Chapter I

Introduction

According to K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Indian writing in English is an idiosyncratic literature that, “a tree has sprung up on hospitable soil from a seed that a random breeze had brought from a far …” (v). Indian literature has focused noticeably on the Indian scenerio which is framed for the Indian readers and also for the English readers. The uniqueness of this literature has occupied an important place in India as well as it has occupied an incredible position abroad. Many writers have concentrated on various themes, though they have written on different genres. Some of them have given importance to women, treated female as their subjects. The male writers have also revealed their choice on writing women as their subjects.

The present literary scenario cares for gender discrimination and the writers involved more of the terms “women” and “gender”. They figure out the relations and encounters that the women handle in their survival situations. Simone de Beauvoir has said, “a woman is not born but made” (71) though she has born biologically as woman, but she has been made with all the social ethics. It is exactly proved true; she is a human being, but an inferior human being in the society and treated as a secondary source in the public. It is being said by everyone that all are in the advanced 21st Century, but it cannot be negotiated that the ill treatment of woman has not yet been uprooted.

The word “Feminism” has seemed to be an aversion to the negativist. They have thought it as a sin which has guided them wrongly. But feminism and the movements have enacted through the activists, and they have brought many changes for the welfare of woman and for the woman. It has insisted on woman’s liberation, rights, status, and power like a man. It has also brought awareness to women in the society to have equal
rights in economical as well as political status like men. The main motive of the movement is to breakup the challenges which are blindly followed on the age-old tradition of gender discrimination. Since her birth itself, she has been anticipated as a meek and left over. This has been strongly recorded in the social order right from the day of the creation of a woman. It is stated in *The Bible* that God is male. He created man; afterwards woman is being created from the rib of the man, as Adam the first man on the earth has commented about Eve as bones of my bones and flesh of my flesh. So Eve has been termed as woman a secondary to man. It has been practiced; every man has avowed that women have been secondary to man.

In India, women have been made to be passive listeners. They should accept their responsibility as a daughter, wife, and a mother. The role of woman in the family and society has many contradictions in the present Indian society. But the irony is that in the pre-historic period they were treated equally and there was no discrimination. They were never separated their entities. The works of different authors from different parts of the world have proved this statement.

In the beginning it had been considered that the Vedic period was the glorious and magnificent period of women. During that period they were honored, privileged with great respect. The women like Altekar, Indira, and Kapadi were fortunate and were treated with all self-respect, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-worth in all aspects like spiritual, social, political, and economical life. Prasanna Sree, in her article, has mentioned that in the Vedic society, the two types of women were visualized as “Brahmavadhini” and “Sadyovadhu.” Brahmavadhini types of women were abstemious, ambitious and had lead their life in search of truth, knowledge, facts, and spiritual pursuits. They had initiated (Upanayana) to widen their knowledge and they practiced learning as a regular activity. In this period women were motivated to learn and they
were treated as muse of learning. These women were called “Yagnopavatini.” They were the Queen, the wives of rishis; saints had encouraged to take part in the scholarly deliberations. They were initiated to actively participate, attend all the assemblies, religious and ritual activities. The position of priest was also taken by them. In the ashram, women were given more importance to participate in all the activities related to our tradition and culture. Another type of women was “Sabotimini.” They were also called “Sabhadharmini” or “‘co’- religionist”. They were treated as equals to men. Both man and woman (husband and wife) participated in all the religious activities. These types of women who participated in various disciplines - arts, science and political events, were called “Grihalakshmi.” They were honoured and given dignity by men. Ramesh Chunder Dutt, in his book History of Civilisation in Ancient India, has discussed about the history of civilization of women as,

Women were honoured in ancient India, more perhaps than among way other ancient nation on the face of the globe. They were considered the intellectual companions of their husbands … affectionate helpers in the journey of life, and … inseparable partners in their religious duties. (67)

Women were given freedom and were treated equally through the Vedic period. They had not only participated in all the fields, the women like Kaikayee, and wife of Karnan had participated in the wars. Besides being in the battlefield they had also indulged in all philosophical discussions. Gargi, Maitreyi, Lopamidra, Bhirwara, Ghosha, Godha, Vishwavara, Apala, Arundhati and many more were educated women. During the vedic period, they were initiated to participate in other activities apart from studies they had learnt weaving, spinning, dancing, painting, thread making, lace making etc. In those days they were supposed to be taken with much care. It is believed that a girl
should be brought with good education and care. In those days women were married between the age of fourteen and seventeen, and also they could have the choice of selecting their match through “Swayamwara”. This matching fair mostly happened in the royal families. The foreigners were very much daunted and sway with the women of India especially during the Vedic period.

It was also stated that more than twenty Brahmavadhis had composed hymns of the Rigveda. Shastri Shakuntala Rao, in her work *Women in Vedic Age*, had opinioned that during the Vedic period “women were regarded with due respect in every sphere of life, and she was not subject to any of the miraculous laws of an unsympathetic society” (37). Later the position of women was being besmirched in the period of “Atharvaveda.” In this period they had strongly supported and welcomed the birth of boy baby. It started in the period of Atharvaveda and till now the society has given importance only to man. In the period of Manu, it had become worst than Atharvaveda. Manu was a diplomatic person who had mainly supported man and also added that he was not a woman hater. In his work *Manusmiriti* he had said, “His ideal was that of oneness of the two and not of equality with each other.” (IV, 1&4) He had framed new set of rules which had thrown women to the embarrassing position. The set of laws was only to degrade women as an entertainer, ornament, known for her impure desires, wrath dishonesty etc. Later the position of women had been degraded slowly and practices like child marriage, Sati, Purdah were introduced due to the lack of education.

It has also proved that during the existence of the ideological frames like Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, man and woman had their equal status in the society. They encouraged women to travel as missionaries and they never constrained woman to get married. The preaching of Buddha and the respect for the human beings played an important role for the development of women. Women enjoyed secular, social, economic
and the recognition of equal status. This has been considered as the wonderful period of women. There was no dowry, child-marriage, Sati, men and women discrimination, and women on women torture were discarded. According to Buddhism, individual independence was the ultimate to individual emancipation for women which was the real world of liberation. Jainism was also closely related to the ethics of Buddhism. They had concentrated and given the better possibility for women. In the period of Sikhism, women were encouraged to reach the higher position in addition to that they had high self-esteem and gave importance to them and their desires.

Women had their own pride throughout the period till the ingress of Islam, after their entrance the position of the women had gone worst. The purdah system was introduced in this period which prohibited them to participate in the public. During this period, women were treated as a sexual object for men. Still, the same treatment has been continued in the society. Not only history carries these different experiences of women but also the narrations, based on the history, reflect the women’s situations.

Many Indian novelists have explored the reality which happened in the society during different periods. Especially, the woman writers as pioneers have contributed a major part in the contemporary Indian writing in English. Mainly in the study of the images of women in literature, the feminist literary criticism has brought the real oppressed status of women. The pioneers have also struggled a lot in the nineteenth century.

Toru Dutt, the first Indian woman novelist, has come out with archetypes of Indian womanhood like Sita and Savitri. She struggled for the upliftment of women; her works were on English and French. Bianaca her first novel in English focused on the attitudes of Indian women. Another novel Le Journal de mademoiselle selled d’ Arve was written in French in the year 1879. Her women characters were reinforced the
conventional myth in a patriotic manner, a necessity in contemporary society. She followed Raja Ram Mohan Roy in the social backwardness of women, the cruelty of Indian caste problem happened in the society during the period.

Roy, another reformist, projected woman as the embodiment of all images over the world. Even now woman sustains life, manages home, protects culture and there are more responsibilities for her. He had strongly urged that she has no dearth of idealized and glorified images of her in all literatures even today. But on the other end, the ghastly reality has also existed in all its crudeness and ghastliness. Right from the beginning, the Indian writers in English have responded with their sensibility. His sensibility records with a dissenting voice and with a note of revulsion about the social evils related to woman.

Most of the women critics and their works, like Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, Katherine M. Roger’s *The Troublesome Helpmate*, Kate Eliett’s *Sexual Politics*, Jasbir Jain’s *Indian Feminism* have revealed the present position of women in their books and about the decrease in their role in the society. Another writer Christine Gomez has pointed out in the article, “New Horizon,” the possibilities of feminist criticism on Indian Writing in English as the traditional literature is fully formed as a male-dominated and women as subordinates. In the context of India, women have been treated as the earth mother, the passive sufferer, the corrupting seductress/siren/vamp, the bitch/prostitute, the witch, the castrating female /threatening emasculator, the rose, dark-haired, sensuous and unsubmissive and the lily-fair-haired, pure and virginal - some of the classic female stereotypes and archetypes identified in literature. She has also quoted the opinion of Mary Ellann about women in Literature that they are formlessness, passivity, instability, (hysteria), confinement, (narrowness), practicality, piety, materiality, spirituality, irrationality, and compliancy and in corrigibility. In the beginning, the women writers
have tried to recreate and disentangle the needlepoint of male domination unknotting the networks of wide-awake and unaware inference about women.

Gayathiri Spivak Chakravarthy, an Indian literary theorist, Philosopher and University Professor at Columbia University known for her work, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* has discussed the race and power dynamics which has involved in the banning of Sati. She has suggested the hegemony of the dominant patriarchal discourse, cannot be operated independently from such a discourse.

Dam Morris, feminist literary theorist has stated woman as a “female” – a neutral constrict, referring to biological sex; “Feminist” is referred to political perception and aims; and “feminine” is related to cultural perceptions of gender. But Elaine Showalter has differentiated woman of three types “Feminine” – imitative, “feminist” – protest, “female”- self-discovery. Moreover now a days, with the help of the reformist movement, economic development and also with the influence of the western feminist movement there have been some changes in the life style of woman and it has played an important role in which has brought a change in her attitude and position of women in India.

It is understood that if anyone studies the images of women, one has to come across idealized images of women. Meena Shirwadkar, in her article, “Image of Woman in the Indo-Anglian novel,” has admitted,

Common images of women appear in various literatures of the world. Woman as a mother and protector, woman as inspirer and cherisher, woman as the motivating primal force – Shakti – protecting good and destroying evil woman as the chaste, suffering wife, woman as a charmer or lure are some of the facts familiar in
literatures. Though basically many myths are common, they take
different shapes as they grow out of the lives of the people in
different countries. (1)

Indian women as writers, entirely different from men, have concentrated on the themes of
affairs of state, war, business, espionage, and sexual encounter. There are number of
women novelists in Indian English Literary scenario who have a remarkable entry and
proved themselves through their writings in the nineties’ and later. Their first novel has
focused on the current issues of Indian society and also the treatment, position of women.
These types of writers have belonged to the third generation, born after Independence.
The writings have had a distinct impressive feel for the language, pen picture of the real
position of contemporary India, with all its regional, ethnic variations. Their writings
have generally concentrated on the middle class, upper middle class, and the downtrodden
of the society they know the best.

Kamala Das has shown the position of Indian woman in the postcolonial period.
Her writings, poems and an autobiographic novel, have articulated the ethnic identity.
“An Introduction” by her is a dramatic monologue with blank verse. This Verse is
interpreted in much point with the anxiety feminist theories in the contemporary India.
Here she has interpreted gender roles as wife, cook, and embroider, quarreler with
servants. She has remembered the pains of her childhood, the first encounter of
masculine violence. She has suffered “cultural scripts a kin to the mystic woman warrior
who went to battle scarred by the thin blades which her parents literally used to write fine
line of scripts on her body.”(36) This has shown that the contemporary feminist writers
have brought the exact position of women in reality without adding any colours in their
works.
Shasi Deshpande has believed that the Indian mythic style has not really provided women a strategy for liberation from male hegemony. The Indian mythical image of women most prevalent in the literature of the time was that of the *pativrata* tradition – the Sita, Sati, Savitri image of the silently, suffering, sacrificial wife, mother and daughter. A critic like Dorothy Spencer recognizes the phenomenon and comments on the subservient role played by women over the ages and also it has been quoted in the work of Shrirwadkar, *Image of Women in the Indo-Anglian Novel* that,

“It seems clear that in women as wife we are dealing with a literary tradition. Sita, Savithri, Shakuntala – At any rate, they exemplify the ideal and thus express society’s values – that “a husband is a woman’s god” – how Sita submitted to Rama; she followed him into the wilderness and afterwards. When he banished her, she turned and went without one word, though she was innocent.” (49)

But Anita Desai’s women have stuck to a new note. She has focused on the problems like temperamental incompatibility, conjugal chaos, and inharmonious man-woman relationship. In her novels, most of the protagonists have alienated from the world, societies, families, parents and even from own selves.

In Manju Kapur’s novels, female protagonists have tried to establish their own identity. They are mostly educated aspiring individual caged within the confines of a conservative society. They have thought individually through education that has become a threat with their family and society. They have struggled between tradition and modernity. Her novels have dealt with all the women issues in the present context, for the basic rights, quest for identity, education and survival. She has completely believed that through education alone women can become aware of their self-reliance which can mold them into a new woman.
Deshpande, Desai, Mukherjee, Kapur and Githa Hariharan have taken up the cause to lead a worthy life. In their writings, both men and women have equal contribution in the life. They have taken writing as a tool and encouraged the readers to be bold, confident, and courageous to face the obstacles to lead a worthy life. Their novels have merged different themes related to psychological, social, moral nuance and relevance. They have observed the happenings in the society, culture and mannerism. They have shown the right way to the readers to focus on right thinking, right living with constant awareness and keen observation which lead to live a meaningful life. Apart from that, they focus on mutual understanding of everyone whom makes them to avoid conflict, to make free choices and respect others feelings. According to Mary Austell and Virginia Woolf, education is considered to be the only tool that could expand woman’s consciousness over the world and ensure her place in the society. They have had their own space; it could be possible for them to identify the important from the unimportant in the society.

Githa Hariharan, belonging to the present century and a well-known feminist activist writer, was born in Coimbatore in the southern part of India. She has come from a well-educated Brahminical family background. Her grandfather has been a teacher of English and her father has been a founder and publisher of the Indian newspaper The Economic Times. She is much familiar with her native language ‘Tamil’ and did not learn English up to the age of eight. Later she had grown up in Manila and Mumbai, where she completed her English Literature in Bombay University, and received her B.A., degree in 1974. She continued her higher studies at Fairfield University in Connecticut in the USA and received her post graduation M.A., in communication. After serving for a while in radio station WNET channel 13 in New York, she came back to India and worked as editor for several years for the Indian publishing House Longman Orient in Delhi.
Hariharan’s first novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* has brought success to her. She has given up her job and started working as a freelance writer and publisher with her husband and two sons in a suburb. For various publications, she has also edited books including *Southern Harvest* a collection of sixteen tales which has been translated into southern Indian languages Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil, and Telugu, which offers a fascinating panorama of the variety and riches of southern Indian Literature. Hariharan has also published several essays on cultural and political issues. She has written book reviews for various Newspapers. She has written five novels and a collection of short stories. These works have been translated and published into several foreign languages like French, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, German, 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 1947-1997*. She wrote a monthly column and their political underpinnings, in *The Telegraph*, Kolkata. She has been Visiting Professor or 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 UK, and Jamia Millia Islamia in India where she was Scholar-in-Residence from 2010-2012.

Hariharan is one of the outstanding authors whose works belong to the renaissance of Indian English Literature which has begun with the early 1980’s when Salman Rushdie’s novel *Midnight’s Children* has appeared. She has written her first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* in the year 1992, and won Commonwealth Writers Prize for the best novel in the Eurasian region. In the year 1993, she had written and edited a volume of stories in English translation from four major South Indian languages named *A Southern Harvest*. She has also co-edited a collection of stories for Indian Children, ‘Sorry Best Friend’, and then she had published an anthology of short stories *The Art of Dying and Other Stories* in the year 1993. By following the stories, she published her

The novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night*, is a story about three women who belonged to different generations of Madras in the south of India. Devi the protagonist has been caught between two worlds. After she has entered into her home, she finds it difficult to survive in India, because of her modern education from an American University. The different culture has created problems due to her reasoning. She has returned from abroad, leaving her black friend Dan, for her widowed mother and pressure by her mother to get married. As a result she got married with Magesh, an insensitive man. She has lost her married life, all for the reason that she has failed to give birth to a child. In the same novel there are other two women, her mother Sita, and the old servant maid Mayamma who were also portrayed with unhappiness due to different reasons. Sita the powerful woman character in this novel, has become a super efficient household machine, lived only for the advancement of her husband. The old-maid Mayamma has also been ill treated because of her misery and also she is barren.

Hariharan has also recalled and interpreted with the characters of the great Indian myths, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. She said the origin of this novel as “I was writing at home the whole time with a baby who was altogether charming but a thoroughly poor partner in a conversation and was surrounded by women of all ages with various faiths. I thought it was just the time to start writing.” (230) In this novel Devi acts as the first person and Mayamma the third person.
The second novel of Hariharan, is *The Ghost of Vasu Master*, which has focused entirely different from her first novel and her short stories *The Art of Dying and Other Stories*. This novel has the combination of *panchatantra* stories and the sequence of a novel. Hariharan through this novel has conveyed the journey of life which has experimented and learnt the value of women, through the Protagonist- Vasu Master retired schoolteacher. This is an autobiographical novel of Hariharan; she has stated this at an endnote in the novel. Vasu Master has retired from his service and served for a P. G. private boys school in the Indian town of Elipettai. The retirement from his service has pushed him towards embarrassment and in an uneasy situation; again he has started his career as a tutor for a student Mani. Mani a twelve year old has the brain of six, a complicated only one student of him. The boy could not speak and will not speak. It is being a challenged task for Vasu to make him speak and understand that cannot be done even by the doctors or anyone. Vasu has told the reticent child more fantastic stories one after another through this teaching process he has learnt a new realm in his life. This has become an eye opener, the travel has made a zigzag movement which he has started to think of his childhood stories, past, fear stories and the ghost stories have come alive to enlighten the child. He has realized that the stories were not of the usual stories which have been heard by other children. The story of Mangala has sensed him to feel the presence of his dead wife and her stories have proved and made him to realize the worth of woman as a mother, a caretaker, a teacher etc. The strong presence of Mangala in his present life and the past scenes were described often. At last he has won the problem of the child through the process of storytelling, and he has also learnt the way he has treated his wife.

The novelist’s third novel *When Dreams Travel* is very different from her earlier work, which is considered to be mainly related to the social realist mode. The novel
*When Dreams Travel* which was written in 1999 is the combination of realism and fantasy and also a kind of feminist retelling of the Arabian work *One Thousand and One Nights* or *The Arabian Nights*. This story has revolved around the two sisters Sharzad, Dunyazad and their husbands Sharyar and Shahzaman. This novel has described the brutal and hypocrite king Sharyar married a virgin every night “deflowered her and then executed her the next morning”. This has happened before when he has got married to Sharzad. Every night she has narrated a story and she has become a master in storytelling. She has saved her life and other’s life from the sharp edge of the sword through telling new stories. The novel has all kinds of fantastic fabricated stories which she has woven into the narrative with the hidden darkness of women. It has not been considered to be an entertainer, but thought provoking manuscript.

Hariharan has also concentrated on short stories entitled *The Art of Dying and Other Stories*, published in the year 1993; a collection of twenty stories composed of sombre tales of depression and power. With great economy the writer delves deep into the meaning of death, the consciousness of loss, and the niggling memories that accentuate this feeling the sufferings of women. She has also discussed the contemporary modern life style. Once again, the predominant theme is the hegemonic male dominance in Indian society that does not allow women creative freedom.

The fourth novel is *In Times of Siege*, focused on the real situation and with personal background. It is a set in the academic, literary circle of Delhi to which Hariharan herself is quite familiar and in a way associated with a fifty-two-year-old Shiv Murthy the central character of the novel, who is the Professor of History at Kasturba Gandhi Central University at Delhi. This novel has covered the span of two months from late August to October 2000 in the life of the protagonist. When everything has gone well in Murthy’s settled life, he has met two unsettled events in his life. The first one has
occurred when Meena, a student at one of the other Delhi Universities, daughter of his old friend asked him to watch out for some time she has been in Delhi. She has arrived Shiv’s place when she has broken her knee in an accident. He has taken her in until she can walk again. At that time his wife Rekha is in America. In the another incident, he hurts the sentiments of a Hindu watchdog group and he has refused to apologise for, when he has written on Basava, the treasurer of a twelfth-century Hindu city, Kalyana Basava had egalitarian ideas that threatened the order of the day and depression of caste system which has been read in Murthy’s lesson.

The recent novel of Hariharan is, *The Fugitive Histories*, published in 2009 also a female centered of Mala, Sara and Yasmin. Mala the mother of Sara, a South Indian Brahmin family, has married Azad, Muslim from Mumbai an artist who has refused to have any religious identities and has carved for the true freedom throughout his life. Sara their daughter has many identities and has confused with her identity and has tried to get an identity like her brother. When Sara has traveled to Ahamedabad for the wake of the carnage of 2002 to make a film about the survivors and has met Yasmin and struggled to put the violence behind her. She has lost her brother and parents. All these three women were caught with their past. The author has woven the stories of the women nicely and skillfully explained political actions. The two women, (i.e.) the mother, and the daughter have pictured the biography of a family and the other one has explained the current scenario which has happened in the family and the society.

Apart from the novels and short stories, Hariharan has written articles which are related to women issues all over the world. She has landed a remarkable position in the Indian Literature and also she has concentrated on feminist and social issues. On the other hand she has not shown herself as a branded women writer, but she believes that is pigeonholing writer and stresses herself as a feminist writer. When asked about her
writing, in an interview with Arnab Chaklader, in *Another Continent*, under the title “Conversation with Githa Hariharan” on September 2005, she answered,

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Am I a writer particularly concerned with “women’s issues?” And am I a feminist? The answer to both questions is yes. I want to make it quite clear that in my life my choices have been dictated by what I perceive as the feminist choice […]. And anyway, however you define yourself, all our work is informed in some way or the other by feminism, along with the ideas of Freud and Marx. And this goes for both men and women, of course. So […] I am a writer who is a feminist, along with several other things. (2)
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Hariharan has revealed that her writings are based on the feminist perspectives, so always the concept of women has taken place in her writings. Apart from that, her writings are generally focused on the convolution of the characters which has closely related to the country’s religion, culture, nationalism, politics and power. She has completely involved and represented her role as a writer and also a social activist. She has accepted herself as a feminist and an engaged citizen. (Hariharan, 2012) Her works have been highly recognized and famous writer such as Salman Rushdie who has included her essays and fictions in his anthology. In another interview with Preeti Verma Lal, Hariharan has conveyed her opinion that:

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It’s difficult to separate the woman and the writer and the citizen in you. Personally, it was very important for me to challenge this: imagine being told you are not the “natural” guardian of the children you have borne – and that too in a society that places such a high premium on motherhood! But the important thing to remember is that all the personal laws in India are anti – women,
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anti – lower castes, anti anyone who was marginal to the scheme of things when these traditional laws were formulated. (Hariharan, Interview with Preeti Verma Lal)

Hariharan has many identities, a regional writer, English writer, feminist writer, women writer, and children writer. She has proved herself to be a writer by observing all the cultural, social issues and has transformed into her writing. She has also involved in other activities of women’s group, cultural and anti-nuclear group. She has challenged the Hindu minority and Guardianship Act as discriminatory against women. She has won in the case which has been challenged to the Reserve Bank of India, led to Supreme Court on February 17th 1999 to buy bond for her son. Hariharan has stated that mother’s signature will be counted and has equal rights to access an account for their children. Their signature is counted to sign in the application forms for schools, colleges, medical permission forms, passport application forms etc. She has strongly raised her voice against all the evils against women and her works have motivated to move further research.

The involvement of Hariharan towards the society and for women community has been seen in all her novels. One can find a different aspect which has reflected in her works have made to focus on her work with at most involvement. The present research centers round this critical problem faced by women writers in the Indian context, power of patriarchy functions in Indian society in the form of political, social religious institutions; and though women have passed through centuries. Women in the society have also faced many problems. The problems have bounded only with the women community which has focused on their biological existence and with emotions. They have been considered, as weak sectors who cannot survive independently. But, Hariharan has broken the law written by the ancestors, her women characters are the best examples.
The above discussion eventually has led the researcher towards the following basic aim and objectives. It has concentrated on six chapters.

- To provide an overall view of woman of different periods of different background from traditional till now.
- To examine and compare novelist’s thematic concerns which are primarily focused on women issues.
- To examine the different types of characters who have been followed by woman today who has been molded to adapt, to beware of ill in the society.
- To assess the contribution to the form of literature, application of theories in the novels.
- To analyse their craft of expressing the themes through title, vision and through myth and mythical characters.

There are some basic assumptions which are directed for the study. The following are the hypothesis for this thesis:

- To examine the novels of Hariharan can be read as a feminist discourse. The author shows the protagonist of all her novels as a rebel against not only the age-old superstitious and traditions but also as one, who advocates a proper balance between tradition and modernity which has a strong message for contemporary Indian women.
- To observe the miserable life of women under patriarchal suppression, economically dependent on others, and have low status in the family and in the society.
To explore the unequal power relations not just gender discrimination, but more fundamental between rich and poor, urban and rural and in all the grounds of social, political, economic and cultural life.

To look at the relationship of man – woman, woman – woman and gender role in society and the discrimination has made them into a challenging model which has made them to strengthen by jurisprudence on equality.

To examine the position of women all over the world whether they have secured life in their family and in the society.

The chapterization of the thesis *Images of Women in the Select Novels of Githa Hariharan* limelights how the majority of woman in the Indian society endure to become empowered the ups and downs they meet during such antecedents. Everything has changed the world or the society, but the position and the treatment of women has remained the same. To which period the women have belonged to traditional, modern, postmodern, and postcolonial, where they were treated as a leftover. They do not have a secured life either at their home or in the society. This thesis has been divided with six chapters including Introduction and conclusion.

The First Chapter, “Introduction,” an outlet of the entire thesis has begun with the introduction of the topic with the definition of “Feminism” later it develops with the life of the author and the works of Hariharan. She is one of the Indian English woman writers, produced a body of Indian Literature that is committed to feminist issues. The hypothesis of the thesis has been discussed in this chapter.

The second Chapter, “Traditional and Modern Women,” of this thesis, has analysed the position of the woman after the Vedic period and how they have lost their power and individuality. The characters from the novel prove as a witness. The author has compared and contrasted her characters with the myth and the mythical characters
from the epic *The Mahabarata*. This has shown the suffering of the female characters to the core, and are more flexible manages both their family, official work and also successfully manages their household duties. In these works *The Thousand Faces of Night*, *In Times of Siege*, *The Ghost of Vasu Master*, *When Dreams Travel* and *The Art Of Dying and Other Stories* Hariharan has dragged out the inner and the darkest world of the woman hidden under male dominated society. Even today woman earns equally to man, but they treat them as unpaid servants. This has proved how the chain is being continued from the past to till now. Hariharan has portrayed the changing images of the woman in the modern, and the postmodern period. Traditional, transitional and modernity are the three stages, which the women in Hariharan’s novels have passed through.

The Third Chapter, “Postmodern Women,” has focused on the postmodern concept of Metanarrative and “Histogaphic metafiction,” the sufferings, the feminist issue, gender equality, fragmentation as seen in all her works. It has also focused the difference of Indian postmodernism and western postmodernism in the opinion of Vinay Kripal. Indian women have initiated to move towards “self - realization,” “self - perception,” “self - expression,” “self - determination” and “self-actualization” but they have not gone beyond their tradition and their family bindings. This chapter has shown how her characters have passed through the techniques how they have passed through self-realisation to actualization and the process of identifying themselves even in the difficult situations.

Hariharan has organized postmodern strategies in her works, which is primarily concerned themselves with the theme of female subjectivity. However, she has given importance to the fragmentation, the handling of the fragmented text of the female self is
different from the way of the treatment of the postmodern novels. Patricia Waugh has pointed out in her work *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*, as,

> The decentred and fragmented subject of the ‘postmodern condition’ is one which has been created, at least in part, by postmodernism itself… It is present in much postmodern writing at least as a structure of feeling. Recent mature scholarship has shown why women are unlikely to have experienced history in this form. For feminist, therefore, the goals of agency, personal autonomy, self-expression, and self-determination, can neither be taken for neither granted nor written off as exhausted. They are ideals which feminism has helped to reformulate, modify, and challenge. (125)

This technique has revealed the changes of women in themselves when they have undergone self-analysis for their identity. They have tried to reformulate, modify and challenged the evils against them. Hariharam has told the stories from the fairy tales, parables, fables, and legends. All the novels are centered on the protagonist, which is revolved around them. In all her novels the protagonists fight against many violent inner forces, and the pride which makes them to win in all the ways.

The fourth Chapter, “Post colonialism and Women,” has argued the mobility from East to West. In India many women writers have published in English apart from the other languages like Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu. There are several Indian women novelists who have global recognition through their works. Hariharam, one such writer, has global recognition through her works and her works have been translated to many foreign languages. This shows the problem is not faced by Indian women, but still happens throughout the world. Jasbir Jain said in her essay “Post colonial realities:
Women Writing History”, the works of the Indian women writers reflect the difference between colonial and Postcolonial context but also reflects a feminization history (65).

In an essay postcolonial criticism Homi K. Bhaba has said that certain cultures are being (mis) represented other cultures, which has extended their political social domination in the modern world-order. It has implied certain culture that is belied by differences in race gender and class. Most of the post-colonialists agree it is difficult to recover the pre-colonial past. Hariharan has used the realism and magical realism in her novels and she has also focused the postcolonial discourses, the subaltern which talks about the position of woman. The members of the postcolonial community continue to be subjugated or controlled as to the degree of liberation made available to them. Hence, Spivak has concerned with the position of women as subaltern in postcolonial India. Harihan’s novel has rendered the colonial and postcolonial situations in India.

The fifth Chapter of this thesis, “Male Interpretation on Female Torture” has pointed out the characters in the novels of Hariharan and the relationships of man-woman, woman-woman, and the power which is suppressed between one and the other. The stronger gender has dominated the weaker one through the physical power or hurt them with vulnerable words. It is a complex idea that in India masculinity is profoundly deep-rooted in the generations of social conditioning in a tradition bound cultural set up. Mick Leach, in his article “The Politics of Masculinity: An Overview of Contemporary Theory,” says, “Unlike the biological state of maleness, masculinity is a gender identity constructed socially, historically and politically. It is the cultural interpretation of maleness, learnt through participation in society and its institutions” (3). Even now the problem exists, one of the power struggles more in modern India in which the women become highly educated, assertive and self-reliant to some extent. In all the novels of Hariharan, she has highlighted the sufferings of women, from the darkest part of their life.
In her view, a society must work towards a balanced gender equation in which both men and women are able to find their own rightful place. The words of Deshpande are, “A world without frightened, dependent, trapped, frustrated women is better world for all of us to live in” (15).

The concluding chapter “Summation” gives the overall analysis of Hariharan’s novels in view of the position of women and their survival situations. She has taken a bold decision of feeding her characters confidence and change which represent the present global women. The thesis has also discussed in this chapter the scope for further research.