

SELF ASSERTION OF DEVI IN GITHA HARIHARAN'S THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT

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Abstract

The Indian Women Writers in English started their journey during the 1980s and through their work they indicated a clear transformation of ideas in regard to an Ideal Indian Woman. And another essential thing about this period is that it is considered as an era of Myth. Women's works were noticed only during this period.

At present women can see their life and identity through literature. There are many focus on history and politics in society and female writers' work should center their attention on Mythology. During the twentieth century there were many women writers flourishing in India. Indian women writers explored the feminine subjectivity and applied the theme that ranges from childhood to complete womanhood. Indian women writers like Anita Desai, Shashi Despande, Manju Kapur, Githa Hariharan, Chitra Banejee, Nayantara Sahgal and so on.

In this paper we are going to discuss Githa Hariharan's work *The Thousand Faces Of Night*. In this work she has shown the 3 generations of women. Devi is the protagonist of the novel. She is the 3rd generation of women, who is under confusion in her life. She cannot lead a peaceful life. She has a thirst for self assertion. Devi needs to find a solution to the problem. At last she finds the solution and starts a new life.

Devi becomes bold. The immature attitude of Devi is transformed into a form of dream. In the dream she was very bold, mature, strong both in mentally and physically but in reality she is just opposite to her dream. Devi becomes aware of her identity. She overcomes the traditions in real life. She starts to think about her own life and finds out her own roots to survive in society.

INTRODUCTION

Githa Hariharan belongs to twentieth century Indian women writers and a multi talented woman. She was born in Coimbatore, India and She grew up in Bombay and Manila. She now lives in Delhi. She is prominent among other women writers and differs from other women writers in Indian literature in her portrayal of different facets of women. Other Indian women writers are highly educated and have enough experience to focus on the status of women in Indian society. They talk about the contemporary women's problem in love, sex and marriage in male dominating society. But Githa Hariharan differs from them by concentrating on women's problem with the help of Indian Mythology. She is brought up in Hindu tradition. So she is well aware of handling Indian Myths taken from Ramayana and Mahabharata and relates them to the women characters of her first and debut award winning novel *The Thousand faces of night* (1992) which won the Commonwealth writer's prize for the first book in 1993. She has not only got Commonwealth writer's prize but also Booker prize even before Arundhati Roy. Her works have been translated into many languages. Her other novels include *The Ghosts of Vasu Master*, *When Dreams Travel*, *In Times of Siege* etc... She was interviewed by Sumana Mukhejee's. In that interview she has shared her feelings about the moment she started her career in literature. She says: "The moment I actually made the commitment to full time writing came during my first maternity break. I was 30, I had written a lot of apprentice work and conversation was not good with a newborn!reader for that. But I have kept at it for 30 odd years. While paying my bills and educating my children"(interview)

Githa Hariharan truly deserves the ‘Commonwealth Writers’ prize for her first novel. Her protagonists have great courage and resilience yet they are too subdued and not strong enough to fight for their rights. They have great tolerance level and cannot be termed as feminist and their plight remains the same over generations and female subordination is very much prevalent. Women are humiliated and suppressed at every level and the trauma they experience at every level of married life is horrifying. Women are condemned for it instead of laying the blame on men. Hariharan has mirrored the male dominated behavior of males and the tragedy that envelops lives of women eternally. Women are in as fragile a condition today as they were in days of yore.” It doesn’t matter whether they are educated or uneducated. They are weighed on the same scale and men will be men and expect them to be subservient and sacrificing or they will show them the door to loneliness and unhappiness”(Feminism and Fiction,244).

The Thousand faces represent the life of women in society and how they are being treated in mal society and Night refers to the dark side of women’s life under the name of tradition, myth, custom, religion and so on which bring women under the circle made by men. Kamala Das’s poem “Night and Children Slims”. Describe how women are given sexual harassment by men. Here Night symbolizes the invitation to sin and envelopes the inexplicable cry of women. There are many works that clearly depict the position of women. The significance of the novel lies not in the incidents but in the set of ideas that constitute the happenings of the past into realities of the present.

SELF ASSERTION OF DEVI

Self actualization is a process of complete realization of one’s own potential and of one’s true self. Self-actualization involves assessing one’s life, one’s motives, accepting one’s own fallibility, willing to change, learning from good things, assessing one’s own progress and realizing one’s own dream. According to William Walsh: “Suffering is the universal experience of extremity which unites all men” (voss, 30). Women are struggling to get inner selves. If women are in need of their self-identity they should focus only on their point. Their self-identity is not in other hands, it is within them.

Githa Hariharan has shown the women characters who face violence both in the society as well as in cultural surroundings. In fact “a women as a victim of this violence, as a marker of social and cultural subjugation of the other, and trophies of conquest” signifies that” the discourse of nation “or beyond is “not only meaningless but oppressive for her” rightly observes sudipMinhas (Feminism and Fiction, 107)

.Githa Hariharan shows Devi as an educated girl, which helped her to realize her position in her life. Female education for Ruskin was” not for self-development, but for

self-renunciation”(Thought of prose, 101). So Women should be educated because it will be helpful for herself as well as those around her. Devi recollects the life of Gauri, a maid-servant who worked in Devi’s grandmother’s house. She looks like a young woman with golden skinned. Devi remembers about Gauri:” she was a young woman as golden skinned as her name, and when she walked home from the pond, freshly bathed, her dripping clothes covered with a plain white sari, she looked like a river goddess”(31).

Devi’s immature mind cannot decode the real purpose underlying the story, it is etched in her memory as a story throughout her life. As Devi grew and matured at the same time the grandmother grew older, stories also took a new shape.”The grandmother’s stories began around this time to take on a sharper, more precarious tone of dangerous possibilities”(35). According to Devi, marriage shatters women’s dreams and they have to sacrifice and be subservient as sexual objects. Devi is a living example who is eternally ridiculed by her husband. Devi walks out of her marriage and is judged unfairly for it. Women are victims of their destiny. Self actualization involves fulfilling one’s potential and becoming all that is capable of being. It is a process of allowing one’s true self to emerge and explore its creative abilities. Devi represents another harsh social reality of contemporary society as a married woman . She says “it is useful to remember that a husband is a man. So is a father He trembles if you wet through the insatiable glands of your outraged heart. Do not believe them “(93).

Nothing around her seems to soothe her Sympathizing with her condition, Bindu Jacob writes At this juncture she meets her neighbour Gopal, a singer and falls in love with him. Unlike Mahesh, this man is very caring for her and by his acts makes her feel that she is very special for him. He senses things related to her before it takes place and misses nothing. Devi feels like an ignorant child imprisoned in a woman's body"(A study of evolution, 128). She feels overwhelmed by her new experience of life. She goes in live in relation with Gopal, becomes part of his staff, and accompanies him in this musical tour According to Gopal women are like raga because they give strength and celebrate the things which have superficial power" Why is this raga like a woman? It is a raga that celebrates strength. It is passion that gives direction to all the superficial, pretty ... Heroine can emerge"(131). These words made changes in her mind. For some days her new experience gives her pleasure. But after sometime she realizes that both belong to two different worlds: he from the light and she from the darkness; he from popular world, she from unpopular world. She feels uneasy about her relationship with him. Because her own experience is splintered and light weight, she realizes that Gopal's music is no longer romantic and not attractive to her anymore. His song does not have the power to attract a magnetic power. Devi feels Gopal is not the solution to her problem.

Devi is not happy with her husband and decides to fall in love with her lover, Gopal. But since it is unacceptable in a traditional society, she becomes an open subject to everybody's comment and leering. Devi feels for no one in her life and feels isolated in the society, so she searches for companions. Devi fed up with her husband and Gopal. Devi finds her companion as a garden, like her mother. Devi spent most of her time in the garden. "In the big , white mansion, surrounded by a large, well kept garden. Devi felt like a foreigner"(132). The nature has the capacity to smooth her mind.

Devi finds out that her mother. So she returns to her mother" to stay and fight to make sense of it all"(139). Devi has now find out her place in the society. She comes to her mother, she feels secure in her mother's affection.

SUMMING UP

The concept of women in the present day India has undergone several changes. In particular, a new set of writers deeply concerned with the social and psychological problems of the middle class Indian women had come up. In the past women in Indian fiction remained always on the periphery even as their works glorified in unison the stereotypical virtues like endurance devotions, self-sacrifice and total submission. Devi is the example of the modern ideas who burst out and she doesn't like to be a slave and gives voice to her feelings to save her life.

Githa Hariharan's brings together and reinterprets some problematic concepts such as history, culture, religion, and creates a theoretical axis upon which it charts insightful and engaging aspects of selfhood and identity. The words of Betty Friedan's in *The Feminine Mystique*: "The key to the trap is of course education. The feminine mystique has made higher education for women seem suspect, unnecessary and even dangerous. But i think that education and only education has saved and can continue to save, American women from the greater dangers of the feminine mystique"(The Miseducation,2).

The novel makes one realize how thin is the difference between reality and illusion is how interspersed facts and fantasy are. The author obviously believes that our life is influenced by many more elements than our eye can perceive. The novel aims at handling the fearful along with the sweet in a delicate way. The overall impact the novel leaves on our mind i s that of a relief, like that of coming out of myth and tradition into a refreshing dawn. The concluding part presents the discourse in a compressed form, whereby the crux is highlighted and the quintessence called out.

Devi at the end of the novel gets her place in the society, "when she stopped conforming to the conventional picture of femininity she finally began to enjoy being a woman"(The Collector,1). She overcomes the old tradition and finds the new way to stand on her own.

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