CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters are modest attempts to show the socio-cultural consciousness in the female protagonists in the works of Githa Hariharan. The writer depicts that at every social, cultural and economic level in India, women are engrossed with different kinds of problems. Her fiction concentrates on individual’s quest for identity. She has focused on the contemporary problems as well as the problems created by patriarchy since ages. She tries to assess the socio-cultural effect on the psyche of her characters and also reveals that both aspects are interrelated. She explores in her works the day-to-day experiences of the Indian women and transforms their experiences in her works. She gives a dynamic view of observed situations in changing socio-cultural scene. In the Indian context, a new professional scenario hitherto unimaginative provides a fresh impetus to express more challenging roles.

Hariharan presents a kaleidoscopic view of Indian culture and tradition and proposes different ways of looking at life. She presents a picture of women born out of Indian culture and mythology which has given it continuity. The role of elder women, especially grandmothers in the family, is worth noticing. They always train their granddaughter in accordance with the conventional roles and discourage change. However, Hariharan’s presentation of grandmother is quite different from the established picture of grandmother. Whether one looks at Devi’s grandmother, Mala’s grandmother; Bala or Ratna’s grandmother, Rukmani, one finds that they encourage their granddaughters to welcome the change. They initially warn them as they themselves are the sufferers at the hands of the society. Later they make their granddaughters see and understand the cracks in patriarchal social structure. The cracks in the male hegemony are shown as the result of prolonged but stiff opposition from women. Elderly and strong-willed women in the family do assert in decision making and even younger women pull the strings from behind. Nevertheless the male dominance is not ever seriously questioned by them. When questioned, the break-up of the family is imminent. The character of Devi, Ratna and Mala are created by the writer with such dexterity that the reader can assess that these granddaughters share a particular bond with their grandmothers. They can see through the tricks of patriarchal social set-up and crave for change. All the three are progressive. Ratna is an observer while Devi and Mala take steps to change the established order.
Another relationship presented as representing socio-cultural scenario is mother-daughter relationship. In the characters of Sita and Mala, the writer has proved that these mothers are able to achieve their womanhood other than motherhood. In the Indian society this relationship is very important. A mother starts preparing her daughter for her husband’s home right from her childhood. Her coming back to her parents’ home after marriage causes fluster to the family’s honour. In Hariharan’s works, this situation evokes new meaning. The writer reinvents the situation in a new light. Mothers in her works are helpful and protective towards their daughter to achieve their selfhood. It is revealed in Devi’s quest of identity, Tara’s mission for economic independence, Sara’s pursuit to find identity in multiple identities and Yasmin’s efforts to make a position.

Through the characters in her works, Hariharan presents a scenario of Indian family systems, the caste, the various cultural rituals at the time of marriage, the astrology, the matching of horoscopes, the whole web that make marriage a social, religious, moral, economic and legal affair. Confronting domestic injustice and society’s hegemonic set-up, a woman’s personality is shaped with the cultural and social setting in which she grows up. The problems they face are different owing to different social, cultural and economic set-up which is adroitly reflected by the writer. In the contemporary modern Indian society interwoven with the influence of western conceptions and culture, one finds oneself in a conflict between the individual and the society. This results in psychological disintegration. Women protagonists under the compulsions of instincts take decisions for the welfare of the family and the society for which they suffer.

Hariharan portrays how woman’s awakening for socio-cultural changes leads her to search for her position in the society. She is in the quest for identity. This aspect is presented in various characters in the novels. Gender experience is not the only phenomenon in their life. It generates to other larger issues and problems. These problems help them weave cobwebs for meaningfulness. Hariharan depicts the socio-cultural consciousness in her women protagonists living in Indian culture. Shades of other cultures also overlap. Shahrzad is from Arabic culture and Sita and Meena belong to Indian culture. Sara stands for multiple identities, and Yasmin is brought up in Muslim culture. All of them weave cobwebs for making their own life and the life around them meaningful. This aspect evolves Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s terminology of ‘third world women’. It breaks the silence about the experiences of women in India as well as in other
parts of the world about the women’s struggle against male hegemony. Each one of them struggles to keep her identity for meaningfulness to this life. Sita, Shahrzad, Meena, Sushila, Sara and Mala finally come out as preservers.

Hariharan warns that if the society does not provide women their right place, they can be revengeful as one can notice the traces of it in the characters of Devi, Dunyazad, Revati and Rukmani. By and large Hariharan paints the traditional, stereotyped image of women in the characters of Mayamma, Gauri, Uma and Mangala. They accept everything as is written in the book of fate. The enduring impression of these characters that remains in the minds of the readers is due to their sustained capacity of bearing the unbearable. They are a picture of obedience and chastity. They are morally and spiritually wiser than their men. They have tremendous power to bear all the problems and can support their husband in the times of adversity. They silently suffer and are the symbol of patriarchal domination. In their psyche there is no divorce, no broken home or marriage. They cannot assert their position at the risk of losing their marital bliss. Family life remains important to them.

Another aspect that Hariharan presents is that women are socially conditioned to derogate their own sex or to co-operate in their subordination. A wife is expected to mould herself in the pattern of the family into which she is married and merge her individual identity into that of her husband. When one is not able to follow the prescribed rules and suppresses one’s desires, the consequences cause neurotic disorders. In reality the anger and discontentment against such systems result in emotional crises and then its sequel is craziness. This situation is revealed with precision in the characters of Bala, Rukmani, Mistress and Revati. They fall in the trap of the unconscious as they are unable to bear the atrocities. They fail to balance the conscious part of the psyche in the process of running after the suppressed desires. Hariharan boldly shows the courage to touch the dark areas in human psyche which are the result of patriarchal social set-up, religious fundamentalism, cultural terrorism and stings of violence at various levels.

Hariharan’s suggestive pattern reveals that the economic independence on the part of women protagonists provides a fresh impetus. Sara, Perumayee, the keen desire of Devi to work outside, Mayamma, Tara, Amita and Yasmin all can be put in this category. Each one of them is either economically independent or has desire to be so. Devi’s desires are curbed by her husband. The household problems drive Perumayee to work away from home and Mayamma works to
live. Sara and Amita have asserted their economic position and Yasmin struggles to carve her niche while facing adverse circumstances.

The world is changing itself at a fast pace. The market economy, modern education, increased geographical mobility, and new employment opportunities are major factors of change. The role of media and culture in the day-to-day life of people is very imperative which has resulted in changing the attitude of the people. Women are quite conscious of these socio-cultural changes. Hariharan paints the character of Meena and Sara in this light. The role of media to solve the conundrum of cultural terrorism is reflected through the character of Meena. Sara and Nina are engaged in making social documentaries and one especially on Godhra carnage. All of these characters of Githa Hariharan make assertive efforts for co-existence. They thus show their modern and progressive tendencies.

The conflicts of the educated middle class women are portrayed in Devi, Meena, Pat, Brinda and Sara and Ratna. Through these characters the writer asserts that the gender inequality is not a divine mandate but a cultural construct. So we can see how Hariharan deals in her works with female ideology in particular and the changing roles of women in Indian society in general.

Hariharan underlines that women have been trying to get a room in the male-dominated world. Various shades of womanhood erupt in the novels. Mayamma and self-reliant Meena finally cover the long journey from sublimation to the assertion of their self-identity. Bala, self-dependent Sara, and other female characters of her works, all try to maintain their identity in one way or the other. Hariharan thus traces a woman's transformation from self-realizing Devi to self-asserting Meena. All these women are strong assertive individuals. In the end all of them are achievers and survivors. As one reads her works, a silent stream of socio-cultural consciousness in female protagonists can be seen flowing underneath the surface.

All the works of Githa Hariharan paint a particular social set-up which affects the thought and behavior of the female characters. One can assess the growth of the writer by the authenticity, commitment and sensitivity towards delicate relations. Githa Hariharan confirms this the way she has travelled from her first novel The Thousand faces of Night to her latest novel Fugitive Histories. Without pain and pining in heart, a writer may write, but the work remains sordid and dreary. In the absence of intense involvement, one cannot express the waves swirling
in one's mind in true words. The work cannot face the tides of time without the soul. Only those works shine in the sky of art and literature which are translated into other forms of arts after the yearning for years together. In the works of Hariharan one feels a labyrinthine structure of thoughts which show the depth of her feelings for the existing problems in society.