

FEMALE RESISTANCE FOR IDENTITY AND ASSERTION OF SELF IN GITHA HARIHARAN'S *THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT*

Upendra Ratilal Kavani¹ and Dr. Monika Choudhary²

¹Research Scholar, Faculty of Social Science & Humanities,
Pacific Academy of Higher Education and Research University, Udaipur Rajasthan, India

²Assistant Professor, Faculty of Social Science & Humanities
Pacific Academy of Higher Education and Research University, Udaipur Rajasthan, India

E-mail: ¹upendrakavani@gmail.com, ²16monika1993@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

In The Thousand Faces of Night by Githa Hariharan, women are portrayed as frightened, needy people who constantly suffer at the hands of their own sex. In this novel, Hariharan meticulously portrays both modesty and the struggle for self-identity in his female characters. These women can either find liberation or reconciliation with themselves through self-realization and self-knowledge. The novel discusses the female characters continuous struggle for the existence in the society. The protagonist Devi suffocated by the decorum and restriction of her role as a wife in the civil society. The novelists like Githa Hariharan wrote abundantly in this age to restore the status of woman in the Indian society. Githa Hariharan explores educated woman's quest for root through her novel.

Keywords: Female Resistance, Identity, Self-realization, Assertion.

The field of English literature has seen a significant contribution from Indian women writers. Following the feminist or women-centered approach, which enables the writers to represent the point of view of feminine awareness, a significant development has occurred in the field of Indian women writing in English. Numerous Indian women novelists have examined various psychological aspects of issues relating to women that have been long hidden as they have dealt with female subjectivity in order to construct identity. The sense of self is a concern for many modern women writers. The similar concern is expressed by postmodern feminist author Githa Hariharan in her debut book, *The Thousand Faces of Night*. *The Thousand Faces of Night* is a tender story of women struggling to survive in a shattered dream world. It is the story of a Devi, the heroine of traditional Hindu society and her hopeless search for identity.

The identity problem of a young girl dominates *The Thousand Faces of Night's* opening scene. The novel's title was motivated by the conundrum that Devi, the main character, encountered, who "encounters the horrors of the thousand faces of night, dreaming of bodies tearing away their shadows and melting, like liquid wax burnt by moonlight" (74). Women, particularly mothers and grandmothers, express concern when they encourage their daughters to adhere to stereotypes. The stories of Parvati, Sita, and Savitri are

exaggerated and repeated to support the conventional view of women, which results in a woman's selfless nature. The historical figures who represent self-sacrifice -- Ganga, Amba, Gandhari, and Damyanti—have left their imprints on the psyches of the women.

Devi, the heroine of *The Thousand Faces of Night*, is a young lady just entering adulthood. The story of her identity dilemma and her attempts to overcome it is told in the book. Western-educated Devi is searching for her roots. The female protagonist of the book typically matures and grows out of her youthful ideals and ideas as she comes to terms with life's reality. Devi, who comes from a traditional Brahmin family, embarks on her adventure after enrolling in an American university to finish her education. She finds herself torn between the opportunity to return to her home country and her newfound experiences in the university. She starts by challenging the underlying assumptions of the assigned role once she has arrived back at her ancestor's home. As she embarks on her journey of self-discovery, her main focus shifts to becoming free of these fixed positions.

The novel centers around all female characters, Devi, as well as her mother Sita, mother-in-law Parvati, grandmother, and maid-servant Mayamma. Devi is Githa Hariharan's ideal female figure because she never stays inside the constraints of

conventional masculine culture. In Indian custom, males were expected to generate money while women were expected to perform domestic duties.

The novel's central theme is the identity loss experienced by Devi as well as by her mother Sita, the elderly housekeeper Mayamma who works at her husband's home, and her mother-in-law Parvatiamma. The marital lives of the female characters are portrayed by Hariharan as being entrapped, mentally deteriorating with time, and becoming physically more disabled.

Sita, the mother of Devi, was forced to abandon her independent pursuits after her marriage and learn to fulfil predetermined responsibilities. Prior to her marriage, Sita's parents taught her how to play the veena. She wanted it, so she takes it as a dowry with her. She could not hear her father-in-law's as she was playing the veena one day. After her father-in-law scolded her "Put the veena away. Are you a wife, a daughter-in-law" (p.30)? She became enraged and dissatisfied. She then pulled the veena's strings out and swore never to play the veena again. When Devi's grandmother was elderly and widowed, eventually asserts her femininity by providing sanctuary to those whose marriages had failed. Devi's mother-in-law, fled her family to her god and started a rebellion.

Devi has an education from an American university and the potential to make money. Devi bargained with Indian tradition because it is the system in which women always give up their freedom and individuality when they are married. From their early marriage, Devi and Mahesh had a lovely existence together. Devi didn't establish the typical

social structure because Mahesh desires a kid. But she wasn't prepared for this additional duty either. Mahesh is not sensitive to Devi. She consequently experiences disappointment and disillusionment in her life. Devi feels as though her freedom is being restricted by the marital relation and that her own existence is in danger due to the gaping emptiness. Devi desires to leave Mahesh because she does not like to subject herself to such a selfless existence. She decides to leave Mahesh after seeing how stuck her life is.

Mayamma, the elderly housekeeper for Mahesh, is another victim of patriarchy. She had never experienced joy in her marriage. When she was unable to conceive, her harsh mother-in-law made her perform penance that included not only abstaining from food and eating leftovers but also agonising activities like soaking the lingam in her own blood to alter her fate. Mayamma belonged to the generation of women who quietly bore their obligations till death and never rebelled, even when they wanted to, because it was taboo for a woman to flee her familial obligations, even if she felt oppressed by them.

The pains, distresses, and hopelessness are not respected by Devi, Sita, and Mayamma. In their struggle for survival, they show the virtue of their womanhood. Their favoured criteria have drastically changed, and Devi is the shining example for modern Indian women. With respect to their various ages, these three characters discover a change in their outlook on life. The title *The Thousand Faces of Night* also refers to the countless feminine qualities.

REFERENCES

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