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## EPITOME OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN GITHA HARIHARAN'S *THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT*

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### ABSTRACT

Githa Hariharan a contemporary feminist novel writer of twentieth century. She won the commonwealth writer's prize in 1993 to her first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*. Githa Hariharan portrays the women of all class and caste were been caught hold under the hands of men. Women were equal in sky but they were treated unequal in the earth. In terms of their talents were not outwitted because of their opportunities and chances were denied. Women were considered the embodiment of sacrifice as take it granted and not even bothered about their wishes either cares about the silent sufferings in that way they were looked as Heard Deaf and Voiced Dumb. Women are considered as an inferior sex in an eyes men .All their inner strength were suppressed, oppressed, butchered and their agony were discriminated in gender by the social evils with only reason Female. Women's devotion to family and loyalty to all was also an unbreakable obstacle in their lives.

This paper lists out the silent sufferings and gender discrimination stand as line of control to break the strength of the women through the array of women characters and Hindu mythological characters in Githa Hariharan's work *The Thousand Faces of Night*.

**KEYWORDS :** Silent sufferings , Feminine , Gender discrimination and Agony of marriage

### INTRODUCTION

Githa Hariharan is the most renowned Indian women writer of Post-Colonial Indian English Literature in a contemporary period. Her first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) win The Commonwealth Writer's Prize in 1993 .She is not only an author but also an activist win the right to have the children named after her instead of carrying the father's name. The case argued and Indira Jaising in the Supreme Court agreed that the mother was also a "natural guardian" of the child .Template: AIR 1999,2. SCC 228. She raises the rights for women and puts a standpoint of first milestone

"Man and Woman have equal rights over their children". She hails from Coimbatore and brought-up in Bombay. Currently she puts up in New Delhi as a freelance editor, *A Southern Harvest* (1993) and *Sorry, Best Friend!*(1997).

Githa Hariharan concerned with re-articulating folk tales. She insists the necessity of reconstruction from dismantled parts of various ideas and beliefs of past has inheritance, such traditions and folklore should not go as waste, irrelevant and outdated. Indeed they are the source for Truths, Relevant and Usefulness for writing about present needs. Her common themes are

subjected to the Discrimination of Daughter, Silence of Women, No Recognition of their Talent, Conflict between Modernity and Tradition, Lack of Communication, Social and Cultural Evils, Economic Suppression and Enslavement to Family Duties. It showcase the true mindset in Indian society, when it comes to treatment of women has started to pen down in the works of post- Independence women writers in Indian English.

This paper focuses on the perspective of woman in another woman point of view. Githa Hariharan brings out an array of women characters for all her perspectives in *The Thousand Faces of Night*. She clearly portrays the women characters of three generation in *The Thousand Faces of Night* with Devi, Sita and Grandma (Pati) and the other sub women characters were Mayamma, Annapurna, Parvatiamma, Guari, Uma, Tara, Lalitha and Julia. Devi, the protagonist of the novel all other characters revolve around the centre character and leaves implication of their agony in life. In additionally, the mythological characters, spiritual God and Goddess were interlinked with those characters in novel. The Mythological characters are Gandhari, Amba and Damayanthi. The goddess are Sati, Parvati, Haimavati, Kali, Mahakali, Bhadrakali and Pratyangira and Lakshmi. The deified women with supernatural powers came from goddess body Shakthi, Mahashathi, Parashathi, Durga, Singhavahini and Mahishasuramardini. Array of characters in myth and novel had undergone unbearable agonies in which Devi learnt the victim of real woman life through theirs.

The myth stories and character heard Devi after marriage from Father in law and in childhood days from grandma has a wide distinct. The stories and characters in Father-in-law's (Baba) are almost same like suffering of woman but he puts in a way, Non-violence, truthfulness, honesty, purity, control of senses were the personification of woman's Dharma, "You see, it takes the wife's flame of dharma, to light within a man, the divine lamp that is rusting with neglect" (66). In accordance, Baba views as service to her husband is service to god's devotional worship. Again his story, Muthuswamy Dikshitar composed rare gem raga 'Kriti'. He had two wives, like sun and moon in complexion. The

first wife has dark complexion and Dikshitar prays for beautiful fair complexion girl is blessed with true prayers. Baba tells the stories of Jayadeva and Padmavathi. Purandar Das, Narayan Tirth and Thyagaraja. Those stories highlight the virtues of chastity, devotion and penance in the life of human being as a woman.

Grandma's character in the story was suffered but she puts it in a way that Women was the victims of society but they were strengthen enough to withstand all odds. View of the woman in imparting qualities of woman is with a dream of "Equality in society should be bloom for women". Her wishes not been in her life either in her daughter's (Sita) life or in her granddaughter's (Devi) life is a pitiful agony of marriage life. In which all their recognition of talents were shattered.

Devi took a photo frame of Sita sitting with 'veena in her grandmother house. She is overwhelmed on seeing it and to know that her mother knows to play veena. Grandma replied 'I thought your mother had torn them all' (28).

Grandma compares Sita life with *Mahabharatha* character Gandhari to know the role of real woman. Gandhari returns to her husband's house as a magnificent queen looked him but he looks the sky because of no eye-sight. She is in an utmost anger tore off a red skirt and tied it tightly over her eyes with fury. "She embraced her destiny – a blind husband-with a self-sacrifice worthy of her royal blood" (29). In the same way, Sita had played veena in husband's house after finished her household works. One day father-in-law roared "Put that veena away. Are you a wife, A daughter-in-law?" (30). She pulls out strings from the wooden base of veena with an unbearable silence looked up in a clear stinging whisper, "Yes. I am a wife, a daughter-in-law" (30). After an incident no one looks Sita with veena and never heard that music again. It stands as the heroic portion of Sita with divine anger and sacrifice like Gandhari.

Sita is more loyal and dutiful in husband house. Sita execute all her roles as wife, daughter-in-law, mother and household works in a clear way. She is very reserved in her voice in husband house. Sita out of her pity, she brings Annapurna to house.

Annapurna a distant cousin of Sita .She helps her in household works and played with Devi like a sister in climbing a tree to pluck raw mangoes. Her peals of happiness with unrestrained passionate grew an intimacy Annapurna wove around her father. Sita notices it and sent out of house. Here the loyalty and duty of being in true relationship to be followed for woman alone in the family and what about man?

Devi turns back to days in grandma house. Uma an orphan, she used to come home to take advice from grandma. She is the victim of disaster after marriage. She has father-in-law and husband. Her Husband is a drunkard. In the extreme lust father-in-law kissed Uma, highest of agony in marriage. Where the chastity and purity gone if the man touches the woman? Is the man no need to have chastity and purity? Grandma compares Uma with Amba "I was terrified by Uma's marriage, but I was also terrified by the vengeful Amba"(40). Another character in grandma's house a servant-maid, Gauri an orphan. Gauri has a domestic problem to offer dowry to marry with fifty sovereigns of gold .she eloped and back to same work as leftover.

Devi returns from US. Dan is a good friend of Devi but he is a Black American. Devi belongs to orthodox Brahmin family tradition and rituals denied her to accept though she likes him. Sita as a dutiful mother started searching a groom for her. Sita has given a full freedom of choosing the life partner in hands of Devi. After some visits of grooms .Devi felt nothing is loyal and there was only a sugar coated words. On meeting with Mahesh, she likes his frankness of wanting wife and mother. Finally she decides to marry Mahesh. Her marriage assembling and preparation compares with Damayanthi choose Nala. Mahesh is a sales representative. He used to travel ten to twenty days for his business. She doesn't know that solitude and loneliness struck her in his absence. Devi seek a permission to go for a job but Mahesh replies Mayamma gets old , "Devi there is so much for you to do at home"(56). Instead he recommends to join Tara's painting class. Woman has discriminated for performing house hold-related jobs (painting, carpet making,..) not in their interested field or their talents shaped on. Mahesh treated Devi in a contemptuous way so she finds

some diversion to keep her engaged but her talents and recognition get oppressed . " This is what comes of educating a woman. Your grand mother was barely illiterate. Wasn't she a happier woman than you are"(74), she finds spending sleepless nights, aching for a loneliness bliss. She is unable to derive lasting fulfillment from identification with stereotyped ideal mothers and ideal wives.

Parvatiamma is an unseen mother-in-law to Devi. She has reminds an enigma; with loneliness in the big house after sending his son to school, husband is a Sanskrit professor believed " a man needs a wife to help him with the business of living"(61). His stories to Devi also bounded in that way. Parvatiamma privation finds a new dimension and withdrew firmly from family life and moved to spiritual devotion like a sage in search for salvation.

Mayamma tells the whole story of Parvatiamma to Devi and brings her own tragic story in a thread-line as,

I came to her, homeless, when my son died. My husband, that wretch, God pity him, had disappeared years ago. I came to her only with a torn sari over my weeping flesh. She gave me home. She gave us all a home (63).

Mayamma expresses the gratitude to Parvatiamma from her Devi comes to know, she is loving , gentle and feminine. Mayamma has a tragic marriage life, she gets married at the age of twelve victimized to child marriage. Her husband is a rake a wretched fellow, she suffered from bestial sexuality. She endured silent sufferings from husband and mental torture from mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law made Mayamma to perform all kinds of pooja, fasting, and penance. When Mayamma's first child got aborted, she showed utmost cruelty to her. She even blames about her eating as, "She eats as much as anybody else, but is barren"(40). Continuously, Mayamma's fetus goes fruitless for ten more times makes her totally weak in health but she always curse Mayamma "A Woman without child, say the sages, goes to hell"(41).

In an auspicious day after eight years, Mayamma blessed with a boy baby. Her sufferings

doesn't ends with it .Her husband took money from a house and went off, Mother-in-law also died in age factor. Mayamma takes her horoscope to enquire about husband's return, everyone says positively as luckiest horoscope. She has an only hope that son will support her life but he is at the age of fourteen. He beat her and sold gold bangles .Mayamma was left alone, son also fell ill of incurable fever. She burnt her horoscope with son's body as a refuge; she came to Parvatamma's house.

Devi plans to escape from solitude and lowliness, she elopes with Gopal a musician but soon understands in a party that she is used as a prop for his profession. Devi painfully realizes that she has run away from all her trials: Dan, Mahesh and Gopal. The Retrospective look into her cracked, unfulfilled life made her crumble. She back to meet Sita.

Thus this paper concludes with cultural and traditional upheaval of woman in context with gender discrimination, agony of marriage, Recognition of woman talents and man- woman relationship. In a positive note, Devi broke all the fetters and came out to breathe a fresh air. In the same way all woman should be brave and Firm in breaking an unwritten censorship posed to woman in any term.

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