caused awe and terror in society. The thousand faces of night, in this novel play with the two images of 'Optimistic' and 'Pessimistic' women. She shows struggle between tradition and modernity. She tells us the story of five women characters like Devi, Sita, Pati, Parvatiamma and Mayamma. Patterns of women's life in a Hindu cultural society can very well be observed in The Thousand Faces of Night. There are other narratives of women linked with these women. Mythological female characters, like Sita, Amba, Gandhari, Ganga, Gauri are strongly reflected in the characters of the novel although there is a vast difference in the time regions of the two. Popular all these, women are connected by their quest for identity, unhappy marriages and dissatisfied ambitions. These stories of middle and working class women are contrasted with the mythological stories of ideal women. And instead of suggesting a way out of the complex situation the mythological stories tend to cross-examine them. The protagonist refuses to follow the preaching from mythological recklessly. She challenges the 'moral' of these stories and tries to translate these 'morals' in a new light. Similar was the circumstance of Devi, the central figure in Githa Hariharan's novel The Thousand Faces of Night. Devi, the daughter of a traditional south

Indian Brahmin family, returned to Madras from America, to live with her mother, sita. Devi, the protagonist, undergoes an identity crisis even after following the norms set by the society. She constately faces the problem of tradition versus modernity, dilemma of cultures western versus eastern, dilemma of mind versus heart and dilemma of being a 'good girl' versus 'bad girl', The crisis 'to be or not to be a good girl' haunts her and the agony of identity crisis attains the desired intensity through the use of myths. Through the study of women characters, provides us with a look into the Indian tradition and culture and the position of women in the Indian society. It is about the journey of Indian women through tradition to modernity in search of self-identity. It also discusses the ways out. It tells us how the characters, mythological and modern cope with passive victimhood Issues raised by Hariharan are social, cultural and ethical. The plight of women is similar through- out irrespective of religion and class. Economically, women might not be equal to men, socially they are deprived of power and culturally they are not given similar treatment. Githa Hariharan's The Thousand Faces of Night (1993) may best be read as a part of the re-visions' myth- making program one finds in women's texts; but she use of and response to myths adds a new dimension to this mode. As parts of this re-making, old story come to be retold in different ways from geocentric perspectives; the traditional figures of patriarchal mythology such as Circe, Medusa and Helen have all been re-invented demolishing the cultural stereotypes popularised and patronised by the patriarchal set up. Such re-visions' myth-making has been one of the "strategies of emancipation" employed effectively in the case of women's liberation. As Patricia Yeager has rightly observed: "As women play with old texts' the burden of the tradition is lightened and shifted, it has the potential of being remade (18)".

Subversion, imitation and pastiche seem to be preferred techniques in feminist re-writing of the old texts. Re-vision's myth-making thus becomes an act of continuous remaking and insistent interrogation of the received tradition, affecting a constant renewal of culture. The present-day world is changed world because of the development in education and modernization. But in spite of this fact, "The inner consciousness of the Indian psyche and the social relations are based on the traditional image of ideal womanhood even in the changed context". (Rao)

In this novel *the thousand faces of night*, Hariharan beautifully narrated in mythological way. All the characters are severely followed by cultural and tradition norms in their life. This cultural behaviour was come from our ancestor's. Hariharan precisely explores the prescription of the gender relations by means of Indian mythology. GithaHariharan debut novel *the thousand faces of*

night is the dismissing saga of women struggling to survive in a world of shattered dreams. It is a story about three women, trying to exist and struggle as well as make their carrier in various ways, caught between traditional and modernity. Hariharan was on maternity leave when the novel comes in her as she was surrounded by women of all ages.

The greatest degree of anarchy is in the development of the characters of the protagonist Devi, her mother Sita and the servant Mayamma. All of them struggle to survive in a world of devastated dreams. Though the characters protest, but is mostly silent subtle and is only expressed after subjection to torture and neglect, only after a long period patience and survival. Apart from this, if she does anything substantial is not mentioned. Though the relationship was temporary one, justification is given for this relationship:

"Dan was Devi's answer to the white claustrophobia of an all clear, all American campus. Even before they could come together in friendship," (3)

Devi returns back to India, but is totally different from the one before her visit to the USA. She has now no initiative, no urges to do anything and waits passively for others to arrange her life. Hariharan tries to point to point out that Devi's character developed as it did as significance of many mythological stories told to her by her grandmother in her childhood. Her grandmother is the oldest character created by GithaHariharan and though she is not present in the novel's main action as and events all the time, yet her presence is felt though the different mythological stories which she tells Devi. The stories which she heard every summer from the Grandmother is a kind of preparation to her future life. The child's mind is prepared to accept her role of woman. The grandmother's stories prepare the child towards her marriage where fortitude, patience, endurance and perseverance are inevitable. Grandmother's stories are allusions to Gods, Goddess, superhuman warriors, brave prince, beautiful and virtuous princesses, men and women destined to lead heroic lives. For each character's problems, the grandmother indirectly narrates a story. The stories of Gandhari, Amba, Damayanthi and others reflect on the life of these characters in the novel. Devi is the central character in the novel. She likes ammu in Arundhati Roy's the god of small things has to endure per suction in her social life. The novel presents a vivid picture of patriarchal dominance in social life, besides sticking a note of feminist approach on theme of women psychology. In fact, globally the psychological suffering of the women is not so intense and heart-touching like that of an Indian woman because of the liberty they enjoy. As they can break any kind of bondage to revolt against and kind of persecution, they have no such cultural concept of subordination of women to men.

Githa terms at these myths from the eyes of a modern, educated woman. She challenges the patriarchal models of these myths in Thousand Faces of Night. There have been many women characters in Mahabharata and Ramayana. These epics have laid down the principles of social power structure. In Hindu Mythology, the women are treated as sacrificing, dependent, worried to please, subordinate and submissive. This depiction of woman stands true in the present time as well and these are still the popular themes in a study of television serials as quoted by Chris Barker as 'Attributes of masculinity and femininity on Indian television' (Krishnan and Dhinge, 1990). Since ages, the Indian culture has been operating on the basis of the norms laid down by these epics. The women characters may have been powerful enough but the society has been modelled on 'Sita' in Ramayana. In the Hindu Mythology ideal women is 'Sita'. Wendy Doniger calls Sita the 'official role model' for Indian women and laments, 'How different the lives of the actual women in India would have been had Draupadi, instead of Sita, been their official role model! Many Hindus name their daughters Sita, but few name them Draupadi. According to Dungier the women of Mahabharata are extremely prominent, feisty, and individualistic, in part as a result of changes that were taking place in the social structures at the time of the reception of the text. There are some women in Ramayana who behave badly, like Kaikeyi, Manthara- the hunchback women or Ahalya- the archety- pal adulteress. The differentiated images of women in the Ramayana led to another major split in Hinduism, for though the Brahmin imaginary made Sita the role model for the Hindu women from this time onward, other Sanskrit texts as well as many dialect versions of Ramayana picked up on the shadow aspect of Sita, the passionate Sita, an aspect that is also entrenched in this first text, only partially displaced on to other, openly demonic women.

Yet the later Brahmin imaginary greatly played down Sita's dark, deadly aspect and edited out her weaknesses to make her the perfect wife, totally subservient to her husband. How different the lives of the actual women in India would have been had Sita as she is actually portrayed in Valmiki's Ramayan and in some other retelling been their official role model. The Valmiki Ramayan thus sowed the seeds both for the oppression of women in the dharma- historic tradition and for the resistance against that oppression in other Hindu traditions. The twentieth century women authors are trying to challenge the traditionally symbolised 'ideal woman' model of female depiction or the oppressed.

They represent a conflict between the ideal woman and the real woman. Thousand Faces of Night explores many facets of womanhood. Strangely enough all women characters are unhappy in marriage, unhappy with motherhood- if attained-is dynamic and unwanted, Devi and others including Parvatiamma or mayamama who even after attaining it reject it. Devi plays the role of suave young charmer in Dan's life, host and home-maker waiting for her husband, Mahesh who comes home as a guest, and a muse for Gopal, the musician. She is unable to see herself completely in any of these roles. She realizes that all the three men in her life- Dan, Mahesh and Gopal had their own identities and she was expected to fuse herself in their identities. The Hindu society in which she grew up demanded her to be a virtuous woman and a 'virtuous women' to merge herself with the identity of the man in her life. She has a problem when she becomes aware that men rule the world, in a patriarchal society like India. She also finds that here, in India, females are raised in the world with different expectations. As soon as Devi realizes this, she promptly comes out of it, to find her own identity individuality.

Devi belongs to a traditional Hindu Brahmin family that believes that marriage is the ultimate goal of a woman's life. Devi exhibits enough control compromising with her individuality agreeing for an arranged marriage. The narrative also takes us to, Devi's childhood, Devi's grandmother's house where the seeds of such a conflict were sown. It was here that Devi learns the rules of being a good girl. She does not pursue a career after her graduation from USA. In US, she is with Dan but Dan's culture was totally different from Devi's and she felt like a stranger, different and unfit for Dan. She hears her 'culture calling'. She leaves her past life in U.S and comes back to India to marry. Devi is tamed by 'memories' of all the stories told by Grandma. A victim of her own imagination of herself as a 'Devi', she is trapped easily into a traditional marriage forgetting her past. The second part explores Devi's life after an arranged marriage. Mahesh, Devi's husband takes her for granted. Devi is unable to adjust in the new atmosphere. She is unhappy, dissatisfied and lonely. Devi says,

"This then is marriage, the end of ends; two or three brief encounters a month when bodies stutter together in lazy, inarticulate lust. Two weeks a month when the shadowy stranger who casually strips me of my name, snaps his fingers and demands a smiling handmaiden. And the rest? It is waiting, all over again, for life to begin, or to end and begin again. My education has left me unprepared for the vast, yawning middle chapters of my womanhood". (54)

Kakkar and Katherina talking about marriage while discussing 'Indian women-traditional and modern, asks, 'is love necessary Devi has no desire to have children but Mahesh believes that she should have children not out of love but because everyone has them. Mahesh is

practical enough to understand that children are the logical outcome of a marriage. He is one of those members of traditional society who consider motherhood as the final goal for attaining womanhood or becoming a complete woman. She visits the hospital regularly so that her ovaries can be 'mended, an efficient receptacle for motherhood' (89). Mahesh begins to abandonment her more when she is unable to conceive despite extended efforts. She can sense this alienation. She says, 'I feel myself getting blurred in Mahesh's eyes. The focus gets softer and softer, till everything dissolves into nothing- ness, everything but my stubborn, unrelenting womb' (93). Mayamma suggests other ways out, through pleasing gods- her room is full of gods and goddesses, as she herself had experienced similar circumstances. Kakkar and Katherina study the nature of health and illness in the Indian setting and find it rather complicated. To use western categories an individual exists equally in a soma, a psyche, and a polis; a person is simultaneously a body, the self and a social being.

In the Indian concept, Gods and spirits, community and family, food and drink, personal habits and character, all seem to be involved in the maintenance of health. Yet these and other factors such as biological infection, social pollution, and cosmic displeasure, all of which Indians would also acknowledge as causes of ill health, only point to the recognition of a person's simultaneous existence in many different orders of being for most traditional Indians, the polis consists not only of living members, but of ancestral spirits, other spirit helpers, and –for the Hindus-the familiar gods and goddesses who populate the Indian cosmos. Subjectively, then an Indian is inclined to believe that his or her illness can reflect a disturbance in any one of the orders of being, whereas the symptoms may be manifested in the other orders. If a treatment, say in the bodily orders, fails, on is quite prepared to reassign the cause of illness to a different order and undergo its particular curing regimen without losing regard for the other methods of treatment.' Mayamma opts for many alternative treatments like lighting lamp under a tree, observing fasts and her room was covered with photos of gods and goddesses and ultimately she delivered a son. She suggests these ways to Devi who follows edging half-heartedly. However, Devi herself wants to explore her own self and is not prepared for any responsibilities of motherhood.

The novel reserves the entire space to discuss exclusively the issues related to women. Hariharan interpretation of the traditional myth and legends are amazingly quite modern, asserting the individuality of women as human beings and approving them to struggle oppression. It is believed she wanted to be her husband's equal partner in marriage. But the grandmother sees the blindfolding of Gandhari as a sign of gripe and rage. According to her Gandhari became aware of her husband's blindness only after marriage, when she meets him for the first time and sees "his pupils glazed and ruthless". With all her mythological stories, she makes Devi grow up with a sense of individuality and struggles to maintain it. Kader Aki also considers that in "the novel myths are revisited rewrote and retold from a female point of view in order to focus the inner lives and spaces of women."

The name, "Devi" may be understood as a generic name to mean "goddess". It is in fact added as a suffix to the names of all goddesses. Besides, the name "Devi" in its original Puranic sense refers to Mahamaya, the absolute divine power. All the forces which appear in various names and forms are in fact different manifestations of Devi. Hariharan's Devi, when placed in this tradition, acquires a symbolic position and her quest becomes characteristic of that of the whole community of women. Also, it marks a voyage to the geocentric past, a time when the goddess was representing Devi in the centre of creation. She is able to liberate her from the desire of attaining motherhood.

The desire to conquer herself is the strongest in her. She is educated and knows that she needs to find her own identity before motherhood. She is marginalized and alienated to such an extent that she loses faith in herself. She is completely drained out by 'giving'. Now, she wants to stop and think and again generate her inner strength. She wants to revolt against Mahesh, who has brought her in this condition and her body helps her in her silent revolt against Mahesh by not conceiving.

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