CHAPTER 1

Introduction
Woman is an integral part of the society. No society or country can progress without the active participation of woman. Although the place of woman in society has changed from age to age and culture to culture, but one fact common to all societies is that woman has never been considered equal to man. She is treated as subordinate and second rate citizen. Her identity and status is derived from her relation to the gendered categories of mother, daughter, daughter-in-law and wife. She 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. Male superiority is inculcated in her. Even most of the scriptures of the world including The Bible, The Quran and Manusmriti define the role of woman, putting her in the “confines of household”.

In the Bible, superiority of a man over woman is emphasized. The Bible clearly exhorts woman to submit herself to her husband. It is believed that woman is made out of man. In the Biblical myth, man has been made master of all and he rules over and controls every object on the earth including woman. St. Paul also gives a secondary position to woman:

Woman should be silent during the church meetings. She is not to take part in the discussion, for they are subordinate to men as the scriptures also declare. If they have any questions to ask, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to express their opinion in church meetings. (Quoted in Arora 10)

In the Quran, the superiority of man over woman is also stressed. The function of a woman in life is to provide the male with sexual gratification and progeny. 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. (Rodwell 415)

Even in ancient India, woman’s lot was no better and they were assigned secondary positions in a male-dominated society by religious injunctions and social conventions. Manusmriti occupies a significant place in the mainstream of Indian philosophy and culture. The ancient Hindu law – giver, Manu, does express some noble sentiments about woman, “Where females are honoured, there the deities are pleased; but where they are dishonored, there all religious acts become fruitless” (Haughton 68). Yet, he too stressed the inferiority of woman to man. Manu says that all through her existence 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. (V, 148)

Thus, the double standards are quite clear. On one hand, a woman should be given full respect. On the other hand, woman must remain dependent on her father, husband, and sons. She should never think of freedom. This unending oppression of a woman in the society has led to the crisis of identity. And this unflinching quest for identity has always enjoyed a great significance in the thematic framework of the Indian-English novels. The novels of R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao laid the foundation of this new Indian English fiction.
R.K. Narayan explores the idea of the crisis of identity along with various dimensions. His first novel *Swami and Friends* (1935) has the seeds of the same theme manifest in the form of the pain and sufferings of children. The other novels are also structured on the same idea explored along with different dimensions. In *Dark Room* all the three major characters suffer with the crisis of identity in their own ways. Ramani is torn apart between marriage and infatuation. Savitri endures all the pains and alienation of a conventional, male dominated family set-up. Shanti Bai is the new representation of identity crisis. She is “married to an unscrupulous husband” but “rejects identity with him and escapes to Madras” (16). Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1980) and *Shame* (1983), knit around the idea of identity crisis which owes its birth and life to the direct collision between individual and history.

Born in the later half of the nineteenth century, fiction becomes a powerful form of literary expression and has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature. The emergence of women writers that “it marks the birth of an era which promises a new deal for the Indian women” (Ramamoorthy 66). Kamala Markandaya is undoubtedly the most outstanding woman writer whose women protagonists are the repertoire of transitional Indian society. Her women characters go in quest for autonomy.

Anita Desai differs from other women writers through her method of psychological exploration of her women protagonists who are essentially lonely and sensitive. The woman grows from self alienation to self identification. It is the inner urge that springs from her self identification that strikes a balance between the constructive and destructive aspects of self-alienation. Anita Desai marks a parallel stream in the history of Indian English fiction. It is however undeniable that her novels have been knit
around the complex idea of identity crisis with the focus on women character. Her first novel, *Cry the Peacock*, published in 1964 is an important landmark in history of Indian English literature. In her second novel *Bye-Bye Black Bird* the crisis of identity is born of the conflict between the spirit of place and the protagonist’s soul. Shashi Deshpande’s major concern is to depict the anguish and conflict of the modern educated woman caught between patriarchal traditions on the one hand, and the self-expression, individuality and independence for the woman on the other. Her fiction explores the search of woman for herself as a human being, independent of her traditional role as daughter, wife, daughter-in-law and mother. She subtly bares the multiple levels of oppression including sexual oppression. In her novels, a similar progress in the protagonists’ life is portrayed in them. All her protagonists — Indu (*Roots and Shadows*), Saru (*The Dark Holds No Terrors*) and Jaya (*That Long Silence*) are in the state of confusion at the beginning. Slowly as the novel unfolds, they go through a process of introspection, self analysis and in the end, they emerge as more confident and sufficiently more hopeful.

Indian woman, in the past was denied opportunities available in the society. The traditional values, and early marriage system in Hindu and Purdah system in Muslims confined her within the limits of the home. She has no identity other than her family. Thanks to the reform movements by social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, women were educated. The educated woman became conscious of the injustice inflicted upon her by the patriarchy and started protesting against it. She tries to assert her rights as a human being and determined to fight for equal treatment with men. Gradually, the issue of gender discrimination began dissolving. Post - Independence India witnessed a significant change as constitutional provisions were provided to offer woman equal rights
and privileges in society which have “tremendously influenced her outlook on conjugal relationship and attitude towards marriage” (Promilla Kapur 2). A new generation of women novelists emerged in the recent past embracing the changed values. They portrayed woman with a voice of her own, a voice that had been suppressed for centuries. Accomplished with a capacity to make free choice, she does not depend on the choice of the male. Santosh Gupta points out that:

Women writers have eloquently voiced women’s side of life — the experiences of man’s ‘other’, society’s marginalized and silenced half.

Breaking off from the traditional male dominated novels that focused on public subjects and public space, women’s novels have brought to center — stage the ignored and unexpressed lives that have been on the periphery of the male lives. (Quoted in Sumanbala 2)

These women novelists throw deep insights into the female psyche and present a full range of feminine experience. An effort to redefine the man — woman relationships can be seen in the novels of Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Sashi Deshpande, Gita Mehta, Arundhati Roy, Githa Hariharan and others. The recent Indian women novelists have reflected variously on the gender issues through their powerful portrayal of man-woman relationship in their writing. Women in their novels “question, analyze and try to open out the gender roles, male power and relationships that are important to all men and women” (Quoted in Sumanbala 2).

Literature produced by Indian women in the last few decades has been trying to probe the problem of self – definition faced by women in the traditional and patriarchal
society. And in doing so, these writers do not work against their own womanhood by imitating or rejecting the male but are endeavoring to resolve the issues by re-claiming and re-defining the positive aspects of womanhood. The Post-Independence period saw the rise of a number of women writers gifted with great creative genius. They have distinguished themselves by their innovative style, depiction of social realities and portrayal of feminine sensibility and exploitation. These women have invigorated the realistic novel by using it to explore and share their experiences and to put forward their own point of view on life, especially through their female characters with all their suffering, helplessness, pain, agony and exploitation.

The theme of woman’s existence, survival and identity figures prominently in women writers. For the women writers, writing is a form of self-expression. Nayantara Sahgal unravels the maxim of freedom in the framework of feminism of Indian sensibility. She has many disturbing questions to deal with, the agony and pain of woman in her novels. Nayantara Sahgal is deeply concerned with the need for freedom of woman to become aware of herself as individual, society has normally denied her. Nayantara does not view her women characters as wage-earner or career women but mainly as wives, daughters and mothers: and it is in these roles that they wish to experience individuals and to be accepted as equals. All this is pre-requisite for life to have some meaning for them and the man-woman relationship to be a fulfilling one. Anita Desai depicts the psychological state of lonely women. Shashi Deshpande gives voice to the long suppressed silence of women. Githa Hariharan, no longer remaining satisfied with woman’s passive role as woman and wife, expresses her angry protest. She erodes the age-old wisdom containing in saying, stories, myths and beliefs. Her anger expresses itself
through the mode of satire and irony. Her vision encompasses the whole history of woman’s role and edifies the emergence of a new woman who is true to her own self.

Githa Hariharan along with Anita Desai, shares the crown with another prominent figure of Indian English fiction – Arundhati Roy who surprised the world with a unique first *The God of Small Things* published in 1995 and was awarded with Booker Prize in 1996. *The God of Small Things* is also knit around the complex idea of the crisis of identity realized at the level of human relationship. Perspective study of Githa Hariharan brings forth her concern with the women’s issues. But this doesn’t mean that she fictionalizes only women’s problems or the female psyche; she also holds a mirror to the women’s reaction to men, society and vice-versa.

Githa Hariharan was born on 1954 in Coimbatore, India and she grew up in Bombay and Manila. She was educated in these two cities and in the United States. She worked as a staff – writer in WNET Channel – 13 in New York and from 1979, she worked in Bombay, Madras and New Delhi as an editor, first in a publishing house, then as a freelancer. In 1995, Hariharan challenged the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1956 as discriminatory against women that violate the equality promised by Articles 14 and 15 of India constitution and recorded victory. The published works of Githa Hariharan include novels, short stories, articles and columns and also the essays on different topics that interest her. She published her first novel – *The Thousand Faces of Night* in 1992 and was awarded commonwealth writer’s prize in 1993 for best first book. This novel was followed by *The Ghost of Vasu Master* (1994). Her third novel *When Dreams Travel* appeared in 1999 and it was quickly followed by *In Times of Siege* (2003). Her latest publication is *Fugitive Histories* which appeared in 2009. A collection

Hariharan’s fiction has been translated into a number of languages including French, Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch, Greek, Urdu, and Vietnamese. Her essays and fiction have also been included in anthologies such as Salman Rushdie’s *Mirrorwork: 50 years of Indian Writing* 1947-97. She has been visiting professor of writer-in-residence in several universities, including Dartmouth college and George Washington University in the United States, the University of Canterbury at Kent in the U.K. and Jamia Millia Islamia in India. She enjoys a crucial place in the history of Indian English fiction. The Post colonial woman novelist, Githa Hariharan, is mainly interested in the portrayal of women characters. Explaining her involvement with women’s issues, she says, “The question of inequalities that women face became an entry point to the exercise of my choices” (Dutta 3).

The aim of the present research is to study this portrayal of woman in Githa Hariharan’s *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *When Dreams Travel*. Portrayal is an expression of the author’s views of life and of their personalities and especially an interpretation of life of their periods and of all life as they have seen it. Portrayal of woman by Indian women novelists has always remained a remarkable feature of Indian English literature. The women writers concentrated on the portrayal of different facets of woman. The writers are highly educated and experienced enough to focus the status of woman in Indian society. They talk about the contemporary women’s problems in love,
sex, marriage with greater confidence. Githa Hariharan articulates these themes with the help of Indian mythology. She addresses the life of a woman in general and the power politics in relation to gender. The post-colonial woman novelist, Githa Hariharan, is mainly interested in the portrayal of woman. Not only that the portrayal of woman by male authors is usually biased against woman and gives only men’s view of life and experiences. This sexist bias becomes obvious in their misogynistic attitude and misrepresentation of woman in their works. Very often, we find the fictional woman in the male writing as ‘mother earth’. She is not seen as human being but with all agony, helplessness, pains, exploitation and suffering. Githa Hariharan in her novels *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *When Dreams Travel*, portrays woman who battles in her relationship with men and society. Her protagonists pass through a lacerating process of identity crisis. There is effective communication between the characters that keep her works flowing. Githa relates the Indian epic stories in the context of contemporary Indian scenario.

**Approach:-**

Man – woman relationship has on the whole evolved through centuries on a set pattern; man to rule and woman to obey; man the master and woman the slave; man the God and Woman the devout. This centuries old, mutely followed relationship is now challenged by women novelists. Feminism, which gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, tried to raise women’s consciousness against their victimization. It can be considered a reaction of women to life, their status at home and in society that has shaped and defined the lives of men and women all over the world. The term ‘feminism’ has its origin from the Latin word ‘Femina’ meaning ‘woman’ and thereby refers to the
advocacy of women’s rights, status and power at par with men on the grounds of ‘equality of sexes’. In other words, it relates to the belief that women should have the same social, economical and political rights as men. Feminist literacy criticism aims at exposing this misrepresentation and marginalization of women in literature to make women’s experience as important as men’s. Feminism emerged as an organized movement for women’s rights and interests, and the political, economic and social equalities of sexes in the male dominated society. The concern of feminism is the need of society where women have been colonized by men on account of sexuality. Feminism is not only a reaction to the patriarchal culture which suppresses women in society, but also a reaction to literature which is the product of this culture. Feminism criticism is concerned with “woman as the producer of textual meanings with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by woman”. It is an attempt to revalue the literature of the past from the gender perspective. Women writers have used fiction to explore and share their experiences. The conflicts which they face in everyday lives are woven into the fictional world of their creation. Men in their writings portray women as they want them to be for. It is not possible for the men to express life otherwise than as they know it which again is according to their own experience. Avadhesh Kumar is not wrong when he says that “only she, not he, knows what she experiences, so only she can speak of it” (Jain and Singh 119). Literature, of course, amply reflects these stereotypes. Feminist approach endeavors to read and focus on women writers and fictional women in literature to reach the authentic female voices and dive deep into their psychology.

Feminism emerged as a kind of protest movement and covered the vast field of life – economical, political, literary, cultural, religious and legal – and as such no single
definition of the concept can encompass it. The *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English* defines the term feminism as “the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men: the struggle to achieve this aim”. Two definitions, commensurate with the cultural exigencies have been accepted in India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh in two South Asian Workshops. According to one, feminism is:

An awareness of women’s oppression and exploitation in society, at the place of work and within the family and conscious action to change this situation. (Bhasin and Khan 3)

And the other more explicitly says:

Feminism is an awareness of patriarchal control, exploitation and oppression at the material and ideological levels of women’s work and in society in general and conscious action by women and men to transform the present situation. (Ibid: 3)

Femininity is the social and cultural construction which gives distinct meaning to woman as a gender category. The socio-cultural distinctiveness has been made possible through system of values, normative expectations, and forms of the institutes of marriage and family, confinement to domestic sphere, widowhood, style of life, and duality of standards leading to expectations, prejudices and attitude discriminatory to women. In a very limited span of a decade or so, the attention of the literary writers, all over the world has focused around woman, particularly the issues of identity, suppression, exploitation and protest attached to her lot. Since the emergence of feminist thought after Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Simone de Beauvoir’s
The Second Sex (1949), Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own (1929), Juliet Mitchell’s Women: The Longest Revolution (1966), Kate Millet’s Sexual Politics (1970) and many others, the issues of woman’s liberation sprung suddenly, and created waves in feminism giving it forward motion. Feminist writers highlighted the argument that woman was neither a minority nor did she belong to the weaker section. During the research, feminist approach of Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf and Juliet Mitchell will be studied to find out the patriarchal bias towards women characters of Githa Hariharan and women in general.

Simone de Beauvoir in her famous work The Second Sex (Published in French in 1949 and English translation in 1984) argued that man is able to mystify woman. This mystification and stereotyping is instrumental in creating patriarchy. She argued that woman accepts this stereotype and is thus, instruments of her own oppression. The book’s central argument is that, throughout history, woman has always occupied a secondary role in relation to man, being relegated to the position of the “other”, i.e., that which is adjectival upon the substantial subjectivity and existential activity of man. Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex (1949) has provided the theoretical foundation for feminist criticism by pointing out the basic asymmetry between the terms ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’. Masculinity is considered to be the “absolute human type”, the norm or standard of humanity. Whereas a woman’s views are often held to be grounded in her femininity rather than in any objective perception of things. De Beauvoir quotes Aristotle as saying that the “female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities”, and St. Thomas as stating that the female nature is “afflicted with a natural defectiveness” (Beauvoir XVI).
She further argued that woman is also measured as the standard of man and found inferior. She begins with the question ‘What is woman?’ (Beauvoir 1) She denies that woman can be understood either in terms of her biological functions or in terms of the idea of the feminine that is to say of woman’s essentially feminine nature. She admits that the latter concept is traditional. Rejecting this traditional conception, Simone de Beauvoir, expresses again the essential feminist idea that woman has the same nature as man and is like him, a free and creative being, and being of equal worth, should have equal rights. A woman has been socialized since birth to feel and act in ways that automatically have excluded her from participating in the culture’s most valued activities. Perhaps Beauvoir’s most famous statement in the book is that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir 267). This important insight suggests that it is not biology or nature which makes us women: it is our situation in society. Man is viewed as ‘One’, while woman as the ‘Other’ to man: as all the things which man is not.

Virginia Woolf was in many ways a pioneer of feminist literary criticism, raising issues—such as the social and economic context of women’s writing, the gendered nature of language, the need to go back through literary history and establish a female literary tradition, and the societal construction of gender — which remained as central importance to feminist studies. Virginia Woolf is one of the early feminist writers to develop a woman centric notion of reading and education. She argued that the patriarchal education system and reading practices prevent women readers from reading as women. They are constantly trained to read from the man’s point of view. Aesthetic values, literary merits and demerits are adopted by male literary authors and critics within the patriarchal institutes which are clearly male centered. Women are trained to adopt these aesthetic
values and merits as universal. Thus, for a woman writer to be accepted, she must per force use these same qualities in her writing. Woolf also argued that authorship itself is gendered.

Virginia Woolf’s essay *A Room of One’s Own* is undoubtedly one of the most influential feminist texts in this century. The most significant points Woolf makes in the essay are as follows. First, women’s previous lacks of success as writers proceed not from any absence of talent, but from social disadvantages such as: their exclusion from educational institutions; their financial dependence; their lack of personal space; the demands of constant childbearing. Secondly, Woolf suggests two remedies: financial independence and personal space in order for women to achieve their full potential as writers. Thirdly, Woolf argues that ‘it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex’.

For instance, Virginia Woolf (in sections four and five of her extended polemical essay *A Room of One’s Own*) suggests that language use is gendered; so that when a woman turns to novel writing she finds that there is no common sentence ready for her use. The “room” of the book’s title is a skillfully used metaphor around which the entire text is woven: Woolf’s central claim is that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (Woolf 2). Woolf notes that most of the books on women have been written by men, defining women so as to protect men’s image of their own superiority (Woolf 32). What is needed, according to Woolf, is a rewriting of history by women so as to present a more accurate account of the conditions in which women have lived (Woolf 45).

Juliet Mitchell was one of the first feminists to explore a theory of female psychic processes. She has been an influential contributor to the development of feminist theory.
She distinguishes woman’s oppression from her exploitation. Oppression is rooted in the ideological realism, which includes the production, reproduction of children, sexuality and socialization. These four functions are primarily or first carried out by the family. Hence the family plays a key role in the oppression of woman. Woman is exploited as worker in production. These four elements of material life interact with one another, so that woman cannot be emancipated unless revolutionary changes occur in all of them. The roots of woman’s oppression will not automatically wither away under socialism. Woman must organize autonomous feminist movements to fight against oppression. In *Women: the Longest Revolution* Mitchell argues that the psychoanalytic concepts of the unconscious and sexual difference are essential to an understanding of how woman is made. Psychoanalysis is necessary to an understanding of how and why sexual difference becomes a constituting force in human subjectivity. Only if we understand how this occurs, we can hope to overcome woman’s oppression. Mitchell argues that the woman is always defined as a lack. She is always, therefore, anxious about her lack. While the man is self-determined and autonomous, the woman is never so. She becomes the “Other” of the man, another with a lack. Gender differences are, therefore constructed in context of the family and society as difference in genitals: one possessing, one lacking. This, for Mitchell, is a social and cultural fantasy where the woman is, right from girlhood, made to believe that male is complete and she is not. Mitchell thus proposed that femininity is “held in the heart and the head as well as in the home” (Mitchell 362).

Gender issues have attracted greater attention in the recent Indian English literature. They acquired greater focus in the hands of recent fiction writers. Man-woman relationship is revalued from a gender perspective to expose the ideological implications.
Gender is viewed as a cultural construct, while sex is biological. Mention may be made of writers like Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherjee, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and many others. Githa Hariharan has been ailed as one of the women writers producing a body of Indian literature that is committed to feminist and social issues. The same femininity can be observed in Githa Hariharan’s women characters and she tries to show how old myths and traditions perpetuate this femininity in her characters. She presents the Indian myths taken from Ramayana and Mahabharata and relates them to the women characters of her first novel, The Thousand Faces of Night. Through this novel, she has won an outstanding place in Indian Writing in English. The term ‘Myth’, used in English is derived from the Greek word ‘Muthos’ meaning ‘Word’ or ‘Speech’. A myth is defined in various ways. The Wikipedia Encyclopedia defines a myth as:

A Myth is often thought to be a lesson in story form which has deep explanatory or symbolic resonance for preliterate cultures, which preserves and cherishes the wisdom of their elders through oral traditions by the use of skilled story tellers.

According to Abrams:

Myth is a system of “Hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group and which served to explain why the world is as it is and things happen as they do to provide a rationale for social customs and observances. (Abrams 170)

Githa Hariharan, being brought up in a traditional Hindu family might have been acquainted with all these myths and she perfectly blended the myth and reality in the
modern Indian life. *The Thousand Faces of Night* can be aptly defined as the several faces of thoughts presented by Githa Hariharan about the central theme — the struggle and predicaments categorized as the quest for identity, female bonding, marriage, penance, chaos and dilemma by the rebellious protagonist Devi. This is a novel about the elemental things of life: about love and death, about men and women, story and myth, passion and loneliness and clashes of cultures and of continents. Three women — Devi, Sita and Mayamma, span three generations and encompass three goddesses in their names. Each of them has their own story to tell: Devi, the daughter, educated in America, married to the pompous Mahesh; Sita, the mother, sacrificing herself to the gods of reasons, and Mayamma, the old servant, married still a girl of twelve years to a drunken husband and abused by husband, mother-in-law and son. All of them, in their own ways have been both a victim and survivor — their lives scarred by suffering, sacrifice, injustice and disappointment meted out by the patriarchal society. Yet in the end; they emerge undefeated and strong by using their own survival strategies. Their survival strategies lie in deconstructing the age old Hindu myths and stories, rewriting them and subverting the male discourse.

Hence, Githa Hariharan’s *The Thousand Faces of Night* can also be read as part of the revisionist myth - making programme one finds in women’s texts. It is not just a womanist novel but it is a definite feminist writing in which myths are revisioned, rewrote, and retold from a female point of view. The focus of this novel is on the inner life of woman. It will be analyzed in detail that how the female point of view differs from the male discourse especially by contrasting myths from the *Mahabharata* with stories from the *Sanskrit*. Hariharan’s sensitive women characters are trapped between traditions,
old values, myth and modernity and have become the victims of gross gender discrimination prevailing in the conservated male dominated society. To keep woman conformed and suppressed, old conservative values and ideas are supported by male dominated world and a woman is forced to face every challenge to keep these ideologies.

The novel explores how middle class Hindu society prescribes gender relations and male script roles by means of myths that women are told and how women rework them in their lives and also in the lives of other. “There is no remedy to sexual politics in marriage” (Millet 147). This statement is explored by Githa Hariharan in her novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*. As part of revisionist myth - making programme, old stories are told in different ways from gyno - centric perspectives. Representation of woman in ancient and medieval classics like *The Ramayana, The Mahabharata, Kadambari, Abhignana Sakuntalam* etc. need to be reexamined from a fresh perspective. Hariharan hints that Devi’s character developed as it did, as a consequences of the many stories from Maharashtra’s folk lore, told to her childhood by her grand mother. Every myth in the name of religion exhibits woman’s suppression that she has to be Gandhari, Savitri and Uma. Like Gandhari, we see the three women in the book had to find a way to come to term with life. The women characters in Githa Hariharan’s novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* are victims of loneliness and emptiness, searching for their places in society. She has succeeded in giving the readers the glimpses of the inner life of women.

*When Dreams Travel* is Hariharan’s re-writing of the famous *The Thousand and One Nights* or *The Arabian Night Entertainments*, as it came to be known and celebrated in the West via the first French translation by Antoine Galland. By rewriting Shahrzad’s story from a feminist angle, Hariharan imposes on the reader a whole re-thinking of the
hatred of woman so obvious in the famous translation of the Medieval Arab anthologies. In this way, Hariharan is not only “answering back” to a misogynous literary tradition but she is also deconstructing and eroding the sexist impact of the original. It is Adrienne Rich who described women’s writing as re-vision. Adrienne Rich defined re- vision as:

> It is an act of looking back, of entering into an old text from a new critical tradition. She observed — this is for us [women] more a chapter in critical history; it is an act of survival. (Rich 18)

By deconstructing stereotypical characters and plots in story telling, Hariharan is doing the implicit morality and prejudice of traditional texts. In her novel *When Dreams Travel*, Hariharan takes the help of ancient history to show how the kings at one time used to exploit woman by hiring her for being one night concubine. The logic behind this is indisputable; a dead woman is a chaste wife. At the core of the ethical debate that is set up in the novel is the connection between sexuality and power. The link between male sexuality and violence is reiterated in the novel. The activity of writing, together with storytelling, is pedagogic discourses that can contribute to promote dominant patriarchal ideologies. When these two activities serve this function, they become the targets of Hariharan’s critical perspective. This amounts to say that Hariharan shifted her reflection from the representation of a concrete society to the analysis of popular discourses promoting certain notions of how to behave as a woman, what activities to perform or which dreams to nurture.

This reasoning is an instance of Hariharan’s intelligent deconstruction of certain commonsense notions entrenched in storytelling and in some patterns of narrative craft which require critical rethinking. As a means to tackle the patriarchal ideology of these
texts, Hariharan retells the famous *The Thousand and One Nights* in such a way that the recreated text argues, A magical tour de force by the writer at the height of her powers, *When Dreams Travel* weaves around Shahrzad of *The Thousand and One Nights* to deliver an exciting, inventive story about that old game that’s never played out, the quest for love and power. The curtain opens on four figures, two men and two women. There is a Sultan who wants a virgin every night; there is his brother, who makes an enemy of darkness and tries to banish it and there are their ambitious brides, the sisters Shahrzad and Dunyazad, aspiring to be heroines-or martyrs. The story of *When Dreams Travel* begins at a time, years afterwards when Dunyazad, the younger sister, on learning about the death of her elder sister Shahrzad, undertakes a long journey. Githa Hariharan keeps the counting of time deliberately vague, “say fifteen-twenty”. In male disguise, Dunyazad travels from her late husband’s kingdom, Samarkand to Shahabad, and reaches the place. As the critic Rama Kandu finds:

> Then past-present-future converges in her consciousness to release a bout of intertextual creativity that resurrects the past only to subvert it through ironical retelling of tales and rediscovering of shocking surprises.

(Mittapalli 182)

Myths are constantly being reinterpreted to create new, more relevant myths. *When Dreams Travel* refers to the modern/contemporary scenario of social milieu with special reference to woman’s position and status in society, the problems she faces while asserting her identity and the hardships she undergoes while articulating her feelings. Githa Hariharan’s novel *When Dreams Travel*, as critics praised has all the elements that confer upon it a leading place in the genre of myths. On the back cover page of the novel,
it is stated “With its sharp and lively blend of past and present, its skillful reworking of the historical tradition and its evocative language When Dreams Travel has all the significance of modern myth”.

Githa Hariharan’s use of mythology is not a conscious decision. The heart of the novel comes first, then the mythology as strategy to make a small space spacious. In both of the novels, stories are essential to the central characters’ quest. In The Thousand Faces of Night, stories help young Devi learn what is expected of her as a woman and also how she can twist and turn these expectations to survive. In When Dreams Travel, the same story mutates in all kind of ways to look at love, power and sexuality from different vantage points.
Works Cited


