

THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT BY GITHA HARIHARAN FROM A FEMINIST POINT OF VIEW

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ABSTRACT

In their works, modern Indian women writers have tapped into feminist awareness. Githa Hariharan is a leading contemporary English author. Devi, the protagonist of *The Thousand Faces of Night*, suffers through an identity crisis. Devi comes to India from the United States in order to help her widowed mother. Devi is pushed into a social niche after she returns to India, where she is subjected to the full power of tradition, mythology, and collective psychology. She recalls the forming effect of her early recollections on her maturation into a lady. Sita takes Devi to the marriage altar. Mahesh, like many other males in Indian society, desires a docile and subservient wife. Mahesh considers his marriage to be a given. Finally, Devi returns to her mother with the intention of starting again.

FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN GITHA HARIHARAN'S

THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT

In literature, feminism takes a varied approach. It has impacted practically every aspect of existence. In both short stories and novels, feminism as a phenomenon has broader repercussions. Feminism has had an intriguing impact on numerous dimensions in modern writing. It has a fresh progressive element to it. Identity crisis in Indian life has been well articulated by mostly Indian women writers. In India, modern women authors' feminist awareness is a unique phenomenon, displaying fury, sadness, and revolt against the system. Women authors have attempted to convey the inner turmoil and problem of Indian femininity.

Githa Hariharan attempts to portray the truth of today's generation of women. Their composite depiction exists in its own world. Understanding Githa Hariharan's various works from a feminist perspective is very important. Understanding feminist reflection in Githa Hariharan's works has required a whole new perspective. Women in India, for example, are suffering more as a result of victimisation in the age of globalisation. Githa Hariharan is a leading contemporary English author. She has distinguished herself as a feminist writer in

literary anthologies. Her most important work is her novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*, which was released in 1992. She is a woman's voice. She has depicted the protagonists in society via her works. Devi, the protagonist of *The Thousand Faces of Night*, suffers through an identity crisis.

Devi's marriage in *The Thousand Faces of Night* is organised and carried out by her mother. Because of her ambivalence regarding American society, Devi declines an offer of marriage from her African–American buddy Dan. Dan does propose to Devi at the end of their senior year, but she is taken aback when the question is posed to her. Dan relates her apprehension to a fear of taking chances. He is quite dissatisfied. Dan and Sarah are completely different in terms of their beliefs, culture, and customs, thus she turned him down. When Devi goes to meet Dan's family, she chooses to let go of her inhibitions and her Indianness. She is, however, unable to do so. Both make efforts to overcome these divides while building a friendship relationship, but she recognises that these disparities will always prohibit them from uniting. She admits that her education and time in America have given her a sense of freedom.

Devi looks on males for stability or affirmation of her worth. In the white claustrophobia of an all-clean, all-American college, she exorcises Dan and uses him as a shield. She understands that her appreciation of Dan is based on the notion that they cannot be one. When Dan proposes to her for marriage, she is taken aback. Devi's indulging in hashish or forming closeness with Dan might be regarded as a reaction to her mother's insistence that she only make acquaintances from reputable Brahmin homes.

Devi returns to India for her bereaved mother's sake. Sita takes Devi to the marriage altar. Like a nice Indian girl, she accepts to a negotiated marriage. Devi's open-mindedness, education, and life experiences question a lot of preconceived notions. She sacrifices her wants in order to satisfy her mother's wish and maintain the family honour. Sita gives Devi just enough time to master the art of wearing the perfect smile, diamonds, and a sari. Devi is pushed into a social niche after she returns to India, where she is subjected to the full power of tradition, mythology, and collective psychology. She recalls the forming effect of her early recollections on her maturation into a lady.

Even before they marry, Mahesh tells Devi about his business, his trips, and that his father and maidservant will be present, and that he would be lonely at times. Devi, too, considers

the situation from that perspective and concludes that she can handle the situation. In fact, she admires Mahesh's honesty and admits to admiring him. She believes he needs a woman who can be both a wife and a mother. She gradually realises, however, that his attitude toward marriage and her loneliness are too much for her to bear. When she says she spends her afternoon opening dirty chambers and cupboard doors infested with insects, one can imagine the absolute ennui that she feels in such a life.

Mahesh does not discuss business with Devi since he believes it is useless. He is completely oblivious to her loneliness. When Devi urges him to postpone his business trip, he cynically says that he would be born a woman in his future incarnation so that he will not have to work. He wants Devi to look after his father, take care of the household, and treat his friends nicely. Mahesh, like many other males in Indian society, desires a docile and subservient wife. Mahesh considers his marriage to be a given. Devi is helpless in the face of Mahesh's great confidence and arrogance. She expresses her wish to play cards with him in order to spend more time with him. When she says she wants to learn Sanskrit so she can better understand Baba's quotations, he quips that she doesn't need to, and that knowing Sanskrit would be acquiring high brow jargon. Mahesh's criticism, if she bears a body, appears to her to be a shrewd manoeuvre for a defenceless lady. Mahesh believes that knowledge is not required to make a lady happy. Her grandma, despite her lack of education, was a very happy woman. Mahesh is looking for a lady who will be submissive and obedient, and she is aware of this. The three women are from various generations and have distinct educational and social backgrounds. Devi's grandma, Mayamma, has been unable to conceive for several years. Devi couldn't bear a girl kid because Sita had one. Mayamma's husband and mother-in-law have physically abused her. Sita's problems are mainly mental, while Devi's are caused by her husband's indifference, which causes her emotional equilibrium to be disrupted.

In today's world, women are confronted with numerous complex issues. There are a lot of complicated issues in *The Thousand Faces of Night*. Devi's attempt to transform old thoughts into new notions falls terribly. Devi represents the victim of a crafty patriarchy. Githa Hariharan also shows the relationship between patriarchy and culture. In order to achieve her goal of sending her unmarried daughter to America, Sita suppresses her artistic side.

The protagonist's persona is intertwined with progressive feminist principles. Devi, the protagonist, is neither an ideal woman like her mother, Sita, nor spiritually superior like her

mother-in-law. She is a regular woman, an educated modern Indian woman with goals and objectives in her own society. She is born to act, to assume the disciplined role of a wife in married life, and to refuse to sacrifice her biological and emotional demands. Devi is a modern educated Indian woman whose opinions and perceptions of women are shaped by her intelligence and drive for self-satisfaction, as well as her awareness of the past. The conflict between past and present values actually propels human beings dependent on nature and rigidly defined social roles of passive suffering into the world, as represented in this storey.

Devi, Sita, and Mayamma's disappointments are beautifully depicted, conveying an aspect of Indian ethos. Indian customs, traditions, rituals, and superstitions are weaved into a rich literary fabric with a plethora of old myths and not-so-ancient allusion stories for this purpose. The fact that the author explains some of these in a glossary at the end of the book for non-Indian readers demonstrates how important they are for comprehending appreciation and, as a result, the novel's success. "My grandmother's tales were not your typical tales. She wrote a storey for each of my childhood inquiries, and she chose each one for a certain occasion. Every question was met with an answer from her. Her responses, on the other hand, were not straightforward: they had to be decoded." (135-6)

This demonstrates that Devi has profound imprints of her grandmother's stories, which she listened to as a child, and that when she visits India, her grandmother informs her all about the society's rituals and rules. At this time, she has received no response from her grandmother's storey.

Finally, Devi returns to her mother with the intention of starting over. The novelist does not answer the question of what will happen in the future. Her novel's characters are true representations of diverse segments of Indian society. This is a conventional strategy, as explained by Githa Hariharan. A true sense of feminist identity is a rebellious spirit. Protest and insurrection against the established orders are central to feminism. Githa Hariharan has depicted Devi's anti-system insurrection with a feminist zeal. She aspires to represent women's struggle in the transition between tradition and modernity.

The socioeconomic realities portrayed by Githa Hariharan are fundamental to the novel's popularity. Devi is shown as a self-sufficient individual who does not succumb to passive suffering. When she decides to stay with her mother, Sita, she is prepared to make compromises and adjustments while feeling a sense of loss. Devi is portrayed in the narrative

as a woman with whom one may identify—intelligent, inquisitive ladies who aren't satisfied with statuesque.

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