Chapter VI

Summation

The preceding chapters of this thesis, *Images of Women in the Select Novels of Githa Hariharan*, analysed on how women have been treated in the different periods like traditional, modern, postmodern or postcolonial or general in the society or in the family. There are changes from one period to another but still they struggle to reach the cliff. Moreover additional responsibilities are given to them as well the torment of women are doubled day by day. They are succeeded only by getting education in the lower level. But the basic demands need to be fulfilled. Education has provided them space; only for the women live in urban situations but still the rural women are also to be benefited. They need space in the family and society. It is analysed and found out that the works of Hariharan have really dealt with the women of different ages and their problems. Her novels as well as the short stories are accredited with female issues. Her works have proved herself a feminist and are an eye opener to the society. She has acted as a mediator to the gender biased society.

Every woman has an individual identity of her own either she may be Sadhu or Kali. But most women down the centuries have been contented to be the shadow of the men around them. They concentrate only on the welfare of their family. They have satisfied themselves in doing the household work to make life comfortable. They would like to use their full potential in many spheres. In Betty Frieden’s words, every woman ought to see house work for what it is not, a full-blown career, but something that must be done as quickly and as effectively as possible.

At present, the new socio-economic and educational climate has evoked in women a real of achievement and independence. Women have opened many new doors in
careers, as astronauts, pilots, scientists, and administrative areas, in order to prove their skills and talents. Education has changed the complete scenario of women. The new beginning of women’s education has gradually made woman conscious of their life. Though they are educated, still many of them belong to the woman community have to be aware of the law which has been written for their protection.

The women characters of Hariharan have stood as an epitome of the changing image of Indian women. They have moved away from traditional depiction of “self-sacrificing” women to “self-assured” women. They have raised their voice against the society. Though education has made them to be aware of their demands, still their regular duties to their family sustain not to satisfy their desires. Many awareness programs have also helped them to be strong but they could not make it into practice. Here Hariharan’s women have not only questioned the system, but they are bent upon paving new paths and contravention on new grounds. Finally, they have created a world for themselves where they seek the companionship of another female or survived alone.

Devi the protagonist of The Thousand Faces of Night has come to her mother, Mayamma the maid of Devi of the same novel has come to Parvathamma, Sharzad, in When Dreams Travel, has lived alone, and Mangala, Eliamma of The Ghost of Vasu Master have escaped by dying. This female bond has replaced the man and woman bond which is ever-present in almost all her novels. The slow but gradual change that has been witnessed in the psyche of 21st century Indian women have reflected in the portrayal of Hariharan’s mother, sister, and daughter - relationship. In her novel The Thousand Faces of Night, Sita, the mother of the protagonist has understood her married daughter’s decision to return to parental home. In the second novel, The Ghost of Vasu Master, Vasu has realized his wife’s importance after her death. In the fourth novel In Times of Siege Murthy has recognised the importance of Meena and Rekha in their absence. Sharyar, in
*When Dreams Travel*, has felt alone when his wife Sharzad has disappeared after telling thousand and one stories without sleep and proved herself a virgin. And, in the short stories, all the women characters have proved to be challenging women in the society. It is proved that her characters have reached the position and above where they have been there throughout these centuries in the male dominated society. Though it is appeared to be very clear in one particular angle, on the other side, still, it has become poorer because of gang rape, female abuse of different ages from five-year-old girl to ninety-year-old woman. They do not have any sort security in the family and in the society.

Hariharan has shaped her writings through which she is all set to cause a silent revolution or change in the attitude of modern Indian women. Since she has written in English, her involvement in different groups, her conscious attempt to question the gender bias proves that she is a woman of substance and is a socially committed writer and a true citizen with awareness of her rights,

As both author and citizen, I can say that despite fears like my character Shiv, I would not be able to live with myself if I didn’t speak up about prejudice and injustice. I think the best way to begin doing this is the tried and tested method – to be part of concerned groups. Later, you develop the toughness to disagree with them if you must!

All her women characters are silent in the beginning, but they have decided to live for their choice in the end. Michael Ondaatje has stated that “Githa Hariharan’s fiction is wonderful… full of subtitles and humor and tenderness” (Back page). Hariharan has not only used a fragile subject but she has unique style for narration. It is understood the stages of women from her first novel to the recent novel have passed through all the stages and reached the highest position.
“The Story of the Grasshopper,” from the novel, *The Ghost of Vasu Master* discusses the position of women of different periods - the first one struggle, the second fights and overcomes the difficulties, later the third one flies out with different colors. It can be interpreted as women belonging to the early stages had their pride and spun their dreams of their own shapes, later they were dominated and they had started to hide themselves in well-built four walls. As days passed, they have struggled for their survival. They managed their entire problem in their life both the hidden and the evident evils.

The survey of Hariharan’s Women has given a detailed picture of the position of women in the society, family and all over the world. Though, feminism has brought a lot of changes in the life style of women, it is not possible for them to imply in the real life style. It has become a myth for them. It is clear that Hariharan’s woman has been molded in such a way that it is possible for a woman to lead a life alone. This has influenced many women all over the world. The research topic *Images of Women in the select novels* of Hariharan has proved that there are different types of women in her novels. Some women are polite, submissive; some of them are very confident and march towards their success and some of them are tactful. All her women are soft, but firm in their decision.

Hariharan has presented the female characters who have followed traditional custom with modern thought in their lives. *The Thousand Faces of Night*, has presented Devi’s father as a dreamer and an idealist who has allowed him to be molded. Devi as a daughter is caught between a “spineless” father and a “self-willed” mother. The dormant element in the family is removed by breaking the cords of Veena’ the passion of Sita. Sita, is a powerful woman in her family, sometimes she is helpless because of her husband. She is a very bold woman. Even after her husband’s death, she has sent her
daughter abroad for studies. At the same time, she has not given freedom to her daughter. She is very much worried about the family members and the society.

Through the character Sita, Hariharan has created the model of an Indian woman who gives priority to the family over the self in a society where men are convinced that after marriage the women’s services are for the husband. Sita’s life is illustrative of how women’s surrender results in transforming her from a docile person to a dominating one. Though there are fissures in the relationship, it is proved out by indomitable spirit. Devi has lamented in the beginning of the novel as a daughter and later as a wife. Afterwards the inner self of Devi has become stronger which has motivated to lead a life of her own. In the same way Lakshmi and Mangala are bound to earth in the novel *The Ghost of Vasu Master*. They abide by the typical tradition. Vasu has enjoyed the tribute to be the head of the family, but has not known whether his wife owns a new silk sari to wear for function. Mangala has remained silent, feeble, has thought of Eliamma found herself and she passed away. The absence of Mangala has made Vasu to realize her presence and the importance to be a part of his life. Sharhrzad has sacrificed her sleep throughout all 1001 nights by telling stories to her husband in order to prove her virginity as well as for the whole women society. These women have not given importance to their desires. They need to satisfy and prove their strong bound on tradition, on the same way others have benefited and ill treated them by their own and other community.

Hariharan’s novel has passed through the ages in India. In India, a blind concept has been followed that woman is not capable of having equality, individual rights, and personal choice, challenges and dismantles the Indian family structure, which is based on sharing and accommodation. In all her novels, the characters of Hariharan have passed through self-realization to self-actualization, Devi, Sita, Mayamma, Mangala and Sharhrzad. In the beginning they were bound to the traditional values which have been
taught through their elders. Later to the core of their ill treatment, they could not manage. Finally, they have decided to prefer their own life style which is full of care, love, and peaceful life. All the novels have shown how Hariharan is being skilled in using the panchathantra tales and the stories which promote the awareness of the female audience. It is also understood that Hariharan through her works has carefully highlighted the effects of the strong winds of change and brought far-reaching turmoil in women’s life in India. She has taken far ahead to break the cultural political pressures in the form of dominance of gender ideology.

Hariharan, through her characters has taken it upon herself to deconstruct the past and to reconstruct a more meaningful present and future through her stories. In both the genres the novels and the short story collections, Hariharan has pinpointed the age-old wisdom mentioned in the form of sayings, proverbs, stories, myths, and beliefs. She was extremely annoyed with the society and the age-old beliefs which she has expressed through the mode of satire, irony, metaphor and sarcasm. She has visualized the whole history of women who are true to their own self. Still the struggles, for their self have remained critical and also the same for women as an ideal to be achieved.

Hariharan has also discussed revisionism; it has acted as a part of the revisionist myth-making, old stories are retold in different ways from gynocentric perspectives. She is talented in using revisionism technique in all her novels; it is one of the essential techniques in postmodernism as well as in post-colonialism. Hariharan has come forward to look back old text with fresh eyes. She has revisioned and framed a new critical direction for a woman more than a chapter in critical history. This is an act of survival. This technique has acted as an important tool for the present women writers; it is also focused on the areas like social, political, cultural, economical, and religious. This technique focuses on remaking of the past and re-invention of a new tradition. She has
devastated the cultural stereotypes popularized and partonised by the patriarchal set up. She is excelled in this art of re-visional heritage and shaped new consecrated world within the old discourse again recreated into a new one where every human willingly be responsible for their survival especially woman. She has retold all the stories in the novels with a new perspective which could reach the readers in new dimension. She has also remolded her female characters with a new form who can think better than anyone through their sharpened mind and courage. Shahrzad, Dunyazad, and Raziya their mother have played important roles in the novel *When Dreams Travel*. In the real story Dunyazad has remained to be a silent spectator, but in the work of Hariharan she has given important role to her. Apart from this technique, she has used magical realism in her novels, some of the incidents which could not be believed with the human eyes. A story has been discussed in her first novel that a woman has married to a snake all of a sudden he has taken rebirth as a man. Lord Krishna has come in the disguise of Jeyadeva, Purandara Dasa’s wife Sarasvati Bai has donated her nose ring and all of a sudden it has come to her and the poison in the bowl has disappeared.

In the novel *When Dreams Travel* Satyasamma, a monster, is neither a human nor animal, poison skin and it reflects more in the story of Buddha. Hariharan has borrowed the concept of peace to portray the character and used the comparison with perfection. She has found the implementation of power over the powerless. She has pictured the exact incident still happening in the society. It has been discussed in Media, Public talk, some of them are there who have pleasure by torturing the weak human. Torture can be given to any relationship like man-woman, woman-woman, and the power which is hidden in them. This blind idea is still followed in this society; it has to be profoundly deep-rooted. The title of each novel has related to the problems of women or to the human who have been suffering in the society.
The novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* has proved the problem faced by Mayamma, the maidservant. She has married in her early age and also has been ill-treated by her husband, son, and her mother-in-law. She has been treated brutally both physically and verbally. Devi has been tortured by her husband mentally. Sita has sacrificed her desire for her entire family, badly treated by her father-in-law. Mangala has been ill-treated by her husband. Lakshmi, the mother of Vasu, did not have name for a year because she is a female new born, after that she has also been ill-treated by her husband and her mother-in-law. Shahrzad has been treated as a slave in the harem by Sharyar the king. He has deflowered every woman, every day, every night. She has never been considered as a human; even after the childbirth she has gone to tell story to the king, her husband. Shiv in, *In Times of Siege* has illicit relationship with his colleague. The problem still existing in this period and it has become worse. Self-esteem has played an important role in all kind of relationships. The one who has sacrificed in the beginning has to give-up everything throughout the life. In all the novels as well as in the short stories of Hariharan, she has focused the pains of women, from the darkest part of their life. She has also revealed that everyone has to come forward towards a balanced gender equation in which both men and women are able to find their own rightful place.

It is observed that Hariharan has presented plenty of stories from Myths, legends, stories, fantasy tales and histories which have not been given importance. She has used exact typical terms used by the natives. She has made the readers to move closer to the character and the novel. She has concentrated on minute things which give real picture of a novel. The readers can also feel and know the terms used in other places, their life style and their culture. The words which are used in south part of India “agraharam”, “kolam”, “pati”, “payasam”, “sumangali”, “nagalingapushpa” seem to be original. She has also focused on ragas like “kriti,” “bhairavi,” “kalyani.” Some other words have also been
used in the novel which made the readers to know the local terms like “panchangam,” “rasayanam,” and “harem.” She has used crafting images with the help of similes and metaphors in both novels and short stories. She has compared human beings with animals and also with inanimate objects for example in *The Art of Dying and Other Stories*, human has been compared with animal “Her neck was a big hump, and she lay in bed like a moody camel that would snap or bite at unpredictable intervals” (9). The description of the city is one of the best examples,

The city is a big insect with its beady, wandering eyes. Nothing escapes its hunger. It sacks golden honey. It smells of sweat and rotten tears. It grows an evil flower in its heart of deeply scarred stone. Everything is found in the sweet, heady poison that oozes out of the loving tarantula. (145)

Hariharan, as a female author, belongs to the third phase of the woman writers who have established a strong foundation in Indian Literature. She has focused her protagonist as well as other characters fight for the right for the freedom for themselves and for their society. They have been treated as a prey to the society. Her female characters have never been forced to choose or become housewives and they have not made-up to do the house hold duties and roles that they have to do and give a picture that they are treated with respect. The author shows the characters who own that freedom and the opportunities to do the things they want to do and those that they are willing to do the pressured state of women who are victimized by the social system has more often than not become the theme and issues in most of their writings. The outcome of their inspiration has portrayed, explored, and presented the stories of women prominent in their writings.
Hariharan’s novels have also been studied with various perspectives. It can be analysed on different themes for further studies like individual search for self, magical realism, politics, myth, and female psyche. When her novels are discussed under – feminism, it is believed that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. Feminism is an organization which supports women rights, an intense awareness of identity as a woman interest in feminine problems. The subjugation of woman is a central fact of history and it is the main cause of all psychological disorders in society. On the other, it can also be analysed under existentialist feminism. It is a movement based on the thinking of cultural and philosophical movements that holds the starting point of an individual. It studies concrete individual actions moods in a powerful attempt to understand people in their individuality and differences. The Universe has not provided any moral rules. But moral rules are framed by the human to make them responsible for the actions and action of others. Later it is followed only for women. The oppression of women can also be analysed through existentialist perspectives. An existentialist feminism can offer women oppression and freedom. As a writer, she has a remarkable position in all the periods and, her novels and short stories can be analysed in different perspectives.

All her novels and short stories are articulated for feminine voices. Hariharan, in her article, “New Voices, New Challenges: Concerns of the Contemporary Writer” has observed on the situations by saying that:

We are constantly being informed that our individual and national lives occupy a larger space, as global space in which we must think and work and complete, we also find, in the day-to-day real world we occupy, that our spaces, as writers, artists, citizens are shrinking all the time.
It is the right time for a man to change his qualities like egoism, ill-treatment of women and sexual harassment as well using abuse words against women. The woman characters as portrayed by the novelist have shown how they survive apart from their obstacles and obstructions. They are proving themselves milestone. These novels have refined the women’s attitude boldly. Women of present century have come forward daringly and started giving their open statement what they face in their day-to-day life. They have acted as the best advisor to their life partner. They have taken enough steps to change their husband’s attitude, in building a concrete peaceful family. In scenery, some men have started appreciating the talents and honors women. There are plenty of programmes conducted in all the media. Some men have started changing themselves after watching those programmes. Such kind of programmes have not only changed the mental and physical attitude of men, but paved a healthy and peaceful path in their life. They have started treating their life partners by giving importance to their emotions.

There is further scope for researchers that they can take the narrative aspects, the psychological thinking of women, the choice of variety of women, the feminine ecology, myth, history and realism, and other aspects in the novels of Githa Hariharan. There is a shift in the choice of women by Hariharan and this can be compared with her contemporaries.