In the fast developing scenario of modernity people are aware of their social, economic and political positions in the society. A remarkable aspect of postcolonial writing in English has been the pre-occupation with the issues of women and downtrodden, both marginalized social groups in the Third World countries. Writing is a medium to raise their voice. Literature is a nice source for presentation of the most intimate consciousness of life and society in which it grows and develops, both male and female writers have highlighted the predicament of women and backward classes in conservative and tradition-bound societies where both are treated as inferior and subjugated groups in hierarchical social structure. It has various purposes to fulfill, some thoughts for contemplation and some plans to act for the welfare of human being. When we ponder upon such different aspects, we decide for changes which take place in life and society, and, therefore, these changes are aptly reflected in literary works. For the welfare of society, literature presents the evils of society with a solution how to make it perfect. Indian English writers express the ideas, feelings and emotions in a very realistic manner, and try at their best to find an amicable solution of the problem.

From its very beginning, Indian English literature has dealt witnessed various issues and Indian English novelists have presented deep anxiety about all these problems in the past. In fact, continuous involvement with social issues as casticism, gender discrimination and patriarchal domination has marked the writings of writers like Mulkraj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Bhawani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Nargis Dalal, Ruth Prawer Jhabwalla, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Githa Hariharan, Nyantara Sehgal and various others.

Women in contemporary society have become aware of the fact that the inferior position accorded to them is not pre-ordained. Women are trying to emancipate themselves from subordination. In this rapidly progressing world, they are redefining their proper place. They have revolted against their exploitation, victimization and marginalization. They are questioning the sexual politics in which they are always victimized. They are busy reshaping themselves in the more humanistic mould, emphasizing thereby the need for a thorough re-examination in depth of marriage and man-woman relationship for a better understanding and sharing of mutual love and respect.
It is not easy for a woman to begin a journey towards success; she has to do hard struggle for maintaining her existential identity, because of the complexities of life. With the change of time, society has taken for granted equal rights for women. But the point of view of narrow minded people has not changed so far as woman is concerned. She is deprived of equal status in the patriarchal norms of society. K. K. Sinha has expressed his views about the proper place of woman in society-

In modern times even she works but that hasn’t shifted her responsibilities, she has become the joint bread winner for the family but her lord has not come forward to share her responsibilities. (It is taken for granted that a woman’s duty is to run a good home, man is for taking rest and making others slog for him at home) She is supposed to do everything at home in order to maintain harmony in the family. Things are changing though not at desirable pace. Astray woman asserts herself here and there, but the moment she decides, to be’ her male counterparts, preferring it the other way round, gang up to cry, Foul! Foul!.

The Indian woman is caught in flux of tradition and modernity saddled with burden of the past to cast off her aspirations. A woman is never regarded as an autonomous being, since she has always been assigned a subordinate and a relative position. The modern woman does not find any sense in such self-sacrifice and yearns for self-expression, individuality, and self-identity.

The superiority of man over woman is also stressed in the Quran. The main purpose of a woman in life is to provide the male with sexual gratification and offspring. The Quran says:

Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God had gifted the one above the other . . . Virtuous women are obedient, careful during the husband’s absence, because God hath on them been careful.

In ancient India, women’s condition was not good and they were assigned secondary positions in a male-dominated society by religious injunctions and social traditions. Manusmriti has a significant place in the mainstream of Indian philosophy
and culture. The ancient Hindu law giver, Manu, expresses some noble emotions about woman:

Where females are honoured, there the deities are pleased; but where they are dishonored, there all religious acts become fruitless.  

Yet, he has stressed on the subordinate position of woman to man. Manu says in Manusmriti that all through her life woman must remain dependent on man:

In childhood must a female be dependent on her father; in youth, on her husband; her lord being dead, on her sons; if she has no sons, on the near kinsmen of her father; if she has no paternal kinsmen, on the sovereign; a woman must never seek independence.

So the double standard mentality of society is quite clear. On the one hand, the woman is given a privilege of status and respect but on the other hand she has to depend on her father or husband. In this context, no question of liberty remains an issue for the status of woman. This can be treated as an unending oppression of a woman in the society by unsocial forces.

An awareness of identity as a woman and interest in feminine problems is feminism. The dependency of woman is a central fact of history and it is the main cause of all psychological disorders in society. Feminism has a strong fundamental case intended to mean only that there are reasons for thinking that woman suffer from social injustice because of their sex.

Women are continuously marginalized on different issues in our society and exploited physically and emotionally. But the perception of woman in post modern phase has been changed due to efforts various agencies in favour of woman. Now she is conscious to prove her existential identity in many ways. No country or society can progress without the participation of woman. Although the place of woman in society has changed from age to age and culture to culture, but question of equality remained in doubt. One common phenomena belief system to all societies is that woman is never given equal status. She is treated as subordinate and second rate citizen. Her identity and status is based on her relationships based on gendered categories of mother, daughter, daughter-in-law and wife. Her identity is always defined not only in relation
to man but as dependent on man and subordinate to him. The discrimination begins right from her childhood as she is treated differently. Her discharging social activities is limited to a very great extent. Even most of the religious books of the world including The Bible, The Quran and Manusmriti define the role of woman and limit her only to the narrow boundaries of certain limited social activities.

In contemporary society female are economically, socially independent in their professions which is the subject of debate between feminists and antifeminists. There are a number of social bondages imposed on woman, but they accept all these as a challenge in discharging their social duties. As a result of it the ratio of female harassment is continuously increasing and various heinous crime are being committed against innocent women.

There are a number of violent activities against women in day to day life. She is put to murder after her marriage by anti social forces that expect Dowry. Honour Killing and female infanticide is also the common phenomena in all section of society. Heinous crime like rape, insult and forced prostitution can be categorized as sexual crimes against her. Domestic violence, forced child marriage and abduction are the atrocities against the weaker section of society that is not allowed to live her life peacefully and harmoniously.

A dowry death is a murder or suicide of a married woman caused by a dispute over her dowry. In few cases, husbands and in-laws attempt to wring a greater dowry through continuous torture which sometimes results in committing suicide. The number of suicide cases happened through hanging, poisoning or self-immolation. Numbers of the bride are burnt by their in laws which is often set up to appear to be a suicide or accident. Dowry is illegal in India, in spite of it, it is very common practice to give expensive goods and money to the groom and his relatives at weddings which are hosted by the family of the bride. Only women are not always the primary victims of dowry deaths. In some cases children are also killed along with their mothers.

An honour killing is also a kind of murder of any family member who has been considered to have brought dishonour and shame upon the family. The most striking areas where honour killings occur in India are northern regions. Most of honour
killings cases can be seen in Punjab, Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. Number of cases of honour killings have filed in the honorable Supreme Court of India.

Female infanticide is another type of crime the killing of a newly born female child or the termination of female fetus through sex-selective abortion. In India, there is bonus to have a son, because he offers security to the family in old age and is able to conduct rituals for deceased parents and ancestors. On the other side daughter is considered, to be a social and economic burden. Dowry is also the cause of infanticide.

Rape is also known as one of the most common crimes against women in India. Victims of rape are increasingly reporting their rapes incident and confronting the perpetrators. Although rapes are becoming more frequently reported but some of the incident of rape are not properly reported. Increased attention in the media and awareness of the masses against such heinous activities has empowered women.

Marital rape and gang rape include both physical and mental violence. Domestic violence, forced child marriage and acid throwing can be classified as crimes against women. In an interview, Honorable judge of Supreme Court of India, Ms Gyansudha Mishra herself accepted that the respect of women in modern days has declined. Society has a very deep command of male dominated ideology. She said:

> When she was Judge in division bench of Supreme Court and High court then advocates used to communicate directly to male judges with a thought that she cannot understand’ as she is a female.\(^5\)

As a writer Githa Hariharan is pre occupied with human condition which can be in essence of creative writing. She selects a small space of all her novels but price to enlarge the limited space to the extent that is assumed the shape of human condition. Hariharan presents an India, with all its myths and legends, history, rituals, feminism, cultural issues and humanism in her novels in \textbf{When Dreams Travel}, and \textbf{Fugitive Histories}; and also describes the political situation minutely and thus she succeeds in presenting the idea and the reality against each other. Hariharan never claims to be a historian or a sociologist. The Hindu writes about Githa Hariharan:
Githa declared that she was not a sociologist, a historian or an academic. It was primarily as a novelist that she was responding to serious political issues such as the demolition of Babri Masjid and the Gujarat carnage. In taking as her protagonist Professor Shiv Murthy (The protagonist of the novel In Times of Siege) of the imaginary Open University of Delhi, named Kasturba Gandhi Central University (which seems to be a combination of JNU and IGNOU), she was trying to play up the subtle use of thought police and the assorted systems of coercion and restraint. The discussion after the reading centred around issues such as the novelistic decisions Githa made, that liberal response to national / international crises and the inadequacy of the liberal discourse.\(^6\)

In the novels of Githa Hariharan, woman asks questions about the accepted sets of values, and arises against the existing moral and social norms, which creates obstacle in the liberty of them. Githa Hariharan’s woman is not ready to accept suffering and sacrificing. Her woman is conscious of her emotional needs, and hence cries for a change of order so that she can live her life in her own way. There are number of hardships and sufferings in their ways when the female stand against an established order. Her woman struggles to establish a new order with changing standards where woman can establish herself and where there is no need for hypocrisy. She believes that character is not judged by chastity of the body, but by purity of heart. Modern woman wishes a new morality, which demands fulfill her individual longings and seeks consideration, not for just the deed but the heart and feelings too. Her concept of liberty is not based to the realms of social and economic freedom but it is the freedom of mental make-up and emotional attitude.

In the earlier novels the theme of the suffering woman at the hands of the society has been considered appropriate. Contemporary writers have also raised political issues and the woman’s participation in such activities. For illustration, when Gandhiji was arrested in the Salt movement, Sarojini Naidu lead the movement in absence of Mahatma Gandhi. Thus the number of historic roles have been played by Indian women in difficult circumstances. Hariharan has also successfully presented her contribution in this area through her novels.
Hariharan’s latest novel **Fugitive Histories** is an attempt to narrate the massacre of Gujarat in 2002. She exposes the legacy of prejudice which continuous to affect desperate people in present day India. **Fugitive Histories** highlights the forces of power in society to keep some people in and some out. In Gujarat riots, Muslims were burnt to ashes, cut off in several pieces. It was difficult to recognize the dead. The women were raped just because they were Muslims. Hariharan narrates the effect of these kinds of carnages in her novel. This novel also reveals the life of three women of different generations in three different cities, Sara in Mumbai, Mala in Delhi and Yasmin in Gujarat:

Marked by an astonishing clarity of observation and deep compassion, Fugitive Histories exposes the legacy of prejudice that, sometimes insidiously, sometimes perceptibly, continues to affect disparate lives in present-day India. In prose that is at once elegant, playful and startlingly inventive, Githa Hariharan portrays with remarkable precision the web of human connections that binds as much as it divides.⁷

**Fugitive Histories** is about those ones, picking up threads from the point where man-made upheavals left them. Mala is a south-Indian Brahmin girl, who marries Asad, an artist. She recalls the memories of her past life, when Asad left home and she was all alone for days and nights in her flat. She opens Asad’s trunk and finds numerous sketches, related to her life with him. The only way to feel close to Asad was through his sketches:

She opens the trunk, expecting a mess. But unlike the cupboards, it’s tidy. There are sketchbooks inside, what at first sight looks like dozens of them, packed tightly, row after neat row. Rows, piles, enough to encompass a lifetime. She suppresses this unlucky obit like thought almost immediately, touches her head in a place of wood. How can anyone’s life, even a few decades of it, fit in a tin box? Still, what is biography-or its less disciplined relative memory-but a reckless attempt to fit chunks of a life into a box, whether she calls the box “the times” or “the works” or “the love story?” There are those usual official signposts: born in, born on, born to, married on, had a son by, had a daughter called.⁸
Githa Hariharan does not present a woman as a weak creature, but as an active one; not as ruled by emotion, but as capable of a sensible choice. She is not totally selfless or extremely selfish, but proving her own positive and individual identity in the society. Now she is not as one whose primary aim in life is only marriage, motherhood and follow the tradition blindly, as seen in the traditional image of woman under patriarchy, but as one who not only thinks about self but also for her community. Mala is shown to recreate herself positively, after discarding the orthodox imposed upon her own mother and grandfather. From her early life, Mala wants to do all those works, which she is not allowed to do because of her being a girl; just like to climb a tree, ride a bicycle very fast and pluck coconuts from a tree. Her grandfather is a very strict person who wants to see every member of the family in order. Mala feels jealous and inferior whenever she sees boys who are riding bicycle so fast and plucking coconuts. Anger and defeat comes in her mind:

Being her seemed to mean being inept, her fear of failure making her taste failure even before she had actually failed.\(^9\)

Mala wants to live liberal life, so that she can enjoy her life according to her own way-

For some years, her ambitions centered on trees and bicycles. But any thing would have done as long as it let her be one of them, those fearlessly joyous children she watched secretly, obsessively, from a distanced. What she wanted was to find a place to be in or a thing to do that would set her free from her family, her home and school in the city, her annual summer home in the village what she wanted was to be set free from herself.\(^10\)

Mala’s grandfather is very strict, always bullies others and the real prisoner in his house is his wife, Bala. She is suffering from hysteria, but actually it is her husband’s harsh behaviour which took her in that condition. She usually ignores others, pretends not to hear anyone except Mala. After marriage, she is never allowed to go out of the house:

Bala was here barely twelve when she came to the house, a week after she began menstruating. Her husband was only five years older, but
already he had firm ideas on who fit where in his household and his life. It didn’t take long for him to decide that this childish, flat-chested, chattering girl was not the bride he deserved. But still she was his; he had to make the rules, she had to follow them. Bala was never allowed to step out of his house, not even to visit her parents. She belonged to the house.11

Bala’s such type of mental position is also responsible for Mala’s suppressed desires of being liberal. She wants freedom, but cannot leave her mother- “It’s unfair, horrible, this price to be paid for being reborn. She will be free, but so free that even her mother will have let go of her. Mala bursts into tears.” (17) Mala loves her caring mother too much so she cannot imagine going away from her. “The thought makes her a little sick, because she knows she can never be someone else. All her life she has to be Mala, all the days till the day she dies."

And in between, home will be like this big room, the people in it her family. When she grows up she will be one of them.”(17) Like Mala, Bala also has a deep hidden desire to get liberty. She says to her husband- “hairy old bastard, the big boss” (23). Once Bala goes on the roof of the house, to comb her hair and enjoy watching unknown streets and houses full of strangers, she feels as :

A whole new life waiting to be lived. But then she is terrorized by the rage on the face of her husband, but then she saw him walking down the street toward the house, she saw the enraged disbelief on his face as their eyes met. Even before it happened she could feel the rough arms pulling her away from the roof, protecting her from the hungry eyes of strange men, eyes that may slide down the length of her wet, naked hair.12

Hariharan presents a real picture of the predicament of woman in the villages and their place in the family. Bala is an old woman, she has grandchildren, but still she has to live the life of a slave of her husband. She is treated like an animal and locked into the storeroom from outside and is not allowed to meet anyone in the house:

She could still hear him roar through the locked door that the storeroom was the best place for her to learn how to be respectable woman.13
Simonede Beauvoir pronounces:

Man does not make his appeal directly to woman herself; it is the men's group that allows each of its members to find self-fulfilment as husband and father; woman, as slave or vassal, is integrated within families dominated by fathers and brothers, and she has always been given in marriage by certain males to other males. In primitive societies the paternal dam, the gens, disposed of woman almost like a thing: she was included in deals agreed upon by two groups. The situation is not much modified when marriage assumes a contractual form in the course of its evolution; when dowered or having her share in inheritance, woman would seem to have civil standing as a person, but dowry and inheritance still enslave her to her family.\textsuperscript{14}

Mostly Githa Hariharan has inculcated female protagonists in her novels. Due to their education, they lead the life of independent thinker, for which their family and society become intolerant. They have to struggle with their families and society, and engulf into an effort to get an identity for themselves as qualified women without any faulty background. When Mala comes to Mumbai for her higher studies, she goes to Dilkush Mansion and meets Asad, an artist. Asad believes in the equality of religion. He marries Mala, a Hindu girl. Mala’s parents do not agree with their marriage so Mala elopes with Asad. Her parents cry:

You’re killing us! You’ll marry this man, this foreigner, and you’ll be lost to us, you’ll kill us!\textsuperscript{15}

After sometime, Mala’s parents accept her marriage and call her home with a sort of indisposition. One of Mala’s great grandaunt comes to meet Mala, which further annoy her mother- “I hope you’re happy; Mala’s mother said bitterly as she prepares for the visit. She throws a new silk sari at Mala. „I hope youre satisfied everyone is talking about us. Now this horrible woman is coming to look at us like we’re animals in the zoo.” (73) To look after her dying grandmother, Mala, with Asad, visits her village where they are welcomed in a very strange way, because of her marriage with a Muslim:
Surprisingly, the uncle is quite courteous to Asad the barbarian, especially when courtesy doesn’t include eating with him. In any case, he’s made sure there will be no polluting accidents. The cook has been instructed to serve Asad’s food on a white enamel plate, not the usual stainless steel ones. Mala recognizes this plate instantly. It’s an old friend-or enemy; it’s the plate reserved for any woman in the household who has to eat alone because she has her periods. The plate is almost basin shaped; it has always reminded Mala of the kind of plate people use to feed their pet dogs.

When Mala meets Bala, she seems happy – ‘you and I beat them; she gloats. ‘You married him. I couldn’t escape this place but I’ve lived longer than that old bastard boss. We’ve won.’ (76) Bala’s fury is a result of the cruelties of Mala’s grandfather. She is satisfied after resisting him.

In Asad’s sketchbooks, Mala gets one, of the year 2002- ‘There’s a caption below the drawing and again, a date. Broken Home February 2002’. There’s no doubt what the date refers to. It’s the year Gujarat burnt, the month it burnt into flames.’ (198) Mala retrieves the evening they listened the news about the Gujrat pogrom, everybody was afraid and deeply hurt. Mala was also in distress. But she is not a Muslim so Asad and her relatives think that she can’t feel and understand about their loss. They all are feeling:

Asad is disturbed, but they’re all disturbed. Mala is as sick and grieved about it as the rest of them in the living room that evening. But is there something, some evil canker that has planted itself in the room, planning to grow between her and everyone else? Growth that may make all of them believe, herself included, that she can only be sympathizer she’s different from the really beleaguered?

Hariharan elucidates the religious prejudices and the feeling of superiority of Brahmins through the instructions of Mala’s mother for her to become an ideal Brahmin girl in following ways:

Don’t use your left hand like a baza Christian! Don’t show off like an uncultured Punjabi! Don’t part your hair on the side like a Muslim! Push
Before the riots of Gujarat, Asad had a very clear vision about religion. He thinks that he is a secular person, and all religions are equal. But the riots in Gujarat finished his secularism, because he always will be a Muslim until others are prejudiced. He is living as an Indian, but others simply consider him a Muslim, an outsider. There are numbers of people who do not believe that Muslims are also Indians, while they are giving equal or more rights in the country. And Gujarat riot is the result of these prejudiced. Muslims were burnt, raped, and thrown out of their houses and properties only because they were Muslims. Otherwise, there was no mistake they had done, for that they were penalized.

Asad is deeply hurt and his faith of equality of religion is broken completely after the riot in Gujarat. He strives to draw the sketches to describe the carnage of Gujarat in his sketchbook. After February 2002, Asad is a totally changed person, now he talks less. He is weakened day by day. He stops much interaction with Mala. He passes most of his time in focusing over his drawings. He says to Mala- “We’ve marched all our lives and nothing has changed. Or it’s changed for the worse.” (215) He is depressed very much, now he can’t bear the pain of cruelties, and in depression, he stops listening news and goes outside of his house. Mala manages the intolerable situation:

She no longer goes to school. The two of them are caged together with a heavily coiled creature too somnolent to move. The flat feels overused; there’s no air in the place. She has to inhale what there is of it, process it so it’s easy to swallow, then feed it to Asad so he can continue to breathe, think, talk. Continue to suffer. If only she could open all the windows and the door of the flat, let the air outside come in! But what will she do if it brings Asad news of new terrors? 19

Mala always tries her best to solace Asad’s broken heart, but every time he fails, his heart disease develops, and finally one morning, his dead body is found on his bed because of heart failure. The way his funeral rites were performed. Sara, his daughter feels the pain of loss as well as the helplessness of her mother and that of her own. Sara
wished that her father should be cremated after Hindu rituals but her brother Samar decided otherwise, ignoring what Sara and Mala thought and felt about the final rites:

Though he knew how Sara felt about it, Samar decides that everything must be done. Asad had never said anything about what he wanted done with his body, so in his heart of hearts he must have wanted to do the right thing. He must have wanted to go back to his ancestral home, its airless waiting room, till his maker was ready to see him. Mala was silent through it all: she let Samar do what he wanted. Actually she didn’t seem to notice what Samar was doing. Sara doesn’t know if it was shock or complete defeat, but Mala was tearless, withdrawn, as if Asad’s body had nothing to do with her.20

Minority groups are disgraced and humiliated and made to feel powerless. They are the victims of ferocity because of their minority status. Minority institutions have been the target of destruction, burning, and violation, such as places of worship, schools, and cemeteries. Mala’s children, Sara and Samar also face number of problems from their early childhood, because of being the children of a Hindu mother and Muslim father. Both suffer from the Identity crisis. Their friends always tease them in the school. Samar’s friend, Prakash does not like his tiffin because he is a Muslim—“He said Samar’s tiffin box smells.” (20) Most of time Samar frustrates due to such incidents. While he has tomato sandwiches in his lunch box, Prakash is prejudiced and smells of meat.

While the Gujarat riots remain the central point of Fugitive Histories, it goes much farther into the past and creates the first chapter of the division between communities. Samar abandons everything that his parents, Maya and Asad had tried to infuse in him, grows beard and finds a superficial bonding with Islamic fundamentalism.

Sara lives in Mumbai and works in an NGO, named Sangam. She writes scripts for documentaries. She writes a script for City Skyline, a film produced by her friend, Nina. Nina requests Sara to write one more script for her next documentary, related to Gujarat riot. On 27th Feb. 2002, the Sabarmati Express, carrying Hindu activists in their way back from Ayodhya, was attacked on Godhara station in Gujarat, and two of
its carriages were set on fire. In the days and weeks that followed, the Muslims of Gujarat became the target of brutal violence. The statements of the survivors, eyewitnesses and relief workers suggest that state officials and the police connived with the attackers. Nina tells Sara the objectives of the documentary and requests her to visit the affected people of Gujarat for a better understanding to write the script:

The documentary will tell the stories of some of these people in their own voices. What happened to them in 2002, what the state government did (or didn't do) to rehabilitate them, and how these people are now trying to rebuild their lives.\textsuperscript{21}

Sara seems very excited to travel to Gujarat and write the script for documentary. And she has a great excitement to know what makes people enemy of each other in the name of religion. Sara’s friend, Laila is burnt to death with her husband when Mumbai combusted. Sara wants to do a research to know the causes of killing which is based on religious prejudices. Sara is very confused about her religion because she is the daughter of Muslim Father and Hindu mother. Laila is a very beautiful girl and everyone can see her beauty, but during Mumbai eruption “all she had in their eyes, was religion.” \textsuperscript{(53)} Laila is murdered because she was a Muslim. Sara gets upset to think about her identity, she is always confused what to adopt as her religion. The following lines point her mystery of religion:

If she ever, wanted to change her last name, drop the zaidi, she could be Vaidyanathan like her mother or Shaw like her boyfriend. Sara Zaidi could become Sara Vaidyanathan, take a break from one half of herself and try out the other. Or she could leave herself behind entirely, turn into Sara Shaw. But that sounds terrible, like steam escaping from a pressure cooker. She could, of course, array much baggage as possible, call herself Sara Vaidyanathan Zaidi Shaw.\textsuperscript{22}

Asad may have told us we’re not Muslim or Hindu, but the rest of the world only has to hear our last name. Anyway, I’m happy to be seen as a Muslim, I want to be one.\textsuperscript{23}

Sara and Nina go to Ahmadabad to know about the pitiable condition of those people who have been affected in Gujarat riots. Sara is confused, she is unable to
understand how she should interact with sufferer of that tragedy- “Will she be able to pull out the answers that tie curled deep in this city’s core, or herself?”(107) Mala is worried about Sara, and afraid to think about her security in Ahmedabad. She goes to Ahmedabad for the first time to know about the recent history of Gujrat riot 2002. Sara and Nina visit some of the dislocated families, established in a new located colony. After the 2002 pogrom in Gujarat, Ahmedabad is divided by a new border. It is assumed that within this border, Muslims are safe, but if they crossbeam border they should be attentive of their safety. Hariharan explains the border in her language:

They call this a border’, Nina tells Sara as they cross a highway, reach an area that is a bizarre mix of bungalows, short and tall buildings many hovels; too many hovels. ‘And some call this area mini Pakistan.’

Sara meets Yasmin, a seventeen year old girl. Yasmin’s father had a shop downstairs in the house where they lived, but during the riots of 2002, Yasmin and her whole family were forced to leave their house and shop. Yasmin’s brother is missed after the carnage in 2002. But Yasmin tries her best to complete her education to fulfil the desire and need of her parents. Yasmin is a very bold and courageous girl, does not lose hope of her survival. Even after facing such type of cruel situations, she wants to go to college to make her life better, and dreams of a easy and peaceful life:

Often it’s almost morning before she can fall asleep. And once sleep finally comes to her, it has trouble leaving. Sleep sits on her head all day like a thick fat cloud. Sometimes it fools her into believing that the day is only a distraction, a dream. It’s the wide-awake night hours that makeup her real life. A secret but real life.

Yasmin fails in her higher secondary exams, but she works hard to pass her exams next year:

She has to pass because Akbar-Bhai is gone. Earlier she used to think it was only till he came back from wherever he was hiding that she had to be Abba and Ammi’s daughter and son. Now she knows he will not come back; she has to be their daughter and son forever. She has to do it all alone somehow. Then everyone who tells Ammi and Abba she shouldn’t go to school will never be able to open their mouths again.
They’ll know they’re wrong, they won’t say, it’s not safe for girls, ‘anything can happen.’ They won’t say it’s no use it’s better she goes to sewing class like sultana, it’s better she does some work right now. It’s better she helps you.\(^{26}\)

Through this novel, Hariharan clears how people are living in fear and terror even after the massacre. In Gujarat, till now minorities don't feel themselves fearless and liberal. Yasmin’s mother reminds her about the barbarity and ruthlessness of people, and always suggests her to be conscious and take care of herself by avoiding crowd as well as the empty roads-

She silently mounts her daily morning prayer: Allah, your grace can do anything. You know better than anyone that anything can happen. Let your grace melt to become water, corporation water. Let it come to your thirsty children through the city pipes. If the city pipes are broken, if the government has forgotten to repair them or thinks we are so worthless we don’t need pies, let then water find other ways. Let it find invisible pipes only you know of, let it travel all the way to this little tap of ours. Allah, only you can teach this tap what it means to be a water tap. By the time she is ready to leave school Ammi has almost finished one skirt; she has reached the bottom edge to be hemmed. But that’s nothing, Yasmin can tell from Ammi’s fierce look of concentration. Ammi has to finish as much of the machine sewing as she can before the other women arrive; the machine is not hers, it’s common property. Ammi is bent over the machine how, her prayer is rushing straight down the hemline. She’s willing the narrow band of cloth to stay in place so the needle can race over it like an express train.\(^{27}\)

People are so terror-struck after the pogrom that they console themselves through the false aspirations that they are lucky to be still alive. Yasmin’s brother lose during the riots, but tell Yasmin that they are very lucky to be still together and alive. They always solace their aching heart:

Yasmin is thinking too hard. She’s thinking we’re lucky we have two rooms even if they’re dark and small. We’re lucky we have too rooms
in a safe area. We’re lucky we have a tap in the bathroom we have to use the water tank outside only once a day. We’re lucky we have electricity. You’re lucky you go to school. You’re lucky your father got some money at least for the old house. You’re lucky you didn’t have to see your brother’s dead body or see him killed. You’re lucky you can remember him as he was you’re lucky, we’re lucky. They have to say it often in as many ways as possible. They have to say it as often as possible because in their hearts they don’t believe it. Now Yasmin has to believe it. She’s lucky.\textsuperscript{28}

Yasmin is always feared of being alone on the road as well as in the crowded places. She has to be very careful and alert against the unfavorable things, around her because she is a Muslim. Before 2002 pogrom in Gujrat, Yasmin used to live in a small house in a quiet and peaceful way. In the same location both Hindus and Muslims lived together like friends. Yasmin tells Sara “Our house is right next to the house with the Ganesh on the wall.” (126) She has deep desire for her old house and past life, when she can also live the life of an independent citizen of India. The riots of 2002 destroyed her peaceful life. First of all, she lost her brother, Akbar, and then they were forced to leave their lovely house. Hariharan presents the attitude of police towards them during the riots:

The first policeman pretends he has never seen them before. He keeps Abba and Ammi standing there for ages while the second policeman dumps files on the chairs raising dust. The second policeman grins. The mischief in his face is almost light-hearted as if he’s only trying to cheer them up; It’s just a little joke before they get down to business. The first policeman leans back in his chair and stares at Ammi as if she’s naked. As if she’s not wearing a sari, a burqa thrown over it so only her face and feet are visible. He lights a cigarette and blows the smoke into her uncovered face. But Ammi stands there like a statue he has to break if he wants to move it.\textsuperscript{29}

Instead of helping them, the police make fun of their pitiable condition and enjoy their grief:
A college student called Akbar Ali. What do you think happened? Has he eloped with a Hindu girl? Or left home to join the terrorists?\textsuperscript{30}

The policemen don’t co-operate them to search Akbar Ali, brother of Yasmin, rather mock them and hurt their feelings. Hariharan throws light on the ruthlessness and cruelty of people when Yasmin’s father searches his son, Akbar, among the dead bodies:

Abba spent all his time visiting the places where the corpses were piling up. He had never seen anything like it before, the parade of body after body that bore so little resemblance to a real body. To a human being, even a dead one. It’s the first time Abba saw that being dead meant being cut. It meant missing a body part - an arm, leg, even a head. It’s the first time Abba saw that being dead could also mean a new body part had grown overnight to stick out of the old body: an iron rod or a hammer or a wooden stump or a screwdriver. There was one body with its belly torn open; a spear stuck out of it like a sharp edged hand calling for help. Another body was just burnt coal. If you touched it, it would fall apart, crumble into a small heap of gritty black powder. Abba didn’t know how the others managed to recognize fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers, people in these monstrous discoloured lumps of flesh, bloated, burnt or cut to pieces. Sometimes it was only bits of clothes they had to identify.\textsuperscript{31}

Yasmin always lives under a fear after the incident, but still she is not broken inside. She continues her education to become independent and leaves that place. She has a dream to be free one day and live happily as an independent citizen with her parents, but always a sense fear of lurks in her mind of something unpleasant because of herself being a Muslim:

To be free. Isn’t that too big, too impossible, like wishing to be rich? Or wishing to be someone else? For now walking down this road, it’s enough if she’s free not to be looked at. Any girl knows that a busy road is a safe road. But Yasmin knows now that she should also be afraid of a crowd. How’s she to find a road that’s not empty but has no crowd,
how’s she to be part of it, be just like everyone else in it? She doesn’t want to see it because when she finally gets out of here she doesn’t want to remember this buildings face. They have lived here safely for almost five years, but it’s still a pretend home. It will remain that no matter how long they live here, no matter how hard they try to make its mean room theirs. The only way to bear it is to see it as a temporary arrangement, to hope she is here on the way to somewhere else.\(^\text{32}\)

Yasmin is not satisfied with her parents’ present status.

Her father has set up a shop with two other men, but the people who are willing to buy from them often have no money; the other walk past the shop as if it doesn’t exist, as if they have trained their eyes not to see a Muslim shop.\(^\text{33}\)

**Fugitive Histories** is a gloomy description of a particular time when some people get pleasure in the destruction of entire community. The darkest note in the book is an insidious observation, which shows that people have lost their will power to fight the forces of negativism:

We heard a crowd was gathering in our area. Then we heard them. Then we saw them. First there were a hundred people, then there were more. There were so many more. There were so many they seemed countless. They had swords, pipes, hockey sticks, soda-lemon bottles, saffron flags, all kinds of sharp weapons. They had petrol bombs and gas cylinders. They broke the dargah down the street and put an idol there. They came to our houses, they were shouting ‘kill them, cut them, burn them alive!’ Then they blasted apart our lives.\(^\text{34}\)

The novel does not have happy and balancing portions to provide some relief to the unrelieved darkness of the Gujarat pogrom. The above lines make alive the whole situation of Gujarat riots. Mariam is one of the victims of Gujarat pogrom. She tells Nina and Sara what is the meaning of that riot to the victims:

It means our men were killed, it means our mothers and sisters and daughters were raped. It means we saw it happening. Our people were
grilled like meat. I saw it with my own eyes. The bodies piled up. Everything was over in a flash.\textsuperscript{35}

Hariharan fills the victims of the carnage with a hope of recreating life and happiness. She throws light on her point of view through one of the victims, who utters- “People don’t want revenge, they want to live again.” (165) Hariharan has tried to provide a positive hope and aspiration to relive life in spite of such carnage. We must educate ourselves to understand the true nature and feeling of all people. Individuals can not represent accurately any racial, religious, or cultural group.

Suppression and torture, both physical and emotional, have forced the women to take the step to fight against the aggressiveness of male dominated society. They have stood against patriarchal domination to get the rights of equality, whereas man has been given all the facilities and exclusive rights in this field. Feminism intends to revenge against the hostile environment in which a woman is forced to live. It is a struggle against the dual moral mentality; to which woman is subjected. The new woman’s demand for her rightful place, recognition and respect, because of her ill treatment; is encouraged her and make her strong. K. Meera writes in \textit{Feminism as Existentialism: Woman in Indian English Fiction}:

\textit{Woman in Indian English Fiction} -

The refusal to be crushed, the attempt to fight and voice protest is the core of feminism. A study of the existential struggle of these hypersensitive and highly individualistic women amply illustrates that more or less feminism can be viewed as an extension of existentialism.\textsuperscript{36}

The woman, in the novels of Githa Hariharan, questions the validity of the accepted sets of values, and rebels against the existing moral codes and social norms, which deny woman the air of freedom that nourishes an individual self. To view them as mere champions of feminism is to do them an injustice. Woman in the novels of Githa Hariharan takes a step against her suffering. Woman is always conscious of her social sensibility and emotional need. She has a deep desire of self-expression and self-fulfillment. Due to fight against established order, she faces hardships and suffering. Hariharan’s woman struggles to establish new rules and regulations with changed standards where she can get her real identity. She believes that character is never decided by the physical beauty but by the beauty of mind. Her thinking towards
freedom is not to bind the realism of social and economic freedom. It is the freedom of mentality and emotions.

Number of fairy and folk tales and myths are anti-feminist, and that they are anti-feminist while they worship women as goddess. There are absences and gaps in our epics and mythological books and this gap can be filled in by feminist writers. Hariharan imperiously crafts ancient myths; When Dreams Travel is a retelling story of myth in her own imaginative way. In her novel, Hariharan presents the feministic aspects of the ancient myth A Thousand and One Nights. Quest for love and power is the theme of this novel. Hariharan debases tradition and reinvents incidents and offers alternative women characters to show their inner power, crookedness and patience in the male dominated society. As Simonede Beauvoir describes in Second Sex:

History has shown us that men have always kept in their hands all concrete powers; since the earliest day of the patriarchate they have though best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes of low have been set up against her; and thus she has been definitely established as the other. This arrangement suited the economic interests of the males; but it conformed also to their ontological and moral pretensions.37

The whole story of the novel moves around two brave sisters; Shahrzad and Dunyazad and two brothers; Shahryar and Shahzaman. On finding their wives cheating them, Shahryar decides to marry a virgin every day, love her for the whole night and kill her in the morning, because a dead wife can never cheat her, and he will be proved as a faithful wife’s husband. When Shahryar comes to know that his wife is cheating him —

It is Shahryar’s agony which is in the limelight. Our storyteller tells us he is ‘half demented’ at the sight of his wife and slave women cuckolding him in his own garden with his own slaves.38

Simonede Beauvoir remarks in The Second Sex:

With still better reason a man who believes that he has gained possession of his mistress may think that he has made a fool of her
husband. This is why an author sometimes represents his heroine as deliberately choosing a lover of lower social class; she seeks sensual satisfaction from him, but she does not wish to give him the advantage over a respected husband.39

In When Dreams Travel, Githa Hariharan explores the world of the ‘mother of raconteurs’, Shahrzad. In an interview, Githa Hariharan has described the genesis of the novel in the following words:

When Dreams Travel began, with the mother of all storytellers, Shahrzad. But the real entry point into the novel came as the next step. I saw in the darkness surrounding Shahrzad, a silent accomplice and sister, Dunyazad. I knew my voice could not be grafted onto Shahrzad: I needed a silent space to fill up, a voiceless woman to be made articulate. I hit upon the idea of the “sisters and descendents of Shahrzad.40

This novel is the sequence of The Arabian Nights. It starts after the thousand and one nights, when Shahrzad succeeds to win over Shahryar. Through this novel, Hariharan reveals the life story of Shahryar, Shahrzad, Dunyazad, Shahzaman and the Wazir after one thousand and one nights. The Arabian Nights and When Dreams Travel are two different stories in narration from the main characters’ point of view, but they are similar in the roles, in the pattern of narrative techniques and the themes. The Arabian Nights is also presented by Simone de Beauvoir in her book The Second Sex:

In essence woman is fickle, as water is fluid; and no human power can contradict a natural truth. Throughout literature, in The Arabian Nights as in the Decameron, we see the clever ruses of woman triumph over the prudence of man. Moreover, it is society that makes him- as father, brother, husband- responsible for his women conduct. Chastity is enforced upon her for economic and religious reasons, since each citizen ought to be authenticated as the son of his proper father.41

Through this novel, Hariharan makes clear the position of woman inside local patriarchies and the extent of the psychological damage inflicted on them as second rate citizens of a repressive social order. She shows in her-stories the conditions of women
who have become pawns or victims at the hands of male dominated powers. The author breaks away from the original version of the tales to present Shahrzad not as a deceiver heroine, but as a suppressed and victim who devices her own unique way to counter patriarchy. While Shahryar’s image presents as oppressive patriarchy and Shahrzad, the fearless and witty femininity, Dunyazad is presented as the heroine of her subverted version. Hariharan reveals that **When Dreams Travel** is the story of Dunyazad, who is hidden behind the shadow of her illustrious sister, Shahrzad:

> I think it would be more accurate to say that while Scheherazade is centre stage, as woman or storyteller or saviour, Dunyazad, the silent accomplice, occupies a part of the stage that is almost unlit. It is always this mysterious, unknown corner of a story that sets the writer going. It was Dunyazad’s position as the unheard younger sister, the yearning, questioning follower, which allowed me to step into the story as a writer.\(^{42}\)

**When Dream Travel** seeks the real answer of the question of power and domination, gender inequality and women survival tactics in a very creative and intelligent way. After three years of continuous killing of virgins, the city becomes lightly populated. At last Wazir of Shahryar has to offer her own daughter to marry him because of the shortage of virgins:

> Shahrzad he must know, is an ideal candidate. He has named her well, Shahr-zad; born of the city, not only is this child of the city chaste but clever, ambitious and quick-tounged.\(^{43}\)

The Wazir tells Shahrzad, a somewhat double-edged warning tale almost sure footed that she will not take scare. Once she volunteers to be the bride though she talks of bridal delights or dreads—there is a chance that this sanguinary story will head towards a happier ending. At the end awaits salvation, and to get there Shahrzad must reconcile the sultan to the hard lot of men. With the company of her sister Dunyazad she must cajole him to repent, and make him aware of that all women need not be killed. And the efforts of Shahrzad attain triumph for her. A thousand and one nights later the sultan is cured and both the sisters are gifted to enjoy their lives, Shahrzad
with Shahryar and Dunyazad with Shahzaman. Shahrzad works hard to achieve her goal:

Shahrzad, the woman who is talking for her life, does not look frightened. She must be though, how can she not be terrified? This could be her very last performance.44

When Shahrzad’s brothers ask her about her dreams-

Shahrzad smiles and shakes her head. ‘my dreams? They are nothing just a rubbishedy pile of rough, uncut stones.’ She turns to her sister, Dunyazad. Between them passes a swift, secretive look.’ Besides,’ adds Shahrzad, darting a teasing look at Shahrayr,’only those locked up in the hovel and dungeons and palaces can see and hear these dreams. Only those whose necks are naked and at risk can understand them.45

Shahrzad explains her fear of being killed as a woman, because it is the demand of the time to continue telling a story, based on whatever comes in her mind without thinking or caring for the content. Her life depends on the continuity of her story. Due to her wit, Shahrzad saves her life:

Shahrzad, like her own story, is a survivor. The travelling tale undergoes a change of costume, language and setting at each serai on its way. It adapts itself to local conditions, to this century or that, a permanent fugitive from it’s officious parent, legitimate history. And Shahrzarz – she too has learnt the lesson of the tales she told. She is now a myth that must be sought in many places, fleshed in different bodies, before her dreams let go of Dunyazad or her descendants.46

In this novel, the high tone of feminism is the real success of Githa Hariharan and it is also a celebration of all womanhood and the power of feminine over male domination. Through this novel one comes to know about the misogynist patriarchal values and sexual morality. Githa Hariharan, very successfully presents her creative treatment in the traditional form of storytelling. She presents feminism in her novels in a very unique way. It was a tradition of medieval period of keeping Harem full with thousands of women to satisfy the lust of kings and sultans. Though Shahryar loves
Shahrzad, but his egoistic thinking of male superiority does not allow him to accept the equality with a woman:

Shahryar was a sensitive imbalanced fellow and the perennial battle between the sexes made him cynical.47

He cannot let Shahrzad become his competitor, so he vanishes suddenly. He says to Dunyazad:

I will show the world how much a man can love a woman. I am building a memorial that will do justice to my love for Shahrzad. And it must do more it must teach generations to come what a chaste woman is.48

Hariharan shifts her representation of the Taj Mahal, a monument of love to unexpected grounds. In her novel, it is a tomb, the real symbol of love between man and woman. Due to the cruelty of Shahryar, his own son Umar becomes his enemy. To establish peaceful city worth-living, Umar desires to be the king of Shahabad:

I should have sons by my side, filling my evening with a mellow joy. But Umar, our young prince of the people, thinks he can teach me how to rule. He forgets that I too had a king for the throne.49

Shahryar’s bitterness towards Shahrzad can be observed very clearly:

Two royal heads,’ writes Shahryar, ‘may sleep on the same pillow, but two rulers cannot live in the same kingdom.’ It is not clear at first whether the second head belongs to Umar or Shahrzad. But Shahryar seems to have almost forgotten about Umar, so muted are his complaints about his imprisonment. It is the past that is vulnerable to a string of shrill questions. ‘How could I not rule over her? How could I not rule? How could I not join myself to her if it meant my salvation?’50

In her novel When Dreams Travel, Hariharan takes the help of ancient historical stories to show the realities of the kings, how they at one time used to exploit women by hiring them for being one night wife. The logic behind this is without controversy; a dead woman is a chaste wife. On the basis of ethical discussion that is set up, this novel presents vividly the connection between sexuality and power.
Hariharan invents plot, taking the historical story and uses it in a new way. Dunyazad re-enters disguised as a man leading her caravan from her home Samarkand to Shahabad, Sultan’s capital. The transformation of a subdued Dunyazad into a bold, courageous and determined middle aged woman is her remarkable success. It appears that the shifty Dunyazad has finally found her true identity as a fearless woman, who knows how to face that male dominated society. Dunyazad wants to know the reason of sudden death of her sister Shahrzad. Now Dunyazad is a widow, her husband Shahzaman died a mysterious death. Dunyazad’s pragmatism about her widowhood gives a glance into the liberated psyche of a modern woman, who doesn’t lose her identity after her husband’s death, but become stronger than before to achieve her personal goals that had been laid aside for the sake of marital duties. Dunyazad, a widow, is far removed from the orthodox image of a widow.

In *When Dreams Travel*, Dunyazad plays the vital role of the protagonist. In The Arabian Nights, Dunyazad is Shahrzad’s younger sister, who helps her in continuing her stories night after night, to succeed in her plan of stopping Shahryar from killing more virgins. In this novel, we can see the depth of her character. For example, the line, ‘I love my sister but I don’t want to be her shadow.’\textsuperscript{51} (256) presents her real feelings towards the whole plan of Shahrzad, and her desire to become a martyr and take the place of Shahrzad. Dunyazad remembers how Shahrzad, even as a child, thought to come out of the walk alive. Her desire, almost butting on greed, is to somehow come out alive. Dunyazad, on the other hand, plays the regular martyr, almost inviting death to encompass her. Dunyazad, who knows her sister and brother-in-law too well, can make a hypothesis that her sister who was so much in love with life could not have died a sudden quick death. Both the sisters play the game of martyr as a preplanning of their future life with Shahryar, which reveals Shahrzad’s love for her life:

The game is called The Martyr’s Walk and each player describes herself as she makes her way to the blade-holding hand that waits for her. Minor variations are allowed. Sometimes the waiting doom is to be dealt out by the hunter; sometimes an executioner or an evil jinni or a king old enough to be their father. But it is always a man who waits for them and he has something sharp in his hand, something that draws blood.
Otherwise where is the terror and the excitement and the hard-won martyrdom? 52

Githa Harihara presents the image of a bold woman who fights for social justice in this male dominated society. Dunyazad plays the role of a female revenger of her sister. By becoming a friend to Shahryar’s son Umar, she succeeds in degrading Shahryar and bringing about his imprisonment inside the same monument that Shahryar is building in the memory of his beloved wife. Dunyazad investigates to know the actual reason of the sudden disappearance of her sister Shahrzad:

She suddenly took ill,’ murmurs Sabiha. It was all over before we knew what was happening.53

When Dunyazad questions about Shahrzad’s sickness and death, Shahryar replies:

It was sudden and fatal’ he says. And Zaman, my beloved brother? It’s been a few years now, but I recall we had no news of his illness before we heard of his shocking death.54

Such type of statement for Shahrzad from Shahryar makes Dunyazad more suspicious about her sister’s death:

It is clear that she has been brought here to play a role in Umar’s scenario of redemption. Dunyazad makes no promises; but she is aware that she has not displayed integration or revulsion. Her silence has already made her part-accomplice. Still, it is a long time since she has felt the tingling anticipation of discovery. Could it be that well–matched pair again, signaling from where they used to, just round the corner? Love and power. Love or power. If it is not love it must be power. But this time she must chase this faithless shadow and trip it up. Throw herself bodily on it, pin it down, hold it till it is hers, till it is part of her. 55

Through these particular lines, one comes to know about Dunyazad’s perspectives about Shahryar just before he is captured by his son, Umar:
And now this new Shahryar, without a queen, without Shahrzad; the features that once inspired admiration, resentment and terror blurred in an ageing body. Regal still, but in a faded, melancholy style, with sunken cheeks, pouches under the eyes, wrinkle hands peeping out of pearl-studded sleeves. Do those grand, despotic desires still live under the skin of this stranger.⁵⁶

It provides a hint on the status of Shahryar after the end of the thousand and one nights. It shows how Shahryar’s power, reputation and kingdom are going to fall down and finish entirely by Umar, who makes him a prisoner. Shahryar’s image, as a powerful, strong and brutal person from The Arabian Nights, has shifted to a more liable to injury, weak and old one, who loses his health as well as his possession over the kingdom. Though he seems to be portrayed as a faded king who is aged and sad. In When Dreams Travel, Dilsad helps Dunyazad to fulfill her mission of finding what actually happened to Shahrzad. Dilsad soothes Dunyazad just like a caring companion-

They are, Dunyazad realizes with amazement, now talking as equals or if there is as imbalance of power, it is she, Dilsad, with her hints of forbidden knowledge, her unknown loyalties, who must dictate the terms of this new footing.⁵⁷

Hariharan also presents social disease of heterosexual relationship, Dunyazad takes her slave girl, Dilshad as her beloved. She feels herself free in the company of another woman, instead of searching for a heterosexual option for her bodily loneliness. In rejecting a male company, Dunyazad offers an alternative to the women who feels suppressed and oppressed by the only option of a heterosexual relationship. The solution that Dunyazad offers may not be toothsome to all female, but her effort almost gives an answer to the women who is suffering in lonely existence, whereas the men rollick with other women. The aristocratic class ladies or even queens also indulge in adulterous relationships with their male servants. Dunyazad and Dilshad experiences arrogant patriarchy which treated them as pawns in their games. Hariharan provides these women the choice of creating a new order of their own—a circle of love where male domination, along with its oppression, cannot interfere. There is a very strong bondage between Dunyazad and Dilsad:
Dilsad is seated by Dunyazad’s low bed, her legs tucked comfortably under herself. Uninvited, she leans forward. Her clever fingers bury themselves deep in Dunyazad’s hair. They stroke and part the hair, strand by strand, grey and black. Dunyazad’s scalp tingles. She looks up into the face bending over hers. She is no stranger to the caresses of women, but this girl is so full of strange, unspoken challenges. Why does she find her comforting then, tender, so unlike the sister she loved? 

Dunyazad comes out as a powerful woman head of all exploited woman. Her agency can be clearly understood through the above lines. She is totally different from her sister Shahrzad, believes to tackle violence with violence. Dunyazad still thinks that she could murder Shahryar with her dagger, the same night of Umar’s birth. Dunyazad’s thought is effective but might not be approved by her father or even by her sister Shahrzad. The image of an aggressive woman is presented by Dunyazad who goes against the patriarchal society with her own courage and boldness. Not only is Harihan’s Dunyazad a woman of action but also a woman of letters. She wrote the first version of Shahrzad’s thousand and one tales in letters of gold.

Githa Harihan explains social realities as the shadow of Indian socio cultural system. It’s fact that:

Women have also since the earliest times, centered nature but they could not talk about them. With the emergence of the feminist movement in the west, the emancipated women started freely discussing such experiences in their autobiographies.

Dilshad is a slave girl who finds her own true identity through revenge against the male dominated society. Even, Dilshad is no ordinary slave girl. She is an intelligent, striving and moderately misanthropic towards the male rulers. Her presence disturbs but her boyish features attract Dunyazad. Dilshad skilfully makes Dunyazad friend with Umar for forcing Shahryar to leave his post.

Dilshad represents the depressed postcolonial womanhood, bearing the double burden of being suppressed by the colonizer and also by the male-dominated patriarchy. She represents those people who suffers in the kingdom like slaves. At the
same time, Hariharan also points out that Shahrzad’s creative power of storytelling is not recognized. When Shahrzad dies, Shahryar appreciates her only for her chastity. She is good because she follows patriarchal value that is imposed on woman and not for her creative talent. Woman’s voice is continuously suppressed from ancient time but she enjoys the glorious place in the history of creative writing permanently as Dilshad says to Dunyazad:

You and I have a script of our own—a story or two waiting to be told, our text of gold to be written, every page remembering us to posterity.\(^{50}\)

Dilshad inducts Dunyazad into the world of Shahrzad as a sultana of the kingdom. Dunyazad consoles herself when she comes to know about this fact that a young storyteller, named Abdullah, entertained the lonely Shahrzad. Dilshad has to face a number of sufferings before she gets the status of a personal attendant of queen Shahrzad. She has a love for learning. In this sense, she is the true spiritual follower and successor of Shahrzad. She not only takes the original texts of Shahrzad’s tales, but steals few more books also from the treasury. Dilshad achieves very important position in Shahabad’s palace:

Dilsad knows the ways of the palace its private bodily functions, its best-kept secrets—better than Shahrzad or Dunyazad, the chief Wazir’s talented daughters and in a palace under siege, vulnerable to every stray virus including conspiracy, the inmates can find themselves in the wrong places, playing wrong role. In the Shahabad palace tonight, it is the slave girl Dilshad who is the purveyor of knowledge, the teacher; Dunyazad the humble pupil.\(^{61}\)

Dilshad presents the face of an average Muslim girl, longing for knowledge among the sea of ignorance. The new sultan, Umar, is so pleased with the services of Dilsad that he provides her everything whatever she wants. She is a poor girl, always likes to choose books instead of money, property or jewellery. She is never aspiring in the postcolonial feminist context where identity and power is preferred to material possessions. Shahrzad teaches Dilshad reading and writing. The talent of using language and myths provide her a new confidence. Now she is a woman of free-mind to
write her stories. Dilshad writes about the exploitation of woman and other common people through patriarchy:

She could feed the wide, gluttonous mouth of the dungeon a meal it does not expect, a potent and fiery banquet. Then armed with her newfound baggage of riches—freedom, the books she must insinuate herself into—she could set out after the ones who left, their stories in her keeping till she catches up with them.\(^\text{62}\)

Shahrzad is very afraid and worried when she is going to deliver her first baby because she is not able to continue her interest in her story, the sultan may order to kill her the next morning. Her sister, Dunyazad advises her not to worry, but…

How can she not worry? Her existence depends on her remembering, and what she cannot recall, she must invent, or plunder from any other narrative that comes to mind.\(^\text{63}\)

She lies there helpless, feeling the blood leaking out of her every now and then. She tries hard because: she believes in an afterlife.\(^\text{128}\) Dunyazad is different from her sister Shahrzad, she believes in revenge and justice. She can’t endure to see her sister’s pitiable life with Shahryar:

Shahabad’s arms. This sultan is completely dispensable, having finished that little task. There is a kind of poetic justice in the timing, don’t you see?\(^\text{64}\)

But Shahrzad is totally opposite to her sister and believes in harmony and forgiveness. She does not want Dunyazad kill Shahryar–

Here I am, talking for my life and yours, and you talk of more bloodshed? Look at this empty harem. Can’t you hear its walls weep?\(^\text{65}\)

The deep feminist insight of Githa Hariharan enables her to perceive the uselessness and platitude of the real life of these women who are behind the original stories. She writes about the pain of the woman and the cruelty committed against her. The act of telling interesting stories of queen is presented here as an act of compulsion imposed upon Shahrzad by the unhopeful male jingoism robbing her dignity and life.
Githa Hariharan presents Shahrzad, the leading character of the novel as the helpless woman trapped in an orthodox male dominated society, who must survive by means of her skill as an author. She is a good writer but has no room for own.

The great change can be seen in the status and attitude of Shahrzad, from a storyteller to a royal advisor. It shows how Shahryar realizes that Shahrzad is a woman, full of craftiness and keenness for power. It also shows the conversion of Shahrzad’s character from being a chaste to a sly woman, and also exposes Shahryar’s feelings, regarding the change in the role of Shahrzad in his life. Since he is a king and he has the habit of ruling on his kingdom, Shahryar dislikes the interference of Shahrzad in political issues, Dunyazad thinks, suspiciousness is one of the cause for the disappearance or may be the death of Shahrzad in the hands of her husband Shahryar:

Shahryar saw what a heroine Shahrzad was to their people. She could bask in her redeemer’s glow for a lifetime. And Shahryar, out of his own administration, and seeing the crowds and adulations she could draw, had conferred the title of sultana on her. Coins were minted with her name, frequent edicts from the harem issued. Surely he of all people should know the worth of a good, modest woman? But around the time of the old Wazir’s death, some subtle shifted of power took place. Orphaned, Shahrzad the saviour seemed to learn to fend for herself all over again. She slowly changed, or her real usurping nature came to the surface. Though she called it her empathy for the people’s needs, her ambitions were visible once too often for the comfort of royal advisers. The thought came to Shahryar one day that this most chaste of women, wise Shahrzad, was turning into wily Shahrzad. One of them had to win. Shahrzad disappeared; he mourned her deeply.  

Both Dunyazad and Dilshad help Umar to win the throne and rule. Umar accepts Dilshad’s demands that the books containing the stories of Shahrzad of the thousand and one nights, be kept in the palace. She also has a deep desire to be a good learner and a great story teller. For her, education and knowledge are more important than any other thing in the world.” Dilshad goes on alone, free from slavery, blessed with books of gold. She is weighed down with rewards.”  

Hariharan also presents in her novel the importance of books and knowledge. As Cicero says: “A room without
books is a body without a soul.⁶８ When Dunyazad and Dilsad share stories with each other, Dunyazad tells the condition of her father at that time when everyday virgin bride was killed by Shahryar. The father of Dunyazad was both, a wazir to the King Shahryar and also the father of Shahrazad. She tries her best to present the uncontrollable and fearful condition of her father who is worried for the safety of her daughter.

This portion of the novel presents number of the social issues in larger context. This shows the real condition of woman and the real way, a woman is treated in our society. In this society woman is treated as a sex instrument and discarded after the fulfillment of sexual purpose. The condition of woman is further exposed: “It is time for him to make his offering to his hungry god. He can feel the goat‘s heart beating against his chest …”⁶⁹ These particular lines project Shahrzad like a goat that is to be offered to god by Shahryar. Woman is compared to animal, who can be butchered or treated for the selfish consideration and fulfillment of bed tempered persons. Through this novel, Hariharan wants to show the real attitude towards woman in the male dominated society.

The author presents the attitude of a man towards a woman. Treachery is also another similar theme. As in this novel, Shahryar is betrayed by Dunyazad and Dilsad. G. D. Barhe explains in his paper on Facets of Feminism in Indian English Fiction-

> In her quest for independence she has developed certain complexes as well. One such complex is to look even at the womanly instinct as a sign of dependence. The fact is that woman is basically a woman as well as a person. As a woman she definitely needs man and vice versa. But as a person she can legitimately claim to be free and independent. However, in our social set up her two identities, viz. a woman and a person have been rolled into one viz. only a woman. And this has led to the confusion.⁷⁰

Each of the three woman establishes her individual identity as a free woman who can take her own decisions and will no more be suppressed by the patriarchal hegemony. Shahrzad is a woman of substance, who has to survive for herself and for the coming generations of women. Like a cheater hero, she keeps a mystical death. She
is neither sentimental nor sacrificing and complains at her predicament. When the thousand and one nights are completed, she is sent to the chamber of queen, where she actively rules over the country.

To present the predicament of woman in the male dominated society, Hariharan has written her novel *When Dreams Travel* in the manner of *The Arabian Nights*. She chooses Dunyazad as a strong voice of story like Shahrzad in *The Arabian Nights*. This novel clearly shows the condition of the woman in our society. Hariharan exposes deep and hidden desires of female through her novel and presents the confident, ambitious, and action-oriented woman through Dunyazad and Dilshad who demand attention, equality and peace, not on compromising cost but their rights. Woman is no longer the puppet in the hands of man. Thus female characters in this novel have to play a ball to keep the tournament of life in an interesting manner.

Hariharan scrutinized both traditional and modern patriarchal structures of society. The main base of modernization is socio economic changes in our society. Some scholars overlook socio economic factors and they have attention on social psychology of gender domination, which is the basic reason in the rise of feminism. According to Kate Millet:

> The modern times patriarchy is held up chiefly by attitudes rather than political or economic structures. This patriarchy is so deeply ingrained into our thinking that the character structure it creates in both the sexes is more a habit of mind and a way of life than a political system.71

Since birth a woman lives under protection of either her parents or husband or her own children. Such pattern of life makes her life safe and smooth, but slavish and dependent also. Now the new education has awakened her real self. As a result of this, she has started thinking of independent and self-reliant life. And in order to translate this thinking into reality, she has started fighting against her own timid self as well as man’s protectoral shell.

Manju Kapur’s novel *The Immigrant* deals with the experiences of an immigrant in a new country as a woman. Nina, the protagonist of the novel faces difficulties in arranging her Indian clothes in Canada. Kapur very thoughtfully presents the condition of an immigrant away from traditional culture. Immigrant psyche shows
the interaction of traditional culture within the culture of an adopted alien land and brings about a transformation in the inherited tradition and culture of the immigrant. Like the other novels of Kapur, this novel also deals with man woman relationship. The whole story of the novel moves around the relationship of Ananda and Nina in an alien land. The feeling of rootlessness in a new country is portrayed with great sensitivity throughout the novel.

Marriage is the biggest concern for an Indian girl even when she is self dependent. Nina, the protagonist is a thirty year old English lecturer struggling to fulfill the needs of her widowed mother and herself. Therefore, at the age of thirty, she has still unmarried. Her marriage is the most discussed issue in her neighborhood and college. Nina’s mother is always worried about setting her daughter in a happy marriage- “To see her well settled was her only remaining wish.”(61) She has always been in search of a perfect match for her daughter. The following lines elaborate a mother’s concern about the marriage of her daughter:

The major topic of conversation in the last eight years had been Nina’s marriage- who, when, where, how? The hopes each conversation generated gradually lost their luster as the years went by and nothing changed. From where could fresh possibilities be unearthed on the eve of thirtieth birthday? The lack of these reflected in her mother’s dull, mournful eyes, was what she was going home to.72

This is to be noticed that Nina was brought up abroad when her father was alive. Nina’s father had been an IES officer and Nina had enjoyed her father’s transfers to all the good European capitals. Her father had planned a very comfortable and luxurious life for his daughter and wife but he died suddenly at a very young age. So her mother Shanti had to move to Nina’s grandparent’s house in Lucknow who behaved:

Anger provided the energy in the house. The grandmother resented her daughter-in-law’s existence, Nina resented her mother’s meekness, the mother put up with everything because Nina’s security depended on her patience. Nina obsessively imagined the day when the two of them would leave this small town hall. Lovingly she embroidered multitudinous themes in the farewell speech to her grandparents, single
mindedly she visualized the job that would enable her to add to the small monthly pension her mother got from the government. Kapur interprets the troubles that are faced by a woman in Indian society as a widow and a mother. Manju Kapur reveals the fact that the main trouble of a woman is her economic dependency on man. It is a fact that it had been the fate of Indian woman to depend on man for her economic needs due to the lack of education but, in modern era, situation is improving and changing day by day. After the death of her father, her mother has to depend on her grandparents because financially, she does not have ability to survive on her own. After seven years at her grandparent’s home, Nina finishes her schooling and migrates to Delhi for higher studies. She completes her English honors at Miranda House and her post graduate degree from the Delhi University. After completing her post-graduation, she starts teaching at Miranda House to fulfill the basic needs of herself and her mother. She doesn’t want to return with her mother to her grandparent’s house ever.

A woman can live with dignity and self-respect only if she is financially independent. Manju Kapur herself has completed her M.A. degree from Canada, Halifax, she has experienced the life style in the west; therefore she brilliantly interprets her experiences as an immigrant through this novel. After marriage with Anand, Naina settled in Halifax and invited her mother to stay with her. Nina’s mother feels a sense of safety when she leads an independent life without the mercy of her parents. Her daughter provides her sufficient money to lead a happy life.

In Canada, a wife is to support her husband and shoulder many responsibilities. Anand’s aunty has a special sympathy for young Indian immigrants who face difficulties in an alien country. Anand has never planned to settle abroad but after his parent’s death in a road accident, nothing is left for him in India except a married elder sister. Eventually he becomes popular as a dental surgeon in Canada. Ananda stays at his uncle’s house in Canada and he becomes quite surprised when he sees the ways of living in west-

Breakfast over, Dr. Sharma and wife Nancy continued with their explanation of western domestic arrangements. Everybody had to do everything themselves. They both cooked dinner, but breakfast, lunch,
tea, snacks, each one made according to their needs. Washing, ironing, bed making, similarly all on their own. You will learn soon beta, said the uncle gently. Here Nancy stubbed her cigarette butt into an ash-tray and carefully picked a speck of tobacco from her painted mouth creased by faint wrinkles scratched into her upper lip.74

Ananda is shocked due to the attitude of his uncle and aunt, not even one day has passed and they are giving him rules to live by. Because in India men are not supposed to do their work themselves, most of the household tasks are performed by women; cooking, washing, ironing, bed making etc. all is meant to be done by women - "The feeling of being taken care of melted away. Of course this was not a world where family sacrificed their all for your success; here blood expected you to stand on your own."(p.24) But in Canada everybody shoulders responsibly equally, and all this is new to Ananda though gradually he learns the ways of living in Halifax and accepts everything though with a little pain.

Kapur describes with great thoughtfulness, the ways in which marriage interviews managed in Indian society i.e. the girl’s family feels inferior in front of the boy’s family. Nina’s mother succeeds to convince Nina to meet Ananda, a Dentist in Canada. Ananda’s sister comes to see the girl to suit as her brother’s wife in Canada. Nina’s mother has tried to make all possible arrangements so that her daughter may get selected as a perfect bride. Nina’s mother serves many home-made dishes like Dahi Bhalla, Barfis, Namak Parra etc. to please the boy’s sister. But Nina does not like her mother’s attitude, behaving like, slaves to please the bride hunters-

Nina used stupid words about her mother’s endeavours; bought-sold-marriage market. She didn’t understand that if a girl was thirty, you had to submit to the process even more.75

Ananda’s sister Alka appreciates Nina’s mother’s efforts and likes Nina as a perfect match and her qualifications appropriate to suit her brother’s wife.

Kapur portrays the orthodox mentality of Indian woman who considers man as their protector and mentor through Nina’s mother’s statement. The mother wants her daughter to settle in marriage, but Nina has many fears about marriage because of a failure in love- “Why did her daughter refuse to recognize that it was necessary to have
a man to protect one from the vicissitudes of life?” (p.75) But Nina doesn’t want to depend on man for her security, since she has managed to live without a man for so many years with her mother, she can live the rest life like that on her own.

This deprived thinking has been carried for ages that only a son can take care of his parents and a daughter’s parent has no right on her after her marriage. So number of times the parents of a daughter suffer a lot in their old age if they have no son. Same situation is with Nina’s mother- “Which husband likes shouldering the burden of his wife’s mother, even a husband as nice as Ananda?” (p.290) But Nina is a modern educated girl and she denies all these old ridiculous traditions- “If only her mother would agree to immigrate to Canada, her life would assume the simple sweetness she yearned for.” (p.295) But finally Nina’s mother doesn’t agree to come with her to Halifax. Hesitantly Nina agrees to marry Ananda and settle in Canada with him. As Ananda has been living abroad for many years he doesn’t believe in dowry and denies to take anything as dowry in marriage. This make Nina feel proud to marry such an open minded person. Marriage makes her feel more independent. “She floated on her back and took in the many stories of the hotel towering over her, indulging in the fantasy of being mistress of her future, her life, her happiness.” (p.93) Nina desires to go Canada with Ananda but the passport is going to take three months to be ready and Nina has to wait till then to migrate to Canada. She has not expected it earlier. She asks Ananda whether he is disappointed about she is not able to join him in his journey back to Canada. But he says that he has expected this before also, which make’s Nina more upset. Ananda says to her- “You thought everything would fall into your lap?” (p.98) the harshness and bitterness in Ananda’s voice surprises her, she has not realized that the adjustment process which her mother so often mentions will begin the moment she marries.

Only a married woman is considered a respected member of society in India. As Nina has to wait for three months to get a visa to migrate to Canada, she returns to Jungpura and continues her job at Miranda House. When she returns to college as a married woman after vacations; everybody congratulates her and demands sweets as treat which fills Nina with joy-
She never anticipated thought the respect that comes with marriage, a tiny shift in focus, and there it was Nina Sharma, an accepted member of society, married, bound for the western big time.\textsuperscript{76}

The writer illuminates the identity crisis of a woman in a new country through Nina’s suffering on her way to Canada. Eventually, after three months Nina finally gets her immigrant visa and now she can leave for Canada but she faces various problems in her way to Canada like her clothes are not suitable according to the place. But Immigrant man in Canada puts irrelevent questions to Nina in order to search her originality and authenticity of Indian citizenship. Nina feels insulted-

Rage fills her. Why were people so silent about the humiliations they faced in the west? She was a teacher at a University, yet this woman, probably high school pass, can imprison her in a cell like room, scare her and condemn her. Thought she was addressed as ma’am, he respect. It comes with her class, her education, her accent, her clothes. Here a different yardstick is used to judge her she doesn’t like her introduction to the new world.\textsuperscript{77}

In beginning, Nina enjoys her time in Canada. Ananda lives in a small flat at Hollin Court; he cooks vegetarian dinner for Nina and also suggests her to start non-vegetarian food. But- “Meat had never crossed Nina’s lips in 30 years, how could she change now.” Gradually, loneliness fills her life when she is left alone for whole day without any books and much work at home as she has never spent time sitting all day at home. She has not brought her books from India her best companion. Emptiness fills her newly married life-

I miss home- I miss a job – I Miss things. I feel like a shadow. What am I but your wife?\textsuperscript{78}

She has to face many problems to settle her in a new country, her indian traditional clothes which embarrass her when she goes out with Ananda. She feels differently in Canadian land-

The immigrant who comes as a wife has a more difficult time. If work exists for her, it is in the future, and after much finding of feet. At
present all she is, is a wife, and wife is alone for many, many hours. There will come a day when even books are powerless to distract. When the house and its conveniences can no longer completely charm or compensate. Then she realizes she is an immigrant for life. Nina cries feels homesick, sometime adventurous, often forlorn. The minute she gets up she is at a “loose end.”

The boredom as a result of loneliness is essential part of human nature. Nina also falls a prey to this boredom. She takes some books from the library to divert her mind and tries to do household works but even after this she feels homesick. Though Ananda tries to prove himself as a good husband, he helps her in household work-

Hey, no need to thank me, here we share everything. You cooked, I wash, it’s perfectly fair.

Ananda introduces Nina to his Uncle’s family. He also takes Nina with him to meet his friend in order to remove her sense of loneliness Sue and Gary. But these all are not enough to fill her free hours in Canada at home. She wants to get a job to fill the free time of the day at home.

Manju Kapur has vividly and realistically described the realistic circumstances in the life of a married couple who settles in abroad to earn their livelihood. Even the reading of books without the company of husband, makes life dull for Nina in a distant country where she has no close relatives. As Nina likes to read books, Halifax Memorial Library is her favorite place to visit with free mind. She brings books and read them in the free hours of day. She gets books as the best medium to finish her loneliness. She shares everything whatever she reads in books but Anand does not seem interested to discuss about books- “Life is not all books.”(p.144) He tells Nina once when she has been arguing about Sue and Gary. It is pathetic for Nina to hear such types of words from Ananda-

She kept quiet. There might be those who thought life was not all books, but she was not one of them. Her husband was the outer world of telegrams and anger that EM Forster described in „Howards” End, she represented a dark inner world of feeling, instinct and intuitive wisdom.
She was Margaret Schlegel, he was Mr. Wilcox, she Constance Chatterley, he Clifford.\textsuperscript{81}

Ananda is very conscious of Nina’s presence before his friends and relatives. He wants to pretend himself as a pure Canadian as his other friends and folks in Canada. He always tries to show herself as a well cultured Canadian man and wants Nina also should pretend like him. Maju Kapur projects the superficial nature of an Indian who tries to change himself and look like a Canadian citizen. He always teaches Nina what to wear, how to behave, how to speak etc:

That you are a traditional, backward Indian girl, like some of these women you see at the India club. Can’t even speak English properly.\textsuperscript{82}

Ananda always seems to get credit from Nina for bringing her to Canada and helping her to settle in every possible way by introducing her to the people and places in a new country.

You are my wife that is why they accepted you immediately.\textsuperscript{83}

Kapur has skillfully presented the tendency of patriarchal domination of man through Anand who projects himself as a dominant husband. He wants to show her that he is behind her identity and reorganization.

Never for a moment, in all her years at home, had she to think about who or what she was. She has belonged. Only now was she beginning to realize how much that meant.\textsuperscript{84}

Inner conflict and rootlessnessness of a woman is presented by Manju Kapur in this novel. Nina is deeply hurt due to the words of Ananda, she feels rootless. It can be understood through the words of Sangeeta Das in her article ‘The Predicament of Women as Reflected in the Works of Contemporary Indian Women Writers’:-

In Indian society, the identity of a woman is attributed to her husband. She is a decorative appendage who is expected to accompany her husband everywhere and meet the people her husband approves. She can never expect to have her own associations and definitely not of the opposite sex or else she is relegated as infidel.\textsuperscript{85}
It is women’s rights to celebrate their womanhood. They have rights to fulfil their dreams. Writing is a very perfect medium to raise their voice. Their writing impacts their very existence in the socio cultural atmosphere as it improves their shift from marginal position to a central one. But from the day Nina has left India, she has been facing identity crisis, first on her way when she is caught by the immigration man and then again and again in Canada on the different occasions. She is jobless; she has no friends of her own whom he can share her feeling. Western foods and clothes both are not comfortable for her. Only one thing is in favour of her that at least she can speak good English-

Till Nina come to Canada she hadn’t known that what lonely meant. At home one was never really alone. The presence of her mother, the vendors who came to the door, the half hour gardener who watered their plants, the part time maid who washed and cleaned, the encounters with the landlady, all these has been woven into her day. When she mourned her loneliness, she was referring to, not the soul-destroying absence of human beings from her life. She had worried about her mother’s lack of companionship after her marriage, it would have been wise to have spared a thought for herself as well.\textsuperscript{86}

The issue of barrenness is also inculcated in the story of Immigrant. The very title of the novel indicates Kapur’s intension to describe the pitiable condition of immigrants in a foreign. Nina has already faced number of problems in Canada as an immigrant. Nina wants to be mother to fill her sense of loneliness wants that first of all Nina should settle down. Nina visits a doctor who asks her to come along with her husband but Ananda is not ready and refuses to go with Nina. Nina insists him to co-operate in planning for a baby. “Am I the only one here who wants a baby?” Ananda knows very well that she can not pass her time alone at home without the company of her husband. He can’t focus anything more to console her because he has to concentrate on his work. Nina is reminded of the words of an astrologer who has claimed that after marriage “her life would be transformed”.

They didn’t convey how much stress she would undergo while assaulted by changes, charges so through that she felt rootless, branchless, just a body floating upon the cold surface of this particular piece of earth. Part
of that birthday treat had been the scooter ride back home with her mother, which allowed them to be exposed at street loves to all the pollutions of the road. Now she longed to sit in a scooter rickshaw and have every bone in her body jolted.  

Manju Kapur presents the issue of existentialism in her novel through Nina’s search for her identity. It is a very difficult task for an immigrant woman to prove her existence in a new place. Nina feels rootless in Canada; she wants to make her identity in Canada herself in more meaningful way. Consequently, Nina’s frequent visits to library prove fruitful to her. She gets a part time job in library as a helper. With a job in Canada, she feels more rooted and satisfied, she comes across with Beth during her job in library. Beth, a student of Masters in Library Science, introduces Nina to a group of women which functions on feminist principles and strengthens women through co-counseling. Nina tells Ananda about joining the group but he is not interested. He objects to join such a ridiculous group. He tries to convince her not to join the group. But Nina wants to join this group at any cost and she argues- “I need to find my feet in this country. I can’t walk on yours”.

Finally, she attends the meeting which is organized by the group. During the counseling session, Beth delivers a lecture to explore the feminististic viewpoints of modern scenario.

We all have problems, Beth started, and we all need help right? Now, how are we going to get it? So far, the only way has been through professional counselors, therapists, psychoanalysts, usually men, usually with biased attitudes that are considered normal. As a result, male-female power equations are further replicated, with the difference that the woman is now paying for this shit. For those who are new to co-counseling it is the theory that in order to avoid dependence, we provide mutual help to each other. In a clinical setup the anxieties and problems women have tend to be treated as neuroses, rather than the result of stress that comes from coping in a male dominated world. Often women fell inadequate, powerless, even sexually vulnerable because of professional therapists.
Beth’s lecture influences Nina. She advises Ananda to take the couple therapy. But he prefers to adopt the medical therapy of a surrogate mother. Nina has felt as used, excluded, and cheated woman. She knows that she is emotionally, financially and socially, heavily dependent on him. She relives her pain of loneliness after joining the group. As it is a feministic group they also borrow and share books, and discuss issues. Nina reads *The Second Sex* of Simone de Beauvoir. She discusses about the meeting with Ananda and presented him this book. Looking at the book, Ananda seems uneasy “But why do you want to read such stuff? You are not deprived in any way.”

Nina ignores his talks and finds the most of text alien but at least, she can relate to the theme of Beauvoir’s thesis that “Women are defined in relation to men.” When Nina expresses her views to the co-counseling group, Lore tries explain to her—

> Underneath the emancipation, said Lore, the Western woman may not be better off than her sisters elsewhere. We have Privileges that make it harder to uncover our inner servitude without awareness, we can be both manipulated and manipulative, exploited, as well as exploitative.\(^89\)

The co-counselling group advises Nina to do graduation in Library Science. Nina qualifies the entrance exam and also gets scholarship for education. With the help of this degree, she can get a suitable job anywhere in North America. This is Nina’s first step towards autonomy after being controlled by circumstances. Ananda also feels happy at this move of his wife which will enable him to have much time for his job. Manju Kapur has raised the hidden issues of impotency society in her novel very boldly as no one dares to talk about such issues openly specially in Indian society. She introduces us to Ananda’s sexual problem when the story progresses, which is treated as an invisible issue in India. But Kapur very boldly raises the problem through Ananda, who is suffering from premature ejaculation. Sometimes, Nina suspects but never enquires about anything. Ananda accepts, he needs treatment to cure his problem and decides to go through treatment under Dr. Max and Carla Hansen in San Francisco secretly. Max and Carla claims to treat his problem within two weeks. Finally, he goes to San Francisco for his treatment and tells a lie to Nina that he is going there for a dental conference. He doesn’t want to tell Nina anything about his problem to avoid humiliation it might bring in front of her-
This was a journey he preferred to make on his own. If he improved, he could tell her. If he didn’t this would be one failure about which she need never know.90

After two weeks therapy in California, Ananda’s condition is improved and now he is more confident about his performance. After his trip to California, Nina notices some changes in his activities. She asks Ananda about his trip, he explains the truth about his treatment therapy, and recovery. Nina is upset to know about his husband’s lie so she feels suffocated and ignored in the company of Anand-

Above all I want us to have a solid relationship, with us sharing everything. You are all I have in this country, you are the reason I am here.91

She wishes to have a good communication with Ananda but he behaves like an individual person. She herself has asked him to go for a treatment and also ensures to cooperate in every possible way. But instead of Nina, he has chosen a surrogate to help him with couple therapy. And he has no regrets for his decision and blames her behaving like a selfish person.

Ananda tries to establish a relationship with his office receptionist Mandy. He desires to prove his manly masculinity through having sex with different women. Once he tells Mandy about the reason he has married Nina- “Oh, her father died, she wanted to emigrate, so I married her. It was to help her really.”

Ananda shows as if he has favoured Nina by marrying her. But Ananda has an Indian viewpoint of woman, who has been silent for ages. Poonam Rani Gupta explains in her article:

It is exactly the tradition of silence, which proves that the victims of male domination are prevented from revealing their victimization. Manifested through various forms and supported by an overwhelming number of agents male domination against women in a patriarchal society is not always perceived as a violation of human rights. In this way its victims become each day numerous, it is also due to the fact that
they are prevented from raising their voice and the perpetrators remain unknown and unpunished.92

Manju Kapur focuses on the cheap mentality of certain egoistic men through the character of Ananda. Though he tries to behave like a pure Canadian, he is incompetent to change his orthodox thinking that man is superior to woman. Ananda has promised Nina to come to Ottawa and see different places with her. The night she has been with Anton, Ananda has called her so many times but the receptionist tells him that she is not in the room. When Ananda arrives there, he seems extremely angry “Where the hell had she been last night? He kept trying the hotel, but they said no one was in the room.” It seems very awkward that on one side he is carrying affairs with Canadian women and on other side he expects his wife to be dutiful. Once Nina purchases a kashmere sweater for 300 dollars which makes Ananda bad tempered about her being extravagant “I should have come with you. You go alone, you lose your head.” As Nina has been an earning woman for a very long time, such words of Ananda hurt her deeply and she replies- “From now on, I will only buy clothes when I have money of my own.” Such petty incidents disturbs their relationship. Nina can not bear this monotonous environment in house, so she chooses to compromise and adjust to maintain the matrimonial harmony, as her mother often keeps telling her through letters and phone-

The stillness around her added to her desolation. Her warm bed now seemed cosiness itself, as did her kitchen, her routine and meals cooked with Ananda. It wasn’t a bad life. Ananda was always saying keep it simple. She would go home and make up with him. For her world to be in order, there had to live between her husband and herself.93

Since the beginning of the novel, Nina tries to get a true companion with whom she can spend her life truly but once again she meets with misery. Her love affair begins with Rahul her English professor during her M.A., who was fifteen years older than her. She completely devotes herself to the relationship but Rahul’s intention has been only to enjoy and thus he is never sincere in maintaining the friendly relationship:

Eventually the serial lover moved on. She thought the pain would destroy her. Despite her knowledge of his nature, in her, weakened state
she succumbed to his blandishments eight months later. Then followed four anguishing years dotted with moments of ecstasy as she waited for him to declare that she was the chosen one. But Rahul had always made it clear that he wanted to have his cake and eat it too. Like all cakes this one was chewed, mashed into pulp and swallowed.\footnote{94}

Finally, Nina chooses her loneliness over compromise. She is depressed and lonely after her break-up with her lover. After her failure in first love affair with professor, now she completely devotes herself to her studies and books of literature. After her marriage, she feels the same trauma of loneliness because her husband Ananda also fails to be her true companion. Though Nina has been suspecting that there is some sexual problem with Ananda and she also wants him to seek for some treatment. “I want us to be happy, she whispered. That is what I want to work at. We should tell each other all our feelings. I don’t want any shadows in our married life.” Nina wants to share his problem but Ananda’s ego doesn’t allow him to share his problem with his wife. Nina wants trust and faith in their relationship but Ananda wants to maintain his privacy. She assures him that she feels happiness in discharging her duties as a wife and hardly cares for his sexual incompitancy to satisfy her sensual desire. Consequently, due to her husband’s ignorance she is in search of another male companion and as a result of this, she is driven in an extra marital affair with Anton.

She meets an American man Anton in the Library School and his personality influences Nina. During a trip to Ottawa to visit the National Library, she develops physical relationship with Anton that makes her feel autonomous and independent. Nina has a deep desire for a person who is equally committed to her as she is. She wishes a life partner with whom she can share her feelings and expects the same from his side. But neither Ananda nor Anton is able to fulfill that place in her life. She longs to meet her mother, whose love has always been pure to her. “That love had a purity, it would be a relief to experience after all the complications she had suffered in its name.”

After a few months of relationship with Anton, she realizes that she is only a time pass for him. She wants to make an end her relationship with Anton. Unfortunately, during a field trip to New York she is raped by Anton. But she never exposes the incident of rape because she has no near and dear relative to help her. This mentality of Indian woman gives another chance to criminal. “He would use their
liaison to defend himself. The whole affair would be out and her integrity questioned.”
So she has to remain quiet and tries to forget about the accident of rape. She doesn’t want her life ruined by Anton so she discontinues conversation with Anton.

Through Ananda, Manju Kapur depicts the patriarchal domination and orthodox mentality of men for whom women are just like an object to satisfy their sexual gratification. They expect virginity from their wives but, on the other side, they develop relationship with as many women as possible. During her holidays, Nina goes to India to meet her mother. Ananda permits her to go to India but he can’t accompany her for he wants to spend time like a bachelor-

He had equal cause to be relieved, but those causes lay in Halifax. For two months he would enjoy a close approximation to bachelor status. One woman was a prison; many contained the variety of the world. Idly he thought he should have been born in an earlier age, when Hindu men could marry as often as they pleased.95

When Nina returns to Halifax after the vacation, she feels the necessity of a baby to fulfill her life. When she asks about seeing a doctor with her, he doesn’t like the idea of becoming a father and loaded with responsibilities. He wants to enjoy his life in different way. He feels sick of talking about treatments, infertility and motherhood- “His wife was conservative after all, in different ways he kept coming to that conclusion. He was the true westerner, she the true Indian.”

Ananda needs to ignore all these conversations about baby, so he irritably tells Nina that the treatment is too costly to be afforded. But Nina wants a baby at any costs and snaps “If he wanted, she would pay him back when she started earning.” This argument makes the situation worse between them and leads to coldness in their relationship. Nina wants permanence in her life and relation with Ananda after her bitter experiences of friendship with Anton and the Prof. “I’m going to try really hard from now on, this marriage is the main thing in my life.” But how she can feel rooted in Canada without a complete family in absence of a baby. She desires to experience motherhood because the love of a baby is true in the real sense-

In her mid-thirties she felt insecure about a future with no children. Her profession was being taken care of, but on the home front she needed
more than Ananda. In India husbands were not expected to meet one’s entire needs. Here it was all man-woman-relationship-love-fulfillment, screaming at her till she wanted to give up the ghost. The anchor she was forging out of the iron minded from the virgin soil of Canada needed a broader base on which to rest.96

One day Nina is informed about the sudden death of her mother due to heart attack and, now she is left alone for the whole life. She goes to India to perform her final duties towards her mother. Her life seems now her own responsibility, she can’t turn to anyone she feels adult and bereft at the same time. After finishing her duties towards her mother, Nina returns to Halifax.

Manju Kapur tries to solve the complicated situation of woman. she creates the character of Nina to point out the absurdities arisen out of fever of modernity and search for materialistic pursuit. Nina’s life becomes a continuous struggle for she is agitated and aspires for full freedom and fulfillment. She feels hurt at finding men to use her not to establish serious relationship to make her existence meaningful. She can be free only when her struggle comes to an end. After her mother, she has expected Ananda as her solitary anchor in the world but she realizes she has been wrongly considering him as her only companion:

Anchors you had to be your own anchor. By now there was no escaping this knowledge. Still she had been trained to look for them and despite all that had happened, she had not got over the habit. Marry me, love me and above all look often me. Somebody had to be responsible for her, besides herself. That was what woman has been led to expect and hardly any price was too high. Loneliness, heartache, denial, all grist to the mill.97

She doesn’t want to qurral with her husband on any issue because he is the only person she can depend upon until she graduates and gets a job. She finds no reason in argument if she can’t change anything. She remains like a strong woman, morose, lugubrious and moody. Ananda accuses her of behaving like a deprived immigrant- “Many people would kill to be in your position. You have everything and still you sulk and behave like one of those heroines in the novels you are always reading.” The
atmosphere becomes oppressive at home because of her deep silence. He blames Nina of living in an imaginative world. But, when Nina tries to argue, he harshly says “If Nina wished to do drama she should go somewhere else.” This fight leads Nina to feel more alone and broken. All her feelings are dramatic according to her husband, she finds no meaning of living with a person like him who is devoid of humanistic traits.

After completing her graduation Nina applies for job everywhere only to leave Halifax and decides to leave her husband to find her own existence. She prefers it to be alone elsewhere than the company of such an insensitive person like Ananda. She wants to find her own identity. Thus, she wants to prove that she is able to survive without his support as she has before marrying him. “I need to be myself.” Her academic records have been excellent and she receives a call from University of New Brunswick for interview. She is sure she will get the job. She packs her bags and leaves for Fredericton. Kapur ends her novel with a positive thought and hope-

Perhaps that was the ultimate immigrant experience. Not that any one thing was steady enough to attach yourself to form the rest of your life, but that you found different ways to belong, ways not necessarily lasting, but ones that made your journey less lonely for a while. When something failed it was a signal to move on. For an immigrant there was no going back. When one was reinventing oneself, anywhere could be home. Pull up your shallow roots and move. Find a new place, new friends, a new family. It had been possible once, it would be possible again.98

After analyzing all the three novels, one can easily say that Manju Kapur and Githa Hariharan register their concern for Indian women in their novels. Both narrate invisible issues like lesbianism, impotency and extra marital affairs, with great nuance and social riots. They dwell upon various feministic issues through their novels like women empowerment, education and economic independence, etc. They write about the emergence of new woman in India who is constantly rebelling for her rights. Their heroines take their life in their own hands, and attempt to establish their own space in the male dominated society. Dr. Poonam Rani Gupta has explained the age old suppression of women in her article:
Manju Kapur is well aware of the fact that women under the patriarchal pressure, were subjected to much more brunt’s and social ostracism. They are discriminated and are biased in lien of their sex. In patriarchal system, man is the legal head of the family. This system ensured that property and children belonged to the same genealogy. The same life lived and struggled under the oppressive mechanism of a closed society is reflected in all her novels. Manju Kapur presents the yearning for autonomy and separate identity in her women protagonists. All her women protagonists are caught in the conflict between the passion of the flesh and yearning to be a part of the political and intellectual movement of the day.99
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