
**Perturbation of Women Today: A Study Of Githa Hariharan's The
Thousand Faces Of Night**

Akanksha kumari¹ (Research Scholar at Patna University)

Dr Nand Kishore Pandey² (designation - professor at Patna University .
English department)

Address: Mohanpur punaichak near Hanuman mandir Patna 23 Bihar

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Abstract

In The Thousand Faces of Night, Githa Hariharan presents the different shades of women, and for that, she has taken the help of Indian historical texts and classical literature. In this novel, Hariharan has depicted many forgotten classical characters who run parallel with the lives and sufferings of women characters in this novel. Being a modern Indian women writer, Hariharan used a feminist approach in this novel, and she attempted to portray the truth about women of today's generation. The leading character of The Thousand Flights Night suffers through an identity crisis. Initially, the protagonist went with that stereotypical perspective of looking at men for stability, strength, and worth. Hariharan highlights many women characters who came across their uneasiness and anxiety, and after that perturbation, they bounced back from their lows.

Keywords: tradition, conventional roles, self-realizations, anxiety, individuality.

Introduction:

Indian women writers have always given a great response and exposure to the struggling and traumatizing life of Indian women. They have portrayed both the conventional and unconventional women characters in their work. These Indian women writers are Anita Nair, Shashi Deshpande, Manju Kapoor, Githa Hariharan, Kamla Markandaya, Urvashi Bhutaliya, and many others. These women writers are well aware of the social conditioning and the mindsets that play a crucial role in shaping the characters of Indian women. This research paper reveals how Githa

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Hariharan has depicted women's anxiety about being unable to cope with the present scenario of modern society and the conventional roles Indian women have always performed.

Moreover, in *The Thousand FaNightf Night*, Hariharan depicted those female characters initially who were conventional, dutiful, and happily performed their conventional roles; however, when they found it challenging to emancipate themselves by performing such traditional roles, they developed their conventional character into unconventional who immune to their trauma and sufferings. Githa Hariharan has portrayed her female characters from three different generations to show the changing battlefields of women. However, the battles and their resulting trauma, anxiety, and suffering are the same in this postmodern era.

Hariharan highlights various stereotypical roles and duties, both positive and negative, of Indian women for which they have sacrificed their identity and dreams. A stereotype is harmful when it limits men's and women's capacity to develop personal abilities and potential, and there have been various stereotypes, particularly for women, since ancient times, which have been obstacles for women. In our society, which limits women's capability both mentally and physically by injecting in their minds that they are weak and not capable of making decisions even for themselves, so it is always the male member of their family who is supposed to make decisions on their behalf for their betterment.

This novel, *The Thousand Fanightf Night*, narrates the stories of three major female characters: Devi, Sita, and Mayamma. Apart from them, Hariharan also portrayed those forgotten and less narrated mythological characters from Ramayana and Mahabharat who are paralleled with them for resolving their mind how they have to behave in a particular way in a particular situation. The novel highlights how

Women of every generation are trained to be ideal women in a particular manner from childhood. For that, women from great Indian classical epics are being exemplified tremendously. Hariharan presented the narratives of three generations not only to show the changing paradigm for women from generation to generation but also to show the thousands of faces they have in their journey of establishing an actual social identity for themselves. Like other writers in India, Hariharan's works also focus on the narratives of Indian history and mythology. Heroines of classical Indian literature greatly impacted Githa Hariharan, and she introduced them with great honor and respect in her novel *The Thousand Flights Night*. If we had a close analysis of her novel *The Thousand Fight Night*, we could witness that Hariharan celebrated those less celebrated heroines of Indian history whose sufferings and pains are somewhere shadowed by the significant classical heroines like Sita and Draupadi. In this novel, Hariharan puts more emphasis on Ganga, Gandhari, Damyanti, and Amba from Mahabharat to show how they have chosen their ways of emancipation; these women had converted themselves from conventional women characters to

unconventional and from delicate and innocent to passionate and desirous women characters. The historical stories of Gandhari, Damyanti, and Amba were narrated to the protagonist by her grandmother, whom Hariharan has represented as a symbol. Devi listened to all these stories from her childhood days, and when she got married to Mahesh there in her in-law's house, her father-in-law narrated her mythological stories of responsible, dutiful, and ideal self-sacrificing women as wives. However, she never found consoling or peace in those narratives because she was unable to establish a relationship with those mythological women.

Devi is the only character representing tradition and modernism in The Thousand Flights Night. Initially, she went to America to pursue higher studies. Later, she came back to her mother to get married by her choice, but after being married to Mahesh, her marriage to a most rational man proved wrong. Mahesh didn't create an emotional bond between them that brought Devi her suffering, loneliness, anxiety, and trauma, which resulted in an extramarital affair with another man, an artist, and musician, brought a moment of relief to Devi's perturbation that didn't last long, and her elopement with him left her emotions unsatisfied again. With the representation of Devi's character Hariharan highlights that in our modern era it's not necessary that a woman should be dependent on man for their emotional, physical and mental well-being for today's women it's important to be strong herself it's not necessary that they will get that emotional satisfaction back from their men they have to be their own savior, which Devi did at the end she emancipated herself by resolving that now she is not going to be dependent on any man for her emotional stability and mental peace she went back to her mother and decided to start a new voyage of her life with her mother, at this point when Devi felt unable to cope with those traditional or societal role as a wife which her mother putted on her, Devi turned herself from a conventional Indian woman to an emancipated woman, She decided not to be among those Indian women who have no other way than just to play those traditionally prescribed roles of a conventional Indian woman as soft, dedicated and submissive. Other female characters of the Thousand Faces of Night site, Mamma, and Parvatiamma, spent a major and crucial part of their lives serving and taking care of others' happiness. Along with Devi Sita, and Mayamma also had resolution and emancipated themselves from their sufferings and mental trauma. While Devi who is the center of this novel came across various mythological stories and real-life experience of many women throughout the novel, however, some of the mythological characters like Gandhari, Ganga, Amba, and Damyanti were introduced to her during her childhood to model her into a perfect Indian woman who could sacrifice her wishes and desires for the betterment of her male counterpart, family, and society.

Conclusion

Today, Indian women writers are facing a challenging scenario for deconstructing their identity and also recreating a society where there would be no

discrimination on the basis of gender. In almost all of her novels, Hariharan brings out the challenges and struggles faced by modern women in preserving their individualism. In *The Thousand Flights Night*, Hariharan talks about both facts and fiction to expose man-woman relationships in both traditional and modern days; it also represents the status of women in Indian society: their suffering, pain, trauma, and psychic status. The well-being of a woman depends on how she is treated in her family and society. In this narrative, the female characters are portrayed as real survivors and saviors. The psychological wellness of women is as important as their physical wellness. A common thing one can find in women of any generation is that they are sensible, and that is why they are prone to mental suffering and trauma; the female characters in *The Thousand fight night* initially went through anxiety and mental trauma because of their relationship with their male counterparts however they took strong step for their transformation from a conventional and vulnerable being to an unconventional, resolute and determined one.

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