CHAPTER V

FEMINIST ELEMENTS IN

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5.1. Introduction:

Githa Hariharan’s novel *In Times of Siege* (ITS) which describes communal events in New Delhi occurred in 2000. Staff meeting, lesson modules, a half hearted little affair with a colleague is the blank but comfortable life of Shiv Murthy, a history teacher in an Open University. But disruption and change are on their way in his life. An outspoken young woman with a broken knee comes into his life and turns it upside down. During this time, Hindu zealots attack his writings on Basava, the reformer poet. When fundamentalism lands on his own doorstep, Shiv discovers that the ideas he had inherited about history, nations, and patriots change in the course of time. These bitter realities are evoked by Githa Hariharan in this novel. Moreover, Githa Hariharan’s feminist ideas are indirectly reflected in this novel. Krishnan Das and Deepchand Patra have rightly pointed:

“Female voices who have wielded the writer’s pen to present forth literature which not only highlight women’s plight in society, but have also enriched the field with brilliant narratives, styles, techniques and themes, enchanting generations of readers, and immortalizing their own agenda in penning their works.” (Das Krishan i)

Githa Hariharan’s novel is not exception to this phenomenon. The feminism in this novel is unique: Shiv, the hero of the novel, is seeking inspiration from Meena.
Under her suggestions, Shiv is forced to confront the demands of his times and choose a direction for the future. But first he must come to terms with his own incomplete past history, fears and his obsession.

5.2. Feminist Approach of Githa Hariharan with Special Reference to In Times of Siege:

The novelists of twenty first century have depicted how a woman can get her liberation from the patriarchal system. Novelists like Nayantara Sahegal, Gita Mehta, Githa Hariharan, Anita Nair, Manju Kapoor and Arundhati Roy have tried to liberate women from patriarchal tyranny. Among these novelists, one singles out Shashi Deshpande. In her novel Small Remedies, Savitribai names her daughter Indorekar by throwing to the winds either her name or her married name. In this she goes beyond the concept of “man produces woman reproduces.” Similarly we have Jai Nimbkar’s Come Rain in which Ann Marries Ravi. When Ravi’s selfishness, hypocrisy and pretence comes out she decides to stay alone. Ann carves out her own identity by being bold, independent and does not mind indulging in extra-marital relationship with Mr. Pathak. Similar boldness is shown by Githa Hariharan’s vision for modern women in her portrayal of women In Times of Siege.

In Times of Siege, the novelist is bold enough to portray a young modern girl Meena and Prof. Shiva’s wife, Rekha. Meena is staying in a hostel. When she gets her leg broken while getting down from the bus, she does not go to her parents. Nor is she a whimpering and whining hussy. Shiv brings Meena home as she is an old family friends daughter. And her parents have asked him to look after her.

Shiv’s attempt at taking care of Meena proves that she is unknowingly stealing his heart. In every move of hers there is the confidence rarely seen in girls of her age.
She appears to be class by herself. Because of this, Shiv does not accept Amita Sen’s offer to have lunch together at a good little place.

Shiv’s admiration for Meena’s beauty is almost adulterous: “Fish-eyed, Fish-eyed, dark-browed, Tangle-haired, wide-hipped, generous lipped. Shiv invokes Meena, Meena’s attributes, with a thousand names like a devotee who mumbles himself into a stupor.” (In Times of Siege 49-0).

It is not for nothing that he praises her body of which he is enamored, but her qualities are superb. Therefore, he is her “Devotee whose words keep him upstairs in safety.”(50) She is ensconced: “….sleeping in a cupboard, marking time while lying on a shelf,” as if the idol of a god.

Shiv is even prepared to take leave for keeping Meena comfortable. He who never went to market for shopping goes to market on a buying spree. He buys a pair of light aluminum crutches and a bag with a brick of chocolate chop and another of Pistachio Paradise. What used to be Shiva’s study table is covered with Meena’s things. The room where she is putting up has become her room.

When Shiv brings the things needed by her, she is transparently pleased to see him. Shiv finds her expression something touching him. Shiv notices that whatever she thinks or feels finds on her face with multiplied intensity. Meena’s face for Shiv displays the potent essence of every passing emotion in her mind.

Shiv adjusts for Meena’s use the crutches he has brought just the right height for her and is amazed by his success. When Meena sees the plastic bag the crutches came in, the plastic bag leads to her intention to get her hair washed by Shiv. A long unruly curl hanging over one eye tells Shiv that he can play guardian to Meena.
Shiv for the first time in his life makes breakfast for Meena and him. For her sake he goes to market he has not been for years. He buys for a white plastic stool for her to sit on while bathing. Shiv buys also for shower head and a tube to attach to the bathroom tap for the convenience of Meena so that she has not to bend for a bucket bath. He even buys for her girlish skirts as she cannot wear salwars and jeans.

Shiva washes Meena’s hair, it is evoked as a ritualistic occasion:

“Meena leans back, lets her hair fall into the sink like dark curtain...the water is cool and refreshing; she shuts her eyes as he moves the shower around her head. He has some trouble opening the bottle of Femme Fatale....The bathroom fills with a potent fragrance....Shiv smears the shampoo over head, then massages her scalp with it...He works the lather down the length of her hair...His eyes dart to the stiff nipples visible under her T-shirt.....half ashamed. (37-8)

This bathing is a ritual act of Shiv having imaginative sexual union with her. Therefore, she says he stands there, watching her, unwilling to let go his priestly role:

“Almost magnanimously she passes the hair brush to him. Wordlessly he goes to work at the tangles, the headily fragrant masses of wet hair, a craftsman before his half-finished master piece.” (38)

Significantly she asks him when the dial tone goes: “Why do you need so many phones.” (42) One is compelled to note that his wife has gone abroad. He has totally forgotten her. Consequently, the author tells us that, “It holds the two of them a cocoon of companionable sympathy.... of understanding, of what is not easily said, of what is best left unsaid.” (35) It is left unsaid because there is an implicit need for both of them to be sexually united. The imaginative lead of the novelist is that she
describes the beauty of the girl in sexual terms, and Shiv fulfils his desire of the mind in bathing and looking after her demands and needs.

Shiv’s narration of his father’s past life as a patriot and his disappearing from his life evokes sympathy in Meena. It evidently brings their emotional union. Meena is a research student in sociology. Her research is on women’s stories. Women affected by anti-sikh riots after Indira Ghandhi’s assassination in 1984. It is this which indicates that the novelist’s nexus of the central vision is feminine perspective in time of crisis. The novelist helps us in focusing her thematic centrality by telling us about Shiv and Meena: “…his real life now converges on a house with two people. A nurse-and-patient team: he is the nurse, Meena is the patient.” (30) “Wherever Shiv is in the house, whatever he is doing, he is aware of another presence…She seems more worldly-wise sometimes than he…. Though she lies in bed…she does not seem aware of her powerlessness.”(30-1) This is exactly the message of Githa Hariharan as opposed to Manju Kapoor’s *Difficult Daughters* and Virmati’s adventure of becoming second wife of Prof. Harish. The word ‘powerlessness’ shows that in the 21st century women have crossed the barrier of patriarchy. They are self-made and superior in the strength of their mind to prove equal to men. Meena’s strength lies in asking Shiv not to tell her parents about her broken leg. A young man cannot bear to stay away from parents and here is Meena who does even that. They are being alone together. Unlike Manju Kapoor, Githa Hariharan plays a different tune in Shiv and Meena’s relationship. Though it is a quibble how their romantic trend bends in opposite direction to make Shiv remember his mother or his girl friend in seeing Meena.

Githa Hariharan does not present a feminine map to show-case woman’s assertion over man’s ability. She rather takes for granted that early feminists focussed upon gender. The sexes, according to them are culturally formed, and not just
biologically. The decade from 1920 to 1960 was a period of protest movements-civil rights, peace, the New Left, anti-poverty. For the theorists the new feminism is not about the elimination of differences between the sexes nor achievement of equal opportunity: it concerns the individual’s rights to find out the kind of person he or she is and to strive to become that person. A theorist like Janet Rediffe Richards thinks that women suffer from systematic social injustice because of their sex.

Kate Millett the main theoretician of the new feminism presents the political relationship between men and women in *Sexual Politics*. The main psychological differences between the sexes include women’s emotional instability, greater tolerance for boring details, incapacity for abstract thought and proneness to submission. The feminist consciousness is of victimization. To see oneself as victim. This power is society, system and men. Feminist in the present day destroy masculinist hierarchy but not sexual dualism. It is pro-woman but not anti-man. In fact this is what Githa Hariharan is out to display in her novel *In Times of Siege*.

Githa Hariharan shows in this novel how women are superior to men like Shiv. They are Meena and Shiv’s wife Rekha. Meena waits for Shiva with her head full of plans to give a befitting reply to the fundamentalist’s attack on him for showing what Basava was a man bent upon bringing reform in society by granting equal status to the down trodden brethren of society. This bitter pill could not be swallowed by the so called Hindus. Because it reduced the common Man to hopeless captives. Their movement swelled and surged to swallow social convention and religious ritual. Such people came to attack Shiv, and like a courageous tigress Meena’s waiting for Shiv to come so that she wants to give him her head full of plans. She thinks that he will pick up a spear and shield and rush headlong into battle.
Rekha is another heroine of the modern age. She has gone abroad without any anxiety about her husband. She is fully capable of controlling the uncontrollable. When they moved to the house, it was a jungle:

“The backyard was a Jungle of thorny shrubs and weeds, the kind that spread like an army advancing forward day by day. Rekha was dismayed, but Shiva could tell she was also enervated by the challenge. He saw a look on her face that he imagines many of the conquerors of Delhi have shared: a gleam that assesses the strength of the enemy, and the spoils to be won. The kind of hungry look that wants to colonize as far as the eye can see, clear and rearrange spaces and lives.” (57-8)

The passage above indicates that she is as brave a woman as Meena is. There women are born warriors. Thus Githa Hariharan indicates that the Indian woman is not a whimpering, crying, helpless woman. She is a warrior in her own right.

As the novel *In Times of Siege* unfolds, it reflects the present day tortured face of India where human rights are violated, and there are attacks on people who cherish secular ideals. The story centres on the middle-aged Professor, Shiv Murthy, who is leading a peaceful and contented life as an academic at a distance education university. His wife is on a visit to Seattle to be with their daughter. His childhood friend Sumathi’s daughter, Meena, who is studying in Kamala Nehru University, comes to stay in his house when she fractures her leg, as he is her local guardian. One fine morning, Shiv finds him amidst sea of troubles when his medieval history lesson irks the Hindu fundamentalist group Ithihas Suraksha Manch. It is Meena who induces Shiv to act and not to compromise on his stand. Taking help from Meena and
her friends he decides to stand firm by the values he upholds and not succumb to pressure from the fundamentalists.

Shiv is a typical anti-hero, his public fall from grace triggers a re-definition of Shiv’s stance and political position in the contested field of contemporary communal politics. As he makes a silent promise to his young friend Meena promise to stand firm, to resist giving up, it becomes clear that Shiv will desist from falling back into political apathy.

It is of course no coincidence that Githa Hariharan emphasizes two main points concerning gender and class in her novel. First the fact that even an average middle-class person can stand up to the threat posed by the ‘Hindu Right and second, the role of women in political debate. In contrast to Shiv’s anti-heroic stance, Rekha (Shiv’s wife) and Meena take up a position of powerful resistance, if not dominance: “Like Rekha, Meena names things with ferocious certainty. Communalist fundamentalist. These women warriors seem to know exactly which cities they want to raze exactly ground, which they want to raise in their place.” (58)

Thus Shiv’s transformation should be considered in relation to his utter mediocrity as well as to the role of women in his life. Meena undoubtedly introduces politics via her involvement as a student activist to Shiv’s heretofore uneventful middle-class way of life. Moreover, she is shown to assist in Shiv’s growing into the mould of a politically active intellectual. Githa Hariharan creates a configuration through the choice of her two main characters. Shiv and Meena a relationship beyond friendship, and help each other in the controversy caused by his history lesson.

Thus, the novel demands that Indian middle class should revolt against anti-democratic forces in their country. In order to put a stop to the “siege of the mind”
India’s large middle class needs to be suppressed for its illogical demands. Especially intellectuals and scholars should speak out against the fabrications of dogmatic ideologies. At the same time, it is younger generation of women in India, as Githa Hariharan suggests, who are prophesied to become main actors on a political stage where democratic and secular principles have to be defended with vehemence and conviction.

Feminist approach of Githa Hariharan is an important phenomenon prevailing in all her novels. Githa Hariharan is one of the leading women writers in India who has proclaimed philosophy of feminism in all her novels. Her progressive prototypes have been reflected directly or indirectly in her works. Das and Mahapatra have observed that, “There are several subtypes of feminist ideology have developed over the years.” (Das Krishna 249)

Githa Hariharan’s feminism has her own characters reflected in her different novels. If we explore the past it is interesting to observe that,

“Githa Hariharan who shot into prominence with her Commonwealth Prize winning novel The Thousand Faces of Night, is one of the leading Indian novelists’ writing in English. Hariharan’s fourth novel In Times of Siege takes up a contemporary situation, focusing on middle aged professor of history in an Open University in New Delhi. Passionately committed to his subject, Prof. Murthy spends his time researching and writing history lessons which are then mailed to students enrolled in the distance education course.” (Singh 186)

This is a challenging novel which has described social and religious conflicts in contemporary India. In this novel Githa Hariharan has narrated different events in
the form of a chain and reflected social realities through characters. She has written different events with unflinching eye for painful details. These details not only shock the reader, but disturb him about the political realities which are creating social tensions. The most positive aspect of the novel has been described. Writer’s triumph in this novel is that she manages to draw attention to images trapped sand distorted within the broken mirror of liberalism, without being judgmental. It is a novel evaluating of contemporary issues and reactions to them.

The social graph drawn by Githa Hariharan seems to be a craft of tension. It is an interesting narration of social upheavals and religious tensions. Githa Hariharan leaves enough clues so that one knows that the several stories woven here are destined to an explosive climax. There are no resolutions in the novel, no pat endings, which is what makes the book remarkable. Githa Hariharan manages to instill a certain sense of rightness rather than dissatisfaction that unresolved endings can cause.

Her feelings in this novel certainly draw feminist aspirations, but they are of distinct nature. Shiva the hero of the novel is seeking inspiration from a woman character and how he shaped is the real success of the novelist. The feminist and social approach of Githa Hariharan is an interesting aspect of the present study. Alkan Dengel, Jeanic, has rightly observed about the present novel that,

“Githa Hariharan’s novel *In Times of Siege* (2003) reverberates with the Hindu Muslim tensions that in the wake of Ayodhya, have left their mark on India in the 1990s. Against this background, Hariharan’s novel deals with the complexity of a society, which is deeply divided and lives under continual threat of communal, religious and ethnic violence” (Web 30-07-2012)
She has depicted the social conflicts and tensions around them. The novel is a graph of social uncertainty and unrest prevailing in Indian social system. Githa Hariharan has displayed these realities in her own style.

The treatment given to the subject by writer is a complex phenomenon. Meena speaks for her generation as an individualist feminist. In her interview Githa Hariharan has rightly pointed that, “Meena is representative of a particular kind of person – not the yuppie sort, but the kind passionately engaged in the world she lives in and wanting to change all the inequalities it breeds, tolerates and promotes.”(Web 30-07-2012)

One of the major political events on the Indian sub-continent during the first half of the twentieth century has been the culmination of the freedom struggle into the achievement of independence under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. India before and after independence have a disconcertingly different picture to the world. Githa Hariharan’s novels are set against this socio-political backdrop of the country while they deal with man’s quest for his identity, man-woman relationship, East-West encounter and pre-occupation with Hindus and Hinduism. In a certain sense man may be called a political animal and every moment in the obtaining world makes his increasingly political life as that seems to be governed by of shoots of political considerations. The writers and novelists in particular have exhibited their consciousness of these developments and have made use of the political events of the country and the state of affairs in their works reacting and commenting on them to Githa Hariharan close to write against political background because she breathed in an atmosphere oozing with political fermentation. It offered her ample scope for authenticity. She has rightly represented feminist approach.
Githa Hariharan has noted that,

“Shiv is actually challenged on both personal and political fronts, and both aspects come together in the person of Meena. The romance between Shiv and Meena is mostly fanciful, but for a few moments of intimacy. Does the medieval historian’s renewed romanticism inspire him to greater feats of courage?”(Web 30-07-2012)

Meena’s character is full of courage and daring. The author has expressed feminist voice in her writings. Meena’s character is a representative of today’s modern women who has her own individual persona like, “Meena has changed her clothes. She now wears a bright red T-shirt and a long wrinkled and flowery skirt. She looks well scrubbed though she has only had a pretended-bath. Before Kamla left with the wet towel and empty basin, she must have combed Meena’s hair and plaited it tightly.”(ITS 13) It shows that character of Meena represents the modern look of Indian women who have their own thought and feelings. Meena represents the modern face of Indian women who leave alone in the city away from their parents.

The author has drawn her character from social settings. Githa Hariharan has closely observed all ups and downs in Indian society and she has witnessed that the struggle made by Indian woman is of manifold nature. She has to understand the social systems around her and has to mark her pathway for bringing total change in her life. She has rightly noted that,

“I have never liked identifying too closely with any one character in my novels. All of them have something of me, and all of them are different as well. Writers are just greedy to live more than one life
experience more than what their own lives give them.” (Web 30-07-2012)

Thus Githa Hariharan has drawn her characters in her own style. Like Githa Hariharan shows today social angles and elaborates it through the various perspective and feminist approach. Here the writer represents social reality in an interesting manner.

D. Janic Ellen has truly observed that,

“It is of course no coincidence that Hariharan emphasizes two main points concerning gender and class in her novel. First the fact that even an average middle class person can stand up to the threat posed by the Hindu Right and second, the role of women in political debate. In contrast to Shiv’s anti heroic stance, Rekha (Shiv’s wife) and Meena take up a position of powerful resistance, of not dominance.”(Web 30-07-2012)

The portrayal of man-woman relationship demands a special focus when one considers the difference between the two. It won’t be an exaggeration and out of the way to make a statement that man-woman relationship has always remained at the thematic center of literature in any country or continent. There can be very few examples of the possibility of literature minus the depiction of man-woman relationship. When it comes to the popular fiction and a work of literary art, both have it and yet there is a difference. In fact man-woman relationship is a delicate area of depiction, demanding a special care and treatment. It is the treatment of man woman relationship which either uplifts or degrades the dignity of that relationship. The feminist approach of Githa Hariharan is rightly presented here. This can be supported
with an illustration, examples of the passage in the novel. Githa Hariharan has noted that,

“The day after Meena’s friends visit her, she has to see the doctor for the first time after her leg has been put in plaster. By the time Shiv goes down to her room in the morning, she is already up, dressed and ready to go. She is wearing a long skirt, a modest brown. She has one shoe on. Her hair is knotted in a fat coil at the back of her neck. She could be a girl impatient to go to a long-awaited party, her face bright with anticipation, her shoulder bag on the bed by her.” (ITS 41)

Githa Hariharan’s approach to feminism has been rightly examined from her own angles. The careful analysis of this novel shows many interesting aspects of modern feminism as can be cited as under. But Meena is a step or two ahead of Shiv., “What are you going to say tomorrow? You will have to chalk out a plan. Obviously you can’t apologize or take back a word of the lesson.” (55)

Thus the feminist approach of Githa Hariharan is an interesting fact on the background of communal forces. Anita Nayar has also examined this novel in an interesting manner, when she points out that,

“There are no resolutions in this novel, no pat endings, which is what makes the novel even more remarkable. For Githa Hariharan manages to instill a certain sense of rightness rather than dissatisfaction that unresolved endings could cause.” (Web 20-05-2012)

This is an interesting observation which explains. Meena’s character develops in the way of individualist feminism by Githa Hariharan. In these peculiar times we
live in, when even the past has only a precarious hold in time, a book like Githa Hariharan’s *In Times of Siege* comes as a warning. Disturbing and moving, it tells of how menacing religion can be in the wrong hands.

About the character of Meena it has been noted that,

> “Meena enthusiastically takes up Murthy’s cause, and is of great help in enlisting help and organizing. The relationship between guardian and ward also becomes a more complicated one – also nicely handled by Githa Hariharan.” (Web 30-07-2012)

Meena is developed in the way of individualist persona she is supported by Prof. Shiv at various levels and situations. When fanatic group attacks Shiv Meena who is studying Kamla Nehru University. Meena who induces Shiv to act not to compromise on the stand taken up from Meena and her friend Prof. Shiv decides to stand firm by the values and fought against the Ithihas. Suraksha Manch. Hindu fundamentalist group is against it is by Meena, supported Prof. Shiv, shows that Meena has courage to fight against the social system and establish herself as a feminist. The approach of the novelist is individualists feminism means to speaks about frustration of middle class women. It emphasis on liberating of women. This novel has depicted individualist feminism through the character of Meena. Like,

> “Shiv can do nothing but agree, he is so bewildered by it all. A morning so far back in time that he can hardly believe he planned to tell the story of the polygamy line drawing to entertain Meena. Meena breaks into his confused thoughts and goes, in her special way, straight to the heart of the matter. ‘It’s Arya, isn’t it?’” (ITS 54-5)
Meena’s character belongs to the voice of women who want freedom from the banding of the society. Meena’s help to Shiv fight against history protection moment and supported when Shiv was in difficulties shows that Meena is the character that has her own choice and individual persona.

Wendy McElroy defined the individualist feminism in the following words. “Individualist feminism in opposition to political or gender feminism is closely linked to the libertarian ideas of individually and personal responsibility of both women and men.” (Das Krishna 251)

In this novel Shiv and Meena are two characters who turn the tables. Meena is developed as a feminist character that fights against communal forces. She is a woman with daring and confidence who is described as champion of feminism.

5.3. Sociological Perspective:

The sociological approach focuses on understanding of literature in sociological perspective. Literature is the mirror of society and it reveals cross section of social fabric which reflects the understanding of writer in the contemporary social context. The characters drawn, plots developed and the social environment created by the writer can be described as social laboratory. Githa Hariharan being one of the feminist writers of high ranking in India has drawn women images effectively in modern Indian English literature.

_In Times of Siege_ it would be interesting to examine how Githa Hariharan has tried to gain social support for her feminist cause. Githa Hariharan has tried to set this balance through two characters, Meena and Shiv. It has been further observed that the social interactional model suggests that stress can amplify negative personality
characteristics that may lead to disruptions in social interactions and personal relationships.

Githa Hariharan’s triumph in the novel is that she manages to draw attention on sociological meaning through complex social situations during the period of riots. Githa Hariharan manages to instil a certain sense of rightness rather than dissatisfaction that unresolved endings can cause. This rightness is based on social phenomenon which she has minutely observed, The intrusion of this young, politically conscious Meena, with her entourage of friends and comrades into the placid, humdrum life of Murthy’s opens a whole new world before him.

Meena is representative of progressive feminist movement and she is fighting against the caste bias social system, which is provoking malice and hatred among various social groups.

The infighting among faculty members is phenomenal in Shiva’s circle. Faculty members are also divided on grounds of caste, religion and ideology among University teachers. Thus sociological processes depicted by Githa Hariharan in her novel clearly illustrates the various shades of inequality prevailing in Indian society. She has also depicted man-woman relationship, institutional insights and social tensions created by communal politics.

5.4. Myths and History:

In Times of Siege Githa Hariharan has exploded different myths prevailing in Indian society. She has focused on social realities effectively. In Times of Siege is based on social and cultural content of political violence which was struck in India in the post Ayodhya period after the demolition of Babri Masjeed. Githa Hariharan has
tried to represent social and cultural forces. In one of her interviews she has admitted that, Murthy is everyman in his daily life, avoiding confrontation whenever possible.

Githa Hariharan exposes the Hindutva’s general glorification of the ancient Hindu past with its claim to cultural superiority and its values have been indirectly hinted by the author using myth of disappearance of Shiv’s father.

Githa Hariharan has raked the issue by in her novel disturbing in its evaluation, of contemporary issues land our mundane reaction to them:

“Basava and many of his followers took on the caste system, the iron net that held society so firmly in place that reduced the common man and woman to hopeless captives. Thousands of these ordinary men and women took part in Basava’s egalitarian dream. The dream spread and took hold of people who had not been people before in Kalyana, people who had just been their functions; the makers of mirrors, the skinners of dead animals, the bearers of children. The people became a movement, the movement swelled and surged, a wave that threatened to swallow social conventions and religious rituals, staple diet of tradition.”(ITS 61)

Such history lessons based on controversial figures apparently don’t go down well with contemporary protectors of India’s history or religious fundamentalists.

This has been explained by Githa Hariharan in her novel. It has been further observed by Sandhya Singh that,

“The louts of Ithihas Suraksha Manch have belatedly discovered that the saintly Basava has been depicted as a human. They wish to have
the lesson withdrawn and the professor humiliated. One day a man who introduces himself as a reporter of a newspaper ‘Current’ telephones Shiv to know whether he is on leave because of; the protests against his controversial article on Basavanna or the University has asked him to go on leave.” (Singh 189)

There are similarities in the myths surrounding 20\textsuperscript{th} Century philosopher. There are parallels in social movements. Githa Hariharan has noted that all social movements for equality whether of caste, class, race or gender have a common thread running through them they enable people to include others, rather than exclude them from their lives.

Githa Hariharan has tried to explain this myth effectively. About threat of extremism Githa Hariharan has observed that, actually people have seen several events in the recent past that have woken up many apathetic people in India and abroad.

Exposing myth and culture is a phenomenal approach of Githa Hariharan. She has been described as an astute observer of cultural issues. Githa Hariharan has lot of questions about the society in which she lives. The right questions must be asked in different ways for making sharp observations.

Thus Githa Hariharan has tried to explain myth and culture from critical feminist angle.

\textbf{5.5. Patriarchy and Social Relationship:}

Patriarchy is an important character of male dominated society in India. In Indian social structures, the head of the family is male and he predominates over other
female members of family. Husband dominates wife, brother dominates sister, and many of the families suffer a great deal due to this male dominated social structure. Githa Hariharan being a champion of feminist literature, often criticizes and explodes against patriarchal system. Sharma has opined that the world has drastically changed in 21st Century!

“Related to these changes was the increased appreciation for feminist formats and values, cooperative decision making, power sharing, support for the weaker links in social networks. Not every woman on the vigil would agree to be labeled feminist but all were persuaded by the feminist process and moved closer to a feminist perspective.”

(Sharma 2)

Literature is one of such areas in which feminist approach has been effectively treated and reflected. Githa Hariharan has ably explained the patriarchal tendency in Indian social system. Women writers in 21st century have worked on different dimensions of the problems of women in the feminist perspective. Traditionally, the work of Indian women writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience.

Now the Indian authors like Arundhati Roy, Kamala Markandaya and Githa Hariharan have broken the path and they are making a crusade for emancipation of women. In the writings of women writers patriarchy is the major hurdle in the development of women.

Feminist writers began to develop new school of progressive writing by attacking traditional patriarchal system. C. Amutha Charu Sheela has observed that,
“Contemporary women writers in Indian English writing have made significant contributions to literature. Many writers have won international awards. Their writings no longer portray the stereotypical images of women as a submissive housewife, doting mother, village girl waiting for her prince or women revolting against women. Their writings deconstruct myths that degrade women.” (Amutha 138)

Revolt against patriarchy is also a part of this deconstruction process. Githa Hariharan being a champion of feminist ideas, has revolted against male dominated society. The present novel is also not exception to this. It has been further observed that Githa Hariharan is one such writer whose discourses show resistance and questions every aspects of social order.

Patriarchy is one such predominant social order in India, which Githa Hariharan has tried to break. Githa Hariharan has attacked the vested interests. She has depicted revolt against patriarchy in her own style. The happenings are reflected through the personality of women. Meena in the present novel is fighting against communal forces. A typical reflection of bold and heroic struggle against patriarchy is woven in this novel.

Patriarchy believes that only man can perform the job of being a guardian. Githa Hariharan’s questions this through this novel. In her own life she has questioned this through a petition in the Supreme Court.

Her petition challenged the Reserve Bank of India’s refusal to let Githa Hariharan make an investment in the name of her minor son. She visited a local branch of the state-run Reserve Bank of India to buy bonds on behalf of her 11-year-old son. She was shocked when the bank officials refused to accept her signature on
the application, saying that her husband is the child’s only legal guardian. Even a letter from the couple stating that they had agreed that Githa Hariharan should represent their son failed to change the bankers’ mind. With the help of the Women’s Rights Initiative programme, she filed a writ petition along with her husband in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act (1956). The crux of their writ petition was the question, what disqualifies a mother from making decisions about her child’s welfare? There is no social, economic, scientific or biological basis to the assumption that a woman is not capable of guardianship. And if there is no rational basis to this law, what is the sole criterion at work? The mother’s gender! Did this not violate the equality promised by Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution? In the judgment Supreme Court released the order to the Central Government Women are natural guardian of any child. Become of this order now-a-days throughout India, after the name of each child, mother’s name in T.C., Marks Memo, Degree, Aadhaar Card etc is accepted. This was supposed to be a landmark judgment for Githa Hariharan. In the present novel, Githa Hariharan shows that though Shiv is the guardian for Meena. In difficult times, Meena becomes Shiv’s guardian. She supports him and inspires him to stand firm. Comparatively she is a better guardian. “Meena’s charms and her carefully staged plans to resist the fundamentalists or fudoos as Githa Hariharan call them. Rising to the occasion, Meena demands that he take a stand and rely on her college friends to his support.” (Singh 194)

Thus Githa Hariharan has described social relationship in contemporary India. She has criticized fundamentalist tendencies which have been responsible for communal hatred and violence. She has depicted a bold woman like Meena who is fighting against violent mob and her fearless reflections against male dominated
society is an important success in her narrations. Githa Hariharan has portrayed thus psychology of traditional Indian society. Revolt against patriarchy and traditional Indian social structure is a corner stone of this novel.

5.6. Characters in the Novel:

The study of the characters in the novel is closely related to the thematic content of the novel. Githa Hariharan being a most fascinating woman novelist in India had tried to portray her characters in a forceful manner. She has pleaded feminism in favor of social justice. *In Times of Siege* is a narration based on secular impulses. Today we live in dangerous times, where the voice of the mob is the only one that is heard. In this work, Githa Hariharan’s voice rings clear, she has her priorities.

Githa Hariharan has projected her characters through the religious fanatic essence in the novel. Githa Hariharan has aptly interpreted the theme through her characters.

It has been rightly stated that,

“In these peculiar times we live in when even the past has only a precarious hold on time, a book like Hariharan’s *In Times of Siege* comes as a warning. Disturbing and moving, it tells of how menacing religion can be in the wrong hands.”(Web 20-05-2012)

The main character Shiv in the novel further gets aggravated due to the internal conflicts. In the University Prof. Shiv is the medieval history professor. Shiv who is projected as a secular reformist. About this character it has been pointed that,
“Professor Shiv Murthy is a professor of medieval Indian history of correspondence University in New Delhi. He is also in some sense deeply emotionally stunted by a childhood experience, the sudden disappearance of a father who had been a frustrated Indian freedom fighter. Shiva finds himself in hot water when the Hindu fanatics up on a series of lessons he’s written on a 12th century reform figure named Basava.” (Web 30-07-2012)

Thus Shiv’s character represent progressive academic intellectual who is brought into difficulties by communal politics. On the writing of medieval history Ithihas Suraksha Manch, Hindu fundamentalist group strongly opposes Shiva’s ideas:

“As usual Shiv is the last one at the meeting. The department head, his four colleagues, and a secretary armed with pad and pen are already there. The head sits with his secretary next to him like a handmaiden; facing them are his colleagues, Lal, Arya, Menon and Amita Sen. The core faculty, processors of historical resources for their unseen students.” (ITS 14)

At the college meeting Shiv face all the colleagues Shiv Murthi give some facts and references for his defense. Meena is the second important character, who helps Shiv in his progressive crusade.

It has been pointed that,

“The day Meena’s roommate brought a plastic bag full of things from their hostel room, two new pictures went up on the wall. Posters, stuck on the wall with Sellotape, one on either side of the photograph of
ruins. One of the pictures is a feminist poster of some sort; no words, just an image of matchitick women holding hands to make a perfect circle.” (27)

Thus Meena’s help to Shiv has changed his fortune and when Shiv was in difficulties. Meena helped him with high responsibility and fair approach. Githa Hariharan has given a little romantic touch to the character by making it more interesting.

The third important character is Basava the father of Shiv. It has been pointed that,

“Like Shiv’s father, Basava disappeared. He was presumed dead. His end would always be shrouded by mysterious circumstances and speculation. Speculative narratives. Narratives of love or faith or revolution. But all the narrative is doomed to be inconclusive.” (Web 30-07-2012)

Rekha is wife of Shiv and Githa Hariharan has described her as a symbol of Indian traditional woman. It has been pointed out that Rekha is away in Seattle visiting her daughter and so it is Shiv who clothes shopping for her, washes her hair, pours her a drink, buys her ice cream and Asterix comics.

Menon is also one character in the novel, is a In-Charge of modern India course who has shown with diversity and wit in the narration. It has been pointed that and among her cameos, it is Menon with his penchant for staring at the ceiling who leaves an indelible impression. There is gentle humor and irony, sensitivity and enough flesh and blood to make up for those times when the book meanders aimlessly
or when the shrillness and a tendency too much speechifying breaks the pace of the narrative.

Thus all these important characters in the novel have brought forth the conflict between fanatics and progressive history writers. The entire ethos in the novel exposes fanatic groups which were making politics over lesson written on the Open University book. The politics in the Indian Universities and societal struggle around the history have been rightly described by Githa Hariharan in this novel. Kamla is also one of the characters who is a peons wife in novel.

Thus Githa Hariharan was quite successful in depicting the struggle between fundamentalist and progressive groups through her characters.

5.7. Tradition and Protest:

Githa Hariharan in all her novels has described struggle between tradition and progressive ideas, mentality and progressive ideas. Githa Hariharan has always remained observer of the sustained crisis. She knew that the fanatics were bringing pressures on the writer of the lesson. Censorship, force and violence are the tactics adopted by the fundamentalist. Githa Hariharan, makes no difference, between Hindu, Muslim or Christian fundamentalists about their history. In Times of Siege the plot has a progressive message deeply rooted through the novel treated by Githa Hariharan. Githa Hariharan has started her career as a writer by attempting to write on a subject that was close to her heart and to many women writers. She portrays the changing image of woman in the modern and the post modern era through her not so conventional women characters. Women in her novels seem to be the personifications of ‘new’ women who have been trying to throw off the burden of inhibitions they have carried for ages. Githa Hariharan’s female characters resolutions conform to a
re-definition of the lives of women, fulfilling the implicit political aim of the author, as she is not merely concerned in documenting reality, but she has used her novels as a medium for the exploration of the new reality and a subtle projection of values, by posing questions, by suggesting reassessment and re-definition.

Thus protest against tradition is an important character of Githa Hariharan’s efforts through her novels. The character of Meena represents individualist, feminist approach Githa Hariharan. The entire novel echoes progressive ideas in an interesting manner.

5.8. Analysis of Language and Discourse In Times of Siege:

Discourse analysis is a method of analyzing novels in a systematic manner. By using this method one can classify the content and focus on the important messages which have been reflected in the novel. Githa Hariharan in her interview rightly pointed that,

“The phone call regarding the extremist’s attack on Shiv’s history lesson changes the tenor of the story, significantly escalating the action. How did you make that difficult transition work so well? That was the idea I began the novel with. But I wanted it to be sneaked in so that it is startling and unbelievable same way and it springs into his life fully formed and menacing and pushes him into the political act of making a choice.” (Web 30-07-2012)

The fanatic attack on Shiv was thus the turning point of the novel, which began the whole theme. In the novel Githa Hariharan has described that “What makes
a fanatic? A Fundamentalist? What makes communities that have lived together? For years suddenly discover a latent hatred for each other?” (ITS 129)

This is the core message of the novel and it has rightly fits in the crux of the problem.

Githa Hariharan has tried to describe Hindu philosophy in a formula. She has pointed out that the fanatics have aimed at the “Golden Hindu history that will legitimize their program of one language, one religion, one nation.” (93)

This philosophy is narrow and creates hatred about other communities.

Githa Hariharan had known that history was being misused by narrow fanatic communities and groups. To them history was a tool of politics. Githa Hariharan is of the opinion that history is used as an armor, as propaganda used as battleground, as the seed of hatred. It is in the hands of the mob conspiracy theories, rightist conspiracies and leftist conspiracies.

However Githa Hariharan knows that these fanatic ideas must be limited by providing new progressive ideas. Githa Hariharan often breaches philosophy of history, which she feels is worthy and balanced. She has provided commentary on history of philosophy. In her view it is the right of a people to complex, pluralistic history. It is true that history is not an indisputable body of knowledge. But history itself shows us that attempts to rectify it have all too often been camouflaged for the doctoring of history.

Githa Hariharan has her own philosophy of history. Her feminist progressive ideas have been reflected in her commentaries. She has rightly focused that,
“Separating history and myth, pulling apart history and legend, deciding which chunks of history will keep the myth earth bound, which slivers of myth will cast light and insight, on dull historical fragments. The two have to be torn apart, their links disentangled, to see who is who then coaxed into embrace again to understand the composite reality. Approaching the whole, the heterogeneous truth that demands the coupling of conflicting narratives, requires the participation of one body.” (87)

Githa Hariharan thus provides her faithful reflections on conflicting interests of fanatic ideas. She is balanced and logical in her comments.

Githa Hariharan through her dialogues and conversations has rightly reflected and neatly pinpointed the problem of distortion of history. The following narration is a good example of her style:

“Yes, we’ve read the lesson, Dr. Murthy. The problem is not the text itself but the implications. What can be read between the lines? I have gone through the lesson carefully and I have made a list of the phrases and sentences that lend themselves to misinterpretation. I am afraid these lapses are what we will now have to explain.” (Web 30-07-2012)

This has echoed that the fundamentalists were worried about the content and interpretations and revisions were made in the right narrations of the history and Githa Hariharan was unhappy about the pressures brought by the fanatic groups.

Githa Hariharan has rightly pleaded the case of Shiv, who had written the lesson on Basweshwara. In her opinion: “ But all this is part of history, drawn from a
variety of sources, Shiv says Part of the challenge of getting to know Basava’s life and times is reconstructing it out of literary texts, legends, inscriptions and other records.”(Web 30-07-2012)

This shows Shiv’s sincerity and faithfulness in writing of history. And Githa Hariharan has narrated the whole event as well as life of Basava and treatment given by Shiva in the history book. Later on she has also described the post politics that occurred due to the pressure of fanatic groups. Her interesting narration is as follows:

“With a confidence that would be the envy of any historian, their press release says: Our Basavanna was a great man sent to earth by Siva himself to do his work among men. There was no question of whether he would succeed or fail, so where is the question of his dying alone in exile. Anyone who refuses to see this must be punished.” (Web 30-07-2012)

Thus all these explorations in discourse analysis bring to us three facts as follows:

- Githa Hariharan is always clear cut in describing progressive ideas. She is an astute observer of the cultural issues.
- The second aspect of this discourse analysis reveals that religious writing which targets another religion must be avoided because they are obstacles in the social peace.
- The third important aspect is that progressive groups in the society must be organized and they have to resist the communal forces.
The message of social change projected by Basveshawara has been kept on height by Githa Hariharan, when she points that,

“Things standing shall fall, but the moving shall ever stay. Every word of Basava’s was a challenge, both to himself and to those around him. The heroic mode in a building, in the city, in a man. In men, growing into empire. Who is a hero? A leader? What makes some of us speak out, draw others to listen?” (Web 30-07-2012)

This is the climax of the spiritual discourse interpreted by Githa Hariharan in this novel.

5.9. Summary:

Thus in this chapter a new light on feminist elements In Times of Siege was thrown. Githa Hariharan being a champion of progressive ideas has continued her school of feminism in this political novel also. She was succeeded after the communal riots in Gujarat. She has pointed that there is a less space for debate in India and elsewhere. Hence she has protested against this bitter truth. When the novel was on midway two historians were attacked in India for their historical writings and that drew the attention of Githa Hariharan. In order to understand currents and cross currents in the novel sociological perspective was adopted in this chapter and that was rightly explained to clarify the political narration with a critical angle. Further myth of the historical writings and reality behind it was also rightly explained. Further patriarchy being character in Indian society, its reflection in the novel was critically examined and individualist feminist approach revealed through the character of Meena was also pin pointed. In her interview with Arnab Chakladar, Githa Hariharan says,
“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 (as opposed to a woman writer) who is a feminist, along with several other things!”

(Rupa 05-10-2012)

In this chapter major characters in the novel such as Prof. Shiv Murthy, Meena, Rekha, and Suniti as well as father of Shiv, Baswa and Menon were described one after another. They were framed in the view of man-woman relationship as well as feminist doctrine. The traditional outlook of Indian society and protest against the outdated values has been reflected by the author.

Against this background discourse analyses in the novel was also made and the message created in the novel was properly highlighted.

In the next chapter feminist elements in Fugitive Histories have been highlighted.

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