
CULTURAL SUBORDINATION AND CONVENTIONS IN GITA HARIHARAN'S *THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT*

V. Pavithra,
II- M.A English Literature,
Kongu Arts and Science College

Abstract

Gita Hariharan is born in Coimbatore, India who is one of the prolific fiction writers. She is also a novelist, essayist, and freelance editor. Her writings have mostly reflected the background of Women's struggle and oppression in society by the two-hundred-year-old customs and culture. It indicates the subalternity which means not only the colonialism but also someone who has been marginalized or oppressed in their life. She exposes the dominant life of women in her first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* which won the Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 1993. The writer describes the psychology of the women those who are affected by cultural dominance through their obligations in the house and how they are treated by their men. Gita explains the conditions of women through the major character of Devi who was completed her studies in the U.S. She was forced to marry Mahesh, a Regional Manager in a multinational company and to follow the conventions of Indian culture which made her education as invaluable. It represents her painful feelings in follow the tradition of Indian oldest culture which was taught by her grandmother from the Indian myths of Ramayana and Mahabharata which convey the tradition of India.

Gita presents about the Indian culture, people and myths through the Indian mothers are trains, protect and guide their daughters on all their endeavors. The paper analyses the subordination and conventions of India in culture. The cultural subalternity exposes by the novelist through describing the Indian myths in a detailed manner in the novel of *The Thousand Faces of Night* which indicates a thousand faces of women in the cultural dominance.

Keywords: *freelance editor, Commonwealth, Ramayana and Mahabharata, .etc*

Gita Hariharan is born in Coimbatore, India who is one of the prolific fiction writers. She is also a novelist, essayist, and freelance editor. Her writings have mostly reflected the background of Women's struggle and oppression in society by the two-hundred-year-old customs and culture. It indicates the subalternity which means not only the colonialism but also someone who has been marginalized or oppressed in their life. She exposes the dominant life of women in

her first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* which won the Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 1993. The significant perennial problem in the novel is cultural subalternity which refers to the conditions of subordination in the Indian culture. It implies the economic, social, political, racial and cultural dominance.

The writer describes the psychology of the women those who are affected by cultural dominance through their obligations in the house and how they are treated by their men. Gita explains the conditions of women through the major character of Devi who was completed her studies in the U.S. She was forced to marry Mahesh, a Regional Manager in a multinational company and to follow the conventions of Indian culture which made her education as invaluable. My education has left me unprepared for the vast, yawning middle chapters of my womanhood (54). It shows her husband and her father-in-law's refusal to work in the outside of the house instead of it they taught about the household duties of women to her.

In Indian society, a daughter is considered a guest in her natal family, treated with the solicitous concern often accorded to welcome outsider, who, all too soon will marry and leave her mother for good. Mindful of her daughter's developmental fate the mother re-experiences the emotional conflicts her own separation once aroused, and this, in turn, tends to increase her indulgence and solicitude towards her daughter. (61)

Gita described the life of women by saying that they never want for anything and they had a very limited role to play in the society which reflects the Indian cultural scenario and the dominance of men. It also shows her separation from her mother. As a result, they lacked vigor, vitality, exuberance, and mobility and also not allowed to think independently though Devi tries to fit herself in the role of a wife and daughter-in-law just as her mother and grandmother did years ago. She tried but failed to adjust herself thoroughly to traditional life and she cannot live as a wife in an arranged marriage by following her husband's footprints.

Devi has some expectations and supports from her husband but Mahesh did not understand and realized it. The conventions and shackles of Indian culture or social morality made her as a slave who got only painful experience in her marriage life. She is confined to the four walls of her house, looking after her household duties. It was not only experienced by Devi, all the Indian women those who are subordinated by the same problem of cultural dominance. It gave her a disappointment and dissatisfaction in life that marriage is torture and it hangs like a knife above her neck:

I am still a novice in the more subtle means of torture. I thought the knife would plunge in, slit, tear, rip across my neck, and let the blood gush, ... The games it plays with me are ignominious... The heart I have prepared so well for its demands remains untouched, unsought for. (54)

It represents her painful feelings in follow the tradition of Indian oldest culture which was taught by her grandmother from the Indian myths of Ramayana and Mahabharata which convey the tradition of India.

Gita presents about the Indian culture, people and myths through the Indian mothers are trains, protect and guide their daughters on all their endeavors. The paper analyses the subordination and conventions of India in culture. The cultural subalternity exposes by the novelist through describing the Indian myths in a detailed manner in the novel of *The Thousand Faces of Night* which indicates a thousand faces of women in the cultural dominance.

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