Myth and Tradition
Chapter IV

Myth and Tradition

The chapter analyses how Githa Hariharan, the Indo-Anglican writer uses literature as a vehicle and driving force to transmit the Indian culture. In her stories, Indian myths are intermingled with the lives of the Indian people. Indian mythology is one of the precious sources of Indian culture. It flourished and enriched itself further and is present as a unique one in the world. Different stories in Indian mythology have been carried from generation to generation either orally or through carefully stored scriptures. In most Indian homes, children formerly learnt these immortal stories as naturally as they learnt their mother tongue at the mother’s knee. *The Ramayana*, one of the most ancient and sacred stories of India, was originally composed in Sanskrit by Valmiki and later translated into many languages. For example, Emperor Akbar, being a great lover of Indian literature and culture, has the credit of translating *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* into Persian language in order to make them popular amongst Persian knowing people, especially Muslims. His personal copy of *The Ramayana*, having been translated and illustrated after a labour of almost five years, was completed in 996 AH (1587 AD). One of the major epics of India and the longest poem in the world is *The Mahabharata* a sacred Hindu text. It consists of many legends and tales revolving around the world between two branches of a mythical family. *The Mahabharata* is one of the best examples of the myth which revolves around many heroes. This is one of the most famous epics in Hindu literature. *The Ramayana* is a fine example of Indian myth which tells of the life of a single man Rama, a
legendary hero, who is worshiped as a God in many parts of India. The work has to be declaimed as an amalgamation of two three or four elements, namely the palace intrigue resulting in Rama’s banishment, abduction of Sita, legends about Hanuman and ape worship and about Ravana and his final downfall and death. It is said only one element has a historical basis and that was Rama’s banishment. Though Ramayana has been divided into four elements, the main focus is on the hero’s journey. It starts from the banishment of Rama and ends when he returns to his own place to serve his people. With this, the epic also comes to an end.

The English term myth is derived from the Greek “Muthos” meaning word or speech. Indian Mythology is one of the richest element in Indian culture. The term “Indian Mythology” means stories connected to the God, Goddesses and human beings. It relates heaven and earth. Religion is the relationship between man and his creator. In other words, religion is a product of faith and has given birth to myths. The mythical and religious beliefs on the Indian epics accept the values of Indian traditional life. Myths and religions are two important aspects of literature and writers of all the countries have used these mythical themes in their respective countries.

The first Indian governor general of India C.Rajagopalachari rightly says:

Ramayana is the moving history of our land. From time immemorial, great minds have been formed and nourished and touched to heroic deeds. (2007:7)

He also explains that The Mahabharata was composed many years ago. But generations of gifted recitations have added to Vyasa’s original great mass of
material. All the oral literature that was thought to be worth preserving its historical, geographical, legendary, political, theological and philosophical were transferred to the written language later. The word ‘Itihasa’ means history but according to the Hindus, Itihasa is a religious oriented story that tells about what happened in the past. Most of them are epic poems. The important Itihasas are The Ramayana, written by the sage Valmiki it tells the story of a battle between the Hindu god Vishnu and a demon called Ravana and The Mahabharata, written by Vyasa. The Mahabharata has the honour of being the longest epic in world literature. It tells the Great War of Mahabharat between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The Itihasas are an advice to the readers through the conduct of a ruler and the people of a country. According to the Hindus, Itihasa refers to a religion based story that tells about past life of godly heroes and heroines, where Puranas became the dominant feature of religion, culture and social life. Building temple and formal ritual worship were the basic tenets that were propagated among the common people. During the period after Puranas, bhakti took over as the most important method of worshipping. Many major epics and short works were written and published during this period. The three central themes were taken to the door of the common people by the media of music, drama, namajapa, discourses, procession and congregational worship. During this period, bajnas were not performed in great number. Big temples did not come up. Only the medium changed and not the message. India is a place of great tradition and heritage and can be called as the cradle of civilization. Epics belonged to a pre-literature and pre-historical era. Methodological procedures demand a relationship between myth and literature.
In *Myth, Poetry and Critical Theory*, Lillian Feder brings out the connection between myth and literature:

> Myths are used in literature in three ways: mythical narratives and figures are the overt basis on which plot and character are created; or they are submerged beneath the surface of realistic characters and action; or new mythical structures are invented that have a remarkable resemblance to traditional ones. (53)

These lines explain the relationship between Myth and literature. In a landmark essay titled *Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities*, theories and speculations regarding the ontogeny as well as the historical development of myth provide us an orientation to the discussion of the bond between myth and literature. Fiction allows greater freedom for experimentation and exploration. It also allows greater space for settlement. Githa Hariharan surmounts her fiction with epics like *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* and relates to everyday life characters. One can locate in Hariharan’s work a thread of revisionist myth making, a means to heal the wounds of one’s soul, as a process of networking among the women of different ages and generations, an attempt in renewing the whole community of women through the representations of myths.

Myths are the archetypal model of all creations, biological, psychological or spiritual. The main function of the myth is to establish exemplar models in all the important human actions. Romanian writer, Mircea Eliade says even the origin of the word psychology leads us to myth. The English word ‘Psychology’ is originated
from the Greek word ‘Psyche’. The root word in Greek means ‘Soul’ or ‘Spirit’. But the soul rises only through true love, Eros, and ends up in Olympus, the place of eternal rejoice. In this context, psychology represents, the mythological point of view, apart from science or knowledge. Psychology is the study of human soul or conscious in search of sense and feeling. We can easily observe the psychological ingredient of myths that cannot be ignored; it is ever present as an essential part. Hariharan’s first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) deals with three women whose different and yet similar stories cut across generations and across barriers of caste and class in a case of classic female bonding. The author focuses mainly on the change of their living and their independency to face the real sufferings, especially, when she uses myth in her novel, TFN to establish the characters identity. It mainly focuses on their struggles in the society to choose a new track to lead their lives. Hariharan is fascinated by myth, fable and legend, and wonders how these forms of storytelling can be reworked in a modern context. In the novel, TFN Hariharan relates old mythological stories to the life of modern.

The continuing impact of age old myths and lures which Hariharan emphasises represent the role of women and models which may remain entrenched in the Indian woman's psyche. Hariharan ponders particularly on the use of myth in the novel TFN and creates a new vision with the dynamic power of her women characters. India is the birth place of numerous mythological tales. Indian civilization addressed itself in the name of great tradition and heritage. Now all people live in harmony even though there are many religions and linguistic variations. From this land, the rest of the world
learn unity in diversity. Indians have learnt the art of living from great saints.

A rich heritage of literary tradition is preserved. Further, the great epics of the world
*The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, invariably preach the principles of life to the
universe. In TFN, Hariharan has narrated several stories from myth through her
protagonist Devi recalls her Grandmother’s stories from Indian myth. She is always
more concerned with the lesion or message related with myth. In order to, make her
daughter to settle down with native culture and tradition, Devi’s mother Sita call her
back from America after her studies get over.

In India, from ancient times a rich oral tradition of storytelling has been
followed. Devi’s grandmother was very fond of telling her fascinating, alluring and
heroic stories from the epics. Hariharan’s moving description of the magical intimacy
between Devi and her grandmother is a symbolic of many possibilities that are open
to all women through the important mentor figures, role models and inspired women
present among them. Devi herself says:

> And most of all, in my memories of those summers, my grandmother’s
> house is crowded with superhuman warriors, men and women destined
to lead heroic lives. For many summers, I thrived on a diet of her caressing
gnarled fingers and her stories of golden splendour. (TFN, 27)

The above quote reveals Devi is preoccupied by mythological characters. Moreover,
even before she returns to India from America, Devi says, “Krishna, the Dark God
who loved milk, butter and women.” Lord Krishna is the central and the most
important and powerful character in *The Mahabharata*. He is an incarnation of Vishnu.
Krishna cult has spread all over the world and there are Krishna temples, even in America. It is interesting to recall that the famous English novelist, E.M.Forster in his book *The Hill of Devi (1963)* gives a detailed and colourful description of the birth of Krishna. Krishna, the blue boy, is a legendary figure who plays flute and dances with the Gopis have inspired scores of gifted poets to sing in praise of him.

Devi, the protagonist, a plain looking young woman educated in the United States returns to India at the behest of her mother; gets married to a diligent and serious minded business executive Mahesh; soon finds her marriage is a sort of solitary confinement, suffers a growing sense of futility and seeks escape in the company of a musical celebrity Gopal. This particular decision of Devi to elope with Gopal shows the psychology of Krishna being referred to as a lover of women. The name Gopal may be understood as a generic name to mean “Lord Krishna”. Devi accompanies Gopal to many concerts, she is hypnotized into forgetfulness. But she finds her life with Gopal is like a kite. She finds it unpleasing and unwanted. She locates herself in an isolated corner. She understands that there is no difference between Mahesh and Gopal who both fail to perceive her emotions and soul.

Githa Hariharan has skilfully drawn the neurotic self of Devi in the showdown, battling with the pangs of alienation and emancipation through mythological stories.

Despite the spread of education, the Indian family structure still continues to be traditional, especially with regard to marriage. Daughters need mothers to train and guide them. Without their mother’s guidance and emotional support, daughters fail to internalize womanhood. In the novel TFN, Githa Hariharan displayed her mastery in
presenting an inextricable link between a mother and a daughter through the characters of Sita and Devi. Sita decides to call Devil back to India in order to make her only daughter settle down according to the native culture. Devi comes to know that her mother is going to arrange her marriage through Swayamvara. It is a ceremony through which a bride can choose her groom from the assembled suitors. She has heard such stories through her grandmother from her childhood. But she is not mentally prepared for it. In the Indian social set up, marriage represents the tradition. Though Devi is not interested in marrying, she accepts the proposal because she does not want to hurt the feelings of her mother. The mother weaves a cocoon. At this point, Devi recollects her grandmother’s story of Damayanti taken from The Mahabharata.

The grandmother has explained to Devi how the beautiful princess Damayanti got married. Damayanti is a character in the Mahabharata. She is the beautiful daughter of king Bhima. She falls in love with Nala, the eldest son of king Nisadh of Ayodhya, whom she has not met but only heard his virtues and accomplishment through the golden swam. She is very much pleased to hear the sweet words of the swam as a messenger from Nala. Meanwhile, king Bhima arranges for her swayamvara, where many princes, kings and even Gods come to seek her hand. Here Grandmother describes Damayanti as follows:

Damayanti entered the hall with an escort, trumpets blaring, and a secret glow of promise surrounded her faces and hands, and the garland of sweet-smelling jasmines and roses she held...... Earlier Damayanti had been anointed by her maid with fragrant oils and a paste of rice
powder, turmeric and sandalwood. Slim –waisted jars encrusted with precious stones were lifted over her head. The fresh spring water flowed over her and then her fair body was dried with silk. Her hair braided with pearls and emeralds, her eyes darkened with Kohl, a vermilion circle glowing in the centre of her forehead, she floated like a fresh lotus down the carpets of the hall. (TFN, 19)

Her heart never wavered from the path leading to Nala, the king of Nishadas. She chooses Nala as her husband and leads a happy life.

This story clearly pictures that the parent guides their daughters towards marriage life but full freedom was given to a girl to choose her husband. Many princes, kings and even Gods were waiting for her selection. Her grandmother assures her that she too will live like a princess in house where she is going to be married and she will be treated as a Goddess of good fortune. Grandmother’s thought moulds Devi as a princess and she psychologically thinks that married life is like a heaven.

Devi is surprised to see a photograph of her mother holding a veena in her hands and asks her grandmother: “Did Amma play the veena when she was a girl?” Her grandmother tells Devi the story of Gandhari, drawing analogy between Sita’s sacrifice of veena and Gandhari’s self inflicted blindness. Gandhari scarifies her sight by wrapping her eyes with a piece of cloth with a determination not to enjoy more than her blind husband Dhritarashtra, while Sita sacrifices her veena to become a good homemaker. Her grandmother thinks that Gandhari’s story will help Devi to understand “what it is to be a real woman” but Devi understands that, like Gandhari,
her mother Sita has also denied herself from any pleasure. Even today many women
can play only the role of a homemaker by suppressing their passion and interests.
Every woman has some inborn talents within herself but most of the time it is buried
like Sita. Hariharan’s Devi, when placed in the tradition, acquires a symbolic status and
her quest becomes representative of the whole community of women. Furthermore, it
marks a voyage to the geocentric past, a time when the Goddess (Devi) was the centre
of creation. They need give up their talents to be a homemaker or a good wife or a
good daughter-in-law. This is the physical, psychological and emotional intimacy that
provides the tempo and tenor for Devi’s initiation into the world of women. Devi does
not listen to her grandmother’s tales silently. She is forever eager to know the reasons
and so she frequently asks the question ‘why’. Hariharan through the character Devi
displays the right mood for an initiate. Her method of narration makes the readers to
revisit the old myth in a female point of view. Devi does not merely learn the stories
but more importantly she learns that stories are meant to be revised and retold.
Retelling a tale of the past thus turns into an act of restoration because it is a
restoration of a lost tradition.

Another interesting story narrated by her grandmother deals was about a
beautiful girl marrying a snake. Although Devi’s ten year old mind is quite immature
to understand the real purpose of the story but whatever she understood remains
permanently etched in her memory.

The grandmother told Devi about the beautiful girl who married a snake. There is
a young couple who do not have a child. Superstitiously, they are told that they
displeased the God in some way or the other and it is the wrath of God that deprives them of the child. So, they make some sacrifices of God and finally they are bestowed with a little black snake. All the neighbours are sacred with the sight but the mother accepts the snake whole heartedly.

When the child grows to an adult, the mother wants her son to get married and asks her husband to seek for a bride. Though he is shocked, her stubborn nature makes him to go to various places in search of a girl. One of his hosts is very much pleased with the man and comes forward to offer his daughter. The girl, on the contrary, is extremely beautiful. She ignores her neighbours criticism and happily marries the snake. With usual traditional devotion, She looks after him with utmost care. One night, the snake crawls into her bed. She embraces him with her loving hands and they spend a night of warm caresses. Towards dawn, the young woman slips out of her husband’s embrace and gets out of the bed. On the floor, she finds yards of cold snake skin ripped apart in the middle. She quickly drags the skin outside and burns it to ashes. Then she goes back to her bed, where she finds a young, handsome human youth sleeping. From then she leads a happy life with her husband who is a human being.

As Grandmother grew older, stories also took a new shape and form, “sharper, more precious tone of dangerous possibilities” (35). Devi remembered how she first heard about Amba, the Princess who sheds her womanhood through her dreams of revenge and becomes a man. In the Indian epic the Mahabharata, Amba is the eldest daughter of the king of Kashi. She has two eldest sisters Ambika and Ambalika.
The king of Kashi organizes a *swayamvara* for his three daughters. Amba and Salva, the king of Saubala secretly loved each other. Amba invites him in order to select by placing the garland. Meanwhile, Bhishma, the son of king Shantanu and river Ganga enters into the *swayamvara* hall. He abducts the princesses Amba, Ambika and Ambalika of Kashi from the assemblage of suitors at their *swayamvara* to his step brother Vichitravirya, the king of Hastinapur. Later he comes to know about the love between Amba and king Salva. As she requests, Bhishma permits her to go back to her lover. However, Salva rejects her as she is spoiled by her captor’s touch. Amba pleads Salva to accept her as his wife but Salva is not convinced of her because she is rightfully won by Bhishma. Amba has no option and hence returns to Bhishma. She pleads him to marry her as he is responsible for her plight. He also refuses as he is under an eternal vow to remain celibate all his life. Finally she comes to the conclusion that Bhishma is the main culprit and she promises to take revenge on him. Then on, Amba decides to spend her rest of the life in the forest. She turns to asceticism and pleases Lord Shiva, who grants her the boon of slaying Bhishma in her next birth. In order to revenge she kill herself and to hasten the fulfilment of the boon. In her next birth, she takes revenge by killing Bhishma.

The stories are significantly placed after situations that call for mythical clarification so that Devi can derive the desired meaning. Rejected by both Bheeshma, the usurper and King Salwa, the chosen bridegroom in *Swayamvara*, Amba has to muster enough courage, hatred and drive for revenge. Through penance she becomes, the avenger. The grandmother's sense of liberation can soar only up to a certain level
and the narrative returns to stereotypical assumptions. To become an avenger the woman needs manhood through her penance. She has to be elevated to the male status first, a necessary condition for the right to express anger or revenge. Hariharan as a feminist writer rewrites and retells myth from a feminine point of view.

Devi recalls the myth of Amba, the Princess who sheds her womanhood through her dreams of revenge and becomes a man. One can hear the so-called superior male voice of Salwa, when Amba, rejected by Bheeshma, goes to Salwa for acceptance as a woman: "Do you think I feast on leftovers? I am a King" (37). Devi identifies herself with Durga, the goddess who is the destroyer of evil. She says: "I lived a secret life of my own: I became a woman warrior, a heroine. I was Devi. I rode a tiger and cut off evil, magical demons' heads" (41). The ferocious and awe-inspiring image of Kritya is also evoked in Devi’s psyche. Devi says:

I read about a Kritya a ferocious woman who haunts and destroys the house in which women are insulted. She burns with anger, she spits fire. She sets the world ablaze like Kali shouting in hunger. Each age has its Kritya. In the age of Kali, I read, each household shelters a Kritya. (TFN, 69).

Thus the old and the outworn order have to be destroyed by giving place to a new one. Among the many religions of the world, Hinduism alone worships the Universal spirit as a female. In no other culture, the female principle is accepted as the Universal power capable of granting liberation to human beings or as the omnipotent power. Only in India, Kali (the Hindu Goddess) is accepted as a creator, preserver and destroyer
of the world. A portion of Sama Veda, called Kena Upanishad, describes Devi another Hindu Goddess, as Uma, the Universal spirit, the most beautiful and golden hued who, instructs Indra on spiritual wisdom. India which declares that the Universal spirit is capable of assuming any form, naturally accepts the female form too as an expression of divine. The worship of Shakti has been in vogue in India right from the Vedic times. The Worship of the Ultimate principle as female is found in all regional literature.

In this novel, Githa Hariharan has skillfully used the orchestration of innumerable stories besides those of Sita and Devi. Many stories are narrated by the grandmother, Devi’s father-in-law Baba and Mayamma to Devi. Devi has been fed on these myths. Later on, she begins to find parallels in myths and lives of those around her. On reading the story of Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, Devi is reminded of her parents and questions the blind idealism of women and the unfairness of men. The grandmother tries to convince her: "All husbands are noble, Devi. Even the blind and the deaf ones" (TFN, 29). She tells her that Gandhari was another wilful, proud woman. She adds: "She embraced her destiny blind husband, with self-sacrifice worthy of royal blood" (TFN, 29). Devi sees the parallel between the myths of Gandhari and the life of her mother who sacrificed all her ambitions at the altar of her marriage. Somehow she feels her mother's self effacement and sacrifice are meaningless. She expresses her anger through these words: "Gandhari's anger, wrapped tightly round her head in a life-long blindfold, burnt in a heart close, very close to mine"(29). She further confesses: "The lesson that was more difficult to digest was human anger, that it could seep into every bit of a womanly body and become the very bloodstream of her life" (29). As a writer
of Indian English literature, Githa Hariharan uses literature as a medium to express her views on society and modern women’s views on their life. TFN is the commemoration of Indian mythology in modern aspects.

Devi’s father-in-law, Baba’s stories remind Devi of her grandmother's but they are different. Devi recalls all the stories that she heard in childhood days and connects it with the situations in her life. She has heard stories related to women's sufferings and their devotion to their husbands. Further, she says:

His stories are never flabby with ambiguity, or even fantasy; a little magic perhaps, but nothing beyond the strictly functional. They always have for their centre-point an exacting touchstone for a woman, a wife.

(TFN, 51).

The above lines clearly explain Devi’s view. After her marriage, Devi spends time in listening to her father-in-law, Baba. He narrates stories from his real experience and stories that he heard, which highlights the patriarch pattern. He narrates Jayadeva, Purandara Dasa, Githa Govinda and Thyagaraja’s life incidents to represent woman as a dutiful wife. Hence the readers come to know this through the line as shown:

“The path of a woman must
be walk to reach heaven
by serving her husband, she
is honoured in the heavens” (55)
According to the above quote, he starts to narrate different stories to Devi. Devi compares her Grandmother’s stories to Baba’s stories. Finally, she is impressed more by Grandma’s stories as a woman.

Purandara Dasa, the saintly composer of Karnataka was wealthy tradesman who deals with precious stone. One day a Brahmin comes to him and request for money to conduct his son’s upanayanam (a Hindu ceremony that marks formal initiation into Brahminhood). Dasa keeps putting him off. Finally, he comes to Saraswathi Bai, Dasa’s wife. Without a second thought, she removes her nose ring and presents it to the Brahmin. The Brahmin takes this jewel to Dasa and keeps it as a security to attain the loan. By looking at the jewel, Dasa recognizes it as his wife’s. He confrontes her about it. Not knowing that to do, Saraswathi Bai decides to take her life. As she is about to consume poison, she see replica of her old nose ring in the bottom of her cup. Both Dasa and Saraswathi are astonished understanding that God worked in mysterious ways. He gives away his property and resolve to lead a simple, austere life. Through this story, Baba conveys his belief that only a common who is submissive and devoted to her husband will be blessed by God.

The other story is about Muthuswamy Dikshitar. He is married to a dark but good woman. When he still shows no interest in worldly pleasures, his parents again find a beautiful, fair girl and gets him married. Dikshitar accepts them both and all of them go to Benares. A few years later, the fair wife desires for jewels. The disciples of Dikshitar suggests him to meet the king of Thanjavur, a patron of arts. At that time, he sees his wife and sings mildly the music, “Hiramanyim lakshmim sada bhajam.....”
He admires her beauty and fells the unimportance of wealth. That night, Ambika, the deity appears in the dream of his fair wife and blesses her. Astonished with the dumb found divine beauty of the Goddess, all the desires for the jewels vanishes from the lady.

Baba further narrates a story of a great man who could see the spiritual greatness of his wife. While writing Gita Govinda, Jayadeva passionately composes a few lines addressing Radha, as follows:

\[ \text{Smara garala khandanam mama sirasi mandanam} \]
\[ \text{dehi pada pallava mudaram ............ (65)} \]

Jayadeva leaves the manuscript to Padmavati, his wife and he goes for an an oil bath. Lord Krishna come is disguise, as Jayadeva and gets the manuscript and restores the lines, when Jayadeva sees this, he falls at the feet of his wife, as she has the fortune of seeing Lord Krishna.

Yet another story of Narayana Tirtha who believed to be the incarnation of Jayadeva once swims across the stream to see his father-in-law. He plucks a hair from his head and recites the mantra to become sanyasi (sage). When he does that, the storms become calm and he reaches the shore safely. When his wife realises this, she scarifies her life with selfless devotion and Narayana becomes sanyasi according to traditional rites.

Religious symbols remind a devotee of God. A devote recognises another with their help. The \textit{rudraksha} symbolises Lord Shiva. The crystal stands for \textit{Nirguna}
Brahman. The basil beads are dear to Lord Vishnu. Symbols have also philosophical importance. Holy ash and holy dust remind man of the transience of life and it teaches the lesson to mankind that rich and poor alike will be reduced to a handful of ashes at the end after death. Man therefore is advised to perform meritorious deeds post haste. Other objects are meant to keep man healthy. Sandal paste cools the body. A special type of mud called Gopichandana also cools the body when applied. Kumkum (turmeric and alum) reminds devotees of Devi, and heals infections and wounds. It also stimulates the nerve centres situated between eyebrows. Turmeric is an insecticide and a disinfectant. The uniform worn by a soldier makes him trim and inspires him; so do religious symbols worn by devotees. Baba insists that non-violence, truthfulness, honesty, purity and control of the sense is, in brief, in the dharma of all the four castes. One could take the wife's flame of dharma, to light within a man, the divine lamp that is rusting with neglect. When Narayana Tirtha, believed to be an incarnation of Jayadeva, was swimming across the stream to visit houses of his father-in-law, a sudden current swept him into deep, turbulent waters. He threw away his sacred thread, plucked off his lead and recited the Mantra that would make him a Sanysai. But current began to subside, and Narayana was swept ashore alive. He was in a dilemma. But he, as in the case of all great men, was blessed with an ideal wife. When she saw her silent husband, she saw through the tempting lie he was turning over in his mind. She saw the luminous halo around his head, now shorn of that one hair that had kept him a householder.
Baba always imposes his that a virtuous wife has to be devoted to her husband. Only then only she will die before her husband, as a *sumangali* with *vermilion* on her forehead, her arms and neck still ornamented with bangles and gold chains which women consider to be very important for their life. Great men earn, through their spiritual power, the fortune of a virtuous wife. The saintly Syaama Sastri's wife died five days before he did. Thyagaraja's second wife made even more certain of her passport to virtuous wifehood. The day she was to die, she held a *sumangali prarthana*; twelve married women sat down to a sumptuous feast she had cooked with her own hands. At the end of the feast, Thyagaraja's wife presented to each of them tokens of their status-six glass bangles, green for fertility, *kumkum*, turmeric, two betel leaves and betel nuts, a little mirror, a comb and a small sandalwood box full of red *kumkum* that was mixed with gold dust. Equipped with the women's blessings, she streaked her forehead and the parting of her hair with a glorious, luminous *kumkum*; then she laid down gracefully, a whole, fulfilled woman and died. Thyagaraja looked upon her immobile, tranquil face and sang the bitter harvest of the sins he committed in earlier births. After his wife's death, he appealed to Rama to take him too. Ten months later, he breathed his last, with the name of Rama on his dying lips. Baba sums up his illustrative stories with an ambitious conclusion that he believes in deeply. By public confessions, repentances, penances, repetition of holy mantras and by gifts, the sinner is released from sin. That which is hard to get over, hard to get, hard to reach, hard to do can be accomplished by penance: it is difficult of overcome penance. Baba's stories of saints and their wives uphold the traditional Hindu concept of Dharma: "The path a
woman must be walk to reach heaven by serving her husband; she is honoured in the heavens” (55). Baba emerges as the voice of Manu, the great Hindu law giver, and the founder of Hindu patriarchy. In his interpretations, women are instruments of men's initiation into bhakti, but have no salvation of their own to seek. Devi is led into the intricacies of the Hindu traditional thought and philosophy through Baba's stories. She has now a complete vision of the entire discourse. Devi is now equipped to arrive at her own positions and interpretations and to make choices of her own.

The Bhagawad Githa, a sacred Hindu Scripture, taken from the great epic The Mahabharatha is in the form of a conversation between Lord Krishna and his friend and cousin Arjuna on the battlefield, during the Kurukshetra war. It is praised by people all over the world and looked upon as a guide to Hindu theology as well as a practical guide to life. The Bhagawad Githa, also called as The Githa Upanishad, is considered on a par with Upanishads, by the Hindus. The Bhagawad Githa (10/34) lists the female virtues as Fame, Fortune, Memory, Intelligence, Constancy and Forbearance. According to Sri Krishna, these are the qualities of women. Even if they are found in men, the above virtues mentioned explain us as follows: Fame is described as the quality of feminine because the entire family follows the example of the mother. The gestures, habits, expressions and pronunciation of the child are governed by its mother. Therefore, women set the trend at home and in the society. Fortune is not mere money but talents and assets put to proper use for the good of society and for quietening the mind and heightening the sense of beauty. This quality is called Shri or fortune, a feminine tendency. A woman’s voice should be sweet,
truthful, powerful, incisive and persuasive. It will console a crying child and control an earring husband. Generally, women do have a greater power for remembering what they have heard. Shri Krishna describes it as a special gift for women. Woman’s intelligence has the gift of intuition to understand the truth of things. They have the capacity to endure suffering, as exemplified by Sita, Nalayini and Damayanti. They also have the unique quality of condoning the offences of others. The earth itself is a great example of the capacity to pardon. In *The Ramayana*, Hanuman has been a witness to demons threatening Sita. He vows to take revenge on them. After Ravana was destroyed, Shri Rama dispatches Hanuman to inform Sita. Worshipping Sita, Hanuman seeks her permission to punish the demon for the past misdeeds. But Sita, the great paragon would not hear of it. She says: “Na kaschit na aparadhyati”. It means the gospel of forbearance. Sometimes Devi thinks of herself, like the Hindu goddess Durga, the most beautiful manifestation of moral and spiritual power, whom even Siva, the God of Destruction respects. But Mahesh, another name of Siva, destroys the very spirit of Devi. Both Mahesh and Gopal lose Devi because they could not perceive her soul. In fact the act of returning to her mother Sita is her final withdrawal from the male dominating world. Hariharan tries to relate Devi’s character to the consequences of the many mythological stories told to her in her childhood days by her grandmother. All such stories run one after the other in this novel.

The characters Sita and Devi of this novel are very much of the mythological characters Sita and Devi. Sita of the novel is very firm in character and stops at nothing which comes on her way. Devi, who carries the name of that great Goddess,
who vanquished the demons like were flies. The only time when Githa Hariharan's Devi exhibits her firmness is once when she had a senseless relationships with Dan a friend of Devi in US and then with the neighbour Gopal. Both relationships are doomed to be nothing other than temporary answers to the dilemma which Devi faces in her life, the dilemma of not knowing what to do with it.

Devi is not a passive acceptor of what life could offer. She has an in built sense of revolt, a trait which she inherits from her father. Her grandmother's stories have a profound influence on her mind. She does not accept her grandmother's versions of Amba, Gandhari and Damayanti, the Puranic women. In fact, she transforms herself into an active participant, viewing them as a source of over-rich, and unadulterated nourishment. The stories fill her mental canvas and act as a tool of empowerment. Though she does not fully agree with her grandmother's stories, she feels desolate when her grandmother dies. The moment the mythical nourishment is deprived, her life becomes traumatic ever after. She realizes that she has become a psychological destitute. Her attempts to date with Dan, to establish a home at Jaracanda, her elopement with Gopal and her final union with her mother can be seen as frantic attempts of an alienated woman trying to seek a haven for shelter and security. The security that she longs for is psychological. She is more concerned with the emotional rapport that is established between a man and a woman. The moment she realizes that her husband is not designed to nurture her inner life, she floats on clouds of alienation.

Devi fails to envisage marriage as a life-long bond which needs love as an adhesive to both strength and ensure a life-long commitment to each other. Devi's
inbuilt sense of independence and her stay abroad make her inept for a traditional Indian marriage. She mentions: "A marriage cannot be forced into suddenly being there, it must grow gradually, like a delicate but promising sapling" (TFN, 49). Therefore, she enters marriage with doubts, regret and a sense of unhappiness. Devi is not moulded for an arranged marriage according to her own culture. At the same time, she lacks the courage to boldly opt for a man of her own choice. She is sure of the fact that her marriage with Mahesh might not provide the type of intellectual companionship that she expects. Therefore, even after a month of their marriage, Mahesh still seems an alien to her. He also fails to read his wife’s mind.

Githa Hariharan no longer remains satisfied with woman's passive role as woman and wife and hence expresses her angry protest. She erodes the age old wisdom contained in sayings, proverbs, stories, myths and beliefs. She expresses her anger through the mode of satire, irony and sarcasm. Her vision encompasses the whole history of woman's role and edifies the emergence of a new woman who is true to her own self. Thus, Githa Hariharan uses the mythical characters in her novel. The twentieth century is essentially an age of unrest, doubts, turmoil and the cradle of a number of complexes. The sociological, psychological and intellectual climates of the present times have undergone a thorough transformation. Time tested beliefs are scrutinized under the microscope. The Indian Epics, Vedas and Puranas envisage marriage not as a mere social instrument, but as a moral weapon to both stabilize and elevate the moral stature of an individual. But unfortunately, it is an irony of fate that in a post-modernistic world such esteemed institutions are currently subject to doubt, cynicism and erosion.
Githa Hariharan in *The Thousand Faces of Night* relates the alienation of a modern Indian girl of today to her mythical heritage. Hariharan emphasises the continuing of age old myths and lures which represent the role of women and models remain entrenched in the Indian woman's psyche. She makes use of myth in the novel and creates a new vision with the dynamic power of her women characters. Another specific feature of India is that there are many religions and linguistic variations but all people live in harmony. From this land, the rest of the world learns unity in diversity. Indians learnt the art of living from Vedas, scriptures and ancestors lives. The invisible energies of the ancient goddesses Devi, Kali and Saraswati, as well as genetic inheritance from all women who lived in the past ages, and experimental wisdom of her own contemporaries contribute to the eventual psycho spiritual growth of Githa Hariharan’s protagonists. The emergence of a woman as a self-creating, self-protecting and self-perpetrating incarnation of the female principle constitutes a re-affirmation of an ancient female eschatology. Devi is worshipped as the supreme deity. Devi's final assertion of her autonomy is thus the celebration of the power of the Divine Devi and that of the entire community of women. One of the most moving of the several mythological stories which the novel contains are part of Devi's cultural and psychological survival.

Hariharan's re-visionist myth-making thus creates a new sacred space within the old discourse, in which women can review life and experience, from gynocentric perspectives, and recreate in words a world wherein they could willingly bear the responsibility of their own survival. Women are no longer vehicles towards somebody
else's ends, nor are they adventures on other people's quests but questers seeking their own salvation. Githa Hariharan is a new voice which cannot remain stifled or silent anymore. The novel pierces quite deep, destroying age-old wisdom, dismantling old myths and heralding a new dawn.

Traditionally, Indian women have been treated as marginalized figures. They are represented as spineless wooden creatures, subjected to male domination. The laws of *Manu* dictated the position of women in the family and society. The position of woman is always reflected in the novels written by Indian woman writers in English. They capture the intricacies of the problems of woman caught between the two worlds of tradition and modernity. Mostly, they deal with women’s sufferings and their pathetic plight under male domination.

Hariharan’s novel highlights the agony of existence of women in the hostile and male dominated society that is not only conservative but also taboo ridden. Hariharan takes up the theme of women’s sufferings in the families and the emotions, pains and anguishes are being caught in the traditional role. She examines the intricacies of the subtle emotions of women. The ordeal she faces throughout her life becomes the material for the great saga on women. She portrays the battles of women against the age old traditional repressions and also indicates the inner strength of women characters in such confrontation with the traditional norms assigned by the society. She shows how her women characters establish themselves in the male dominated society.
Githa Hariharan has been acknowledged as an outstanding writer. Her fiction is wonderful with full of subtleties, humour and tenderness. The novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* conceals nothing. It is an outspoken book dealing with the problems faced by women both before and after marriage. In Hariharan's work, the old stories undergo subtle and gradual transmutations through narration as they are passed on from one generation to the other. Grandma and Baba, both narrators are engaged in an act of re-writing and re-vision and every narration marks a difference with the earlier version. Re-visionist myth-making thus becomes an act of perpetual remaking and insistent interrogation of the received tradition, affecting a constant renewal of culture. Furthermore, one can locate in Hariharan's work as a thread of re-visionist myth-making as a means to heal the wounds of one's soul, as a process of net-working among the women, the women of different ages and generations and an attempt at renewing the whole community of women through the re-presentation of myths. Therefore, Githa Hariharan clearly presents the characters that are much related to the mythical characters. Her vision about myths is to help the women to understand their lives and face all the sufferings confidently. With the help of mythical stories, the women characters in the novel mould their lives and learn to struggle. Their mind and body become stronger to face anything and to learn through their experience in their lives. Thus Hariharan proves the strength and bravery gained in the women characters through their knowledge of mythical stories.

Githa Hariharan in her short story collection *The Art of Dying and other short stories (1993)* has intertwined an enormous weight of tradition that still continues to
bear down on society as a source silence and inner ferment. There are still pressures of cultural politics in the form of dominance of gender ideology in the literary market place, which forces women writers to conform to traditional female roles instead of achieving the liberation of the spirit that is the imaginative writer’s right. The main text of TAD, seems to run smoothly, well within the orthodox order, as of upholding the traditional power equations, but very subtly she teaches us to feel the simmering ferment just below the surface. The stories that often follow begin with the death of a mother, a grandmother or a father and seem to work their way backwards from there, into life. It is, therefore, an impressive bunch of short stories but also a somewhat intimidating one. Death in these stories also serves as a kind of negative critical function. The stories from TAD, reveal a vast gallery of human beings whose lives suddenly throw up unforeseen actions and reactions in their final moments.

The culture and tradition start from mother’s womb and it follows us. As per the law of nature, all creatures are mortal. Hindu religion believes in the cyclical reincarnation of the soul. Various epics, tales, sacred scriptures and four Vedas viewed death as a natural aspect of life. One can receive many descriptions about life after death and before birth in theologies. The ultimate goal is to transcend the need to return to life on earth. Based on one’s past thoughts and action reincarnation of the soul takes the shape and life of any creature in the world. Hinduism believes that heaven and hell exit apart from earth. According to that, the first mortal to meet fate after death is named Yama. Yama is called the judge of man. The sacred scriptures of the Rig Veda, which call him King Yama, promise that the virtuous are sent to heaven
and at the same time wicked are pushed to hell. Yama is aided by two ravenous dogs that are described as,

four-eyed keepers of the path and wide nostrils, who watch over men.
These two dogs wander among men, thirsting for the breath of life.
Yet, once they have secured their prey, they lead them back to their heavenly realm, where Yama directs them to their destiny.

(https://books.google.co.in)

It is believed that, after death, the soul takes four hours and forty minutes to reach the place of Yama. Therefore, according to Hindu belief, a dead body should not be cremated before a time has elapsed. To dispose the dead body, much more ritual cremation was designed by ancestors.

Cremation is ritually designed to dispose the body. It is intended to release the soul from its earthly existence. Hindus believe that cremation (compared to burial or outside disintegration) is more spiritually beneficial to the departed soul. This is based on the belief that if the physical body remains visible then astral body will exist. The serious cremation ceremony begins with the ritual cleansing, dressing and adorning of the body. The body is then carried by four Vedas to the cremation ground with prayers chanted to Yama, invoking his aid. The dead, now, is an offering to Agni, the fire. Here, as in the most ancient Vedic times, the fire conveys the offering to heaven. After the corpse is almost completely burnt, the chief mourner performs the rite called kapalakriya, the ‘rite of the skull’. He uses a long bamboo stick to crack the skull to release the soul from entrapment in the body. After the cremation, the ashes are
thrown into the river, ideally the Ganges River, and the mourners walk away without looking back. After the funeral, everyone undergoes a purifying bath. The death ritual does not end with the elimination of the body. There is still the safety of the soul to look after. To ensure the passage during its voyage to the other world, an eleven day ritual called *shraddha* is performed. It consists of daily offerings of rice balls, called *pindas*, which provide a symbolic, transitional body for the dead. During these days, the dead person makes the journey to the heaven, or the world of the ancestors or the 'far shore. On the twelfth day, the departed soul is said to reach its destination and be joined with its ancestors, a fact expressed symbolically by joining a small *pinda* to a much larger one. Without these rites, the soul may never find its way to Yama's realm.

After the soul enters the astral world it is believed that one day in the astral world is equal to one year on the earth and this is the reason why people perform death anniversary. Death is a universal truth. As per the Hindu religion, when a soul gets out of a body, after twelve days it gets relieved from that birth and enters into another unborn body. The cycle of birth and death has always been a topic of interest to everyone. On the other hand, this is a hypothetical one. Going by the law of physical that “Energy can neither be created nor destroyed. It can only be transformed”, soul is also an energy which can never be destroyed but will always be here on this earth and will keep changing its form. As human body is made of five matters, it will decompose like other things in the world.

Githa Hariharan’s *The Remains of the Feast* is taken from her collection, *The Art of Dying and Other Short Stories*. *The Remains of the Feast* tells a double
narrative, one focusing on the revolting body and the other one on the object, and they constitute ambivalent messages in terms of female subjectivity. In this story ninety year old woman, Rukmini who is nearing the end of her life suddenly bursts out with the urge to sample all the food she has been forbidden to her as a widow and Brahmin such as, so far. When she is dying of cancer, a new life bursts forth in a hitherto controlled appetite that declares its scandalous self. She desires to eat everything that has been denied because she is a widow, she demand for eatables like cake with eggs from the Christian shop with a Muslim cook, coca-cola laced with the delicious delight that it might be alcoholic, bhel-puri from the fly-infested bazaar and at the end she wishes to wear silk sari of bridal red. Years of deprivation pale into insignificance against the grandeur of this feast in which the flesh reasserts its primal authority.

Rukumini suddenly revolts against Brahmin culture by violating a food taboo. Her great granddaughter Ratna narrates all the details of the blissful moment when Rukumini deliberately deviates from the taboo and experiences the “Forbidden Fruit”. It is singularly easy to forget that the feminist salience of the story is based on the fact that its protagonist is not just a Hindu widow but a Brahmin widow. Rukumini’s upper-caste status comes into play in a variety of ways. The desires and appetites that drive the plot are structured by the proscriptions that govern a Brahmin widow's life. In this story, old great grandma’s predictable hungers are updated to include others excited by the more modern ideas. The Brahmin tradition of purity which includes food diet and dress for widowhood has often been overlooked and has never been considered abuse of any sort. The family is exemplary in its modernity. This Brahmin family in
this story practices nothing that can be called serious discrimination based on caste or gender. This lifestyle has always been seen as a source of internal peace and has called a path to true happiness. The prescriptions of the government law are not forced onto the widow; rather, her traditional life in the household signifies the scope of an Indian modernity that can accommodate tradition without compromising its humanism. When the old woman is about to die, they call the doctor and not the priest. Rukumini’s great granddaughter Ratna herself is a medical student. In this story one can see a close fit between tradition and modernity and Brahminism and secularism that they signal a natural continuity in the new and altogether persuasive frame that the narration sets up.

Yet one wonders at the title of the collection. If there were such a thing as the ‘art’ of dying, Githa Hariharan’s uncompromisingly rational stance and her honesty do not allow her to play with ‘altered states of being’ which are said to give the individual a degree of control over his own death, suicide and euthanasia. So most of her original and yet recognisable characters in these twenty stories tumble with a clumsy predictability from a precipice of isolation, with the reader scrambling down a parallel slope of often jagged prose, nearsightedly trying to trace the parabola of descent. The story The Art of Dying is yet another story which deals with a dying woman. The daughter of the dying woman is the narrator. The story moves between the past and present. When the mother, a widow hears the death news of her son, her immediate depression leads to death. The confession of the dying woman expresses her guilt. She feels that she is not able to die along with her son. The grief of the
parents when their children die is inexplicable. Githa Hariharan brings out the sufferings of death bed through this character. The recap of their own life appears before their death. The physical sufferings and psychological memories mingled in her mind makes them too longing for their life again at the end. The two short stories *The Remains of the Feast* and *The Art of Dying* stand out highlighting the human behaviour. While the dying suffer emotional suppression, the living prefer to take the back seat with reference to their emotions and do everything, of course, in a mechanical manner.

The more delicate psychologist, Freudian effect is created in the story *Forefather*. Here, a daughter and a son waiting for their father’s death. His body has been paralysed but the mind still demands domination. He cannot forget that he is the lord of all that he surveys and his daughter is a mere automated menials who can be summoned and dismissed at the ring of his bell. She is so curious to know about her father’s death. Hence, she asks a crow, her oracle, to tell her how long the cunning tyrant of her father could continue to make her play the nursemaid. She believes that when she flings a stone at the crow and if it hits it her, father would die next week. A second attempt means a delay of a month, but if the bird flies away it would mean another six months of helplessness. This is a superstitious belief followed through the oral tradition. In another point of view, it shows how the daughter treats the paralysed father as a burden.

According to Indian tradition and family system, children have to take care of parents in their old age. Mother and father are placed before God according to Hindu mythology. In this story *Forefather*, superstitious belief makes one to forget reality.
The two scientific disciplines, sociology and psychology, examine why people have superstitious belief. The dictionary says that superstition is a belief on some supernatural things which may exist or may not exist. In India many people believe in powers which are not seen and try out so many things to overcome the bad sins, but that kind of belief are outdated in the modern trend. According to the Anthropologists, superstitious belief is a form of folklore, because it is a collection of tradition and wit in culture. It is being passed from one generation to another through oral. It is sure that superstitious beliefs arose in pre-scientific societies. Most of the educated think that superstitions are classified roughly as religious, cultural and personal. Human mind has great power. Buddha says: “The mind is everything. What you think, you become.”

All superstitious beliefs are just a belief and vary from person to person. Beliefs become notions at first, then become opinions, and slowly begin to prevail in the society. It is hard to remove one from superstitious beliefs, because, over a period of time, they are rooted firmly in the Indian society. They have made a place for themselves in all walks of life, including politics and sports. Science is the knowledge of the physical world and its phenomenon, which depends on testing facts and systematic experimentations. People were like slaves to the age old customs. Supernatural power and superhuman power were respected with awe and wonder. The best example is seen in the poem Night of the Scorpion by Nissim Ezekiel about superstitious belief with Indian rural background. It is the most popular and often anthologized poem with striking and brilliant simplicity, which stands as a unique example of Indianness.
It captures the character of the Indians present with their native simplicity, superstition or simple faith and genuine human concerns. This is an interesting and very valid poem containing a fascinating tension between personal crises and mocking social observation, but the discrepancies of form confuse the tone which swings between the natural and colloquial reporting of experience and removed literary formality. The poet expresses his own experience in this poem when he was a boy. Once when his mother was stung by a scorpion the illiterate village folk try to console the mother they said as follow:

May the sins of your previous birth

Be burned away tonight, they said.

May your suffering decrease

The misfortunes of your next birth, they said.

May the sum of all evil

Balanced in this unreal world. (19-25)

The above poetic lines show how the villagers sincerely prayed that the scorpion will stop all the sins of her previous birth and it will wash away that night, or her sufferings might decrease the misfortunes of her in the next birth. They said the sums of evil might get balanced in this unreal world. They called the world unreal as everything in this world is temporary, and births and deaths keep occurring in a cycle. They even prayed to god that the poison purifies her flesh. They sat around the mother groaning in pain. The priest was also performing his rites to tame the poison. Finally, after
twenty hours, the sting was lost. It is a great poem which tells about the reality of Indian culture, and how the people believe in everything and try to recover themselves from troubles. One can find that in this poem, superstitious ritualism or sceptic rationalism or even the balance of both with expression of Indian ethos through maternal love in the Indian way, is nothing but scratching the surface. Our thinking power gets paralyzed under the influence of unknown fear of superstitious belief. Ignorant people believe in unseen things. At times even educated people do the same thing. One has to analyse only then he or she free from unnecessary superstitious beliefs which was acquired during the evolution of dark ages and it is for enlightenment. Education is enlightened by physical and mental training.

The functional part and the passive part of the myth and superstitious are analyzed in detail in this chapter with special reference to mythological fiction TFN and TAD. Some theorists believe that myth is such a necessary part of the human psyche that everyone needs myth in their lives to lead a normal functional existence. Recent theorists have argued, for example, that humans are genetically programmed to think in story form: stories, they say, are how one can best remember the important events in his or her own lives, how one can interpret the meaning in the lives of those who are around them, and how one can best remember the world events. Myth is a psychological term defined as part truth and part fiction. According to mythic or story-oriented psychologists, almost every element of what one says, does and believes is to a greater or lesser degree mythic. For example, when five people watch an event try to describe it, there will be five different versions narrated there will certainly be a thin layer of
difference in each version. They are different, not because people necessarily lie or change reality, but rather because people see reality slightly different manner. Each one sees it through a slightly different filter, much like in the parable of the four blind men trying to describe an elephant. Thus one see part of reality and fills the rest with his or her own assumptions, expectations, needs, wants, pasts, presents, futures and desires. This as theorists point out, is precisely the meaning of myth: one mythologizes his or her own life, make stories out of them that fit the understanding of reality. This is how the minds work, and also, one get attracted to such stories when it makes sense. Moreover, there are any people who derive great pleasure by listening to various kinds of myths. Myth and story oriented psychologists say that whether one makes his or her own myths or enjoy others, ancient or new, the important threads of one’s constructed self of life’s mythic. The most common belief about the psychological value of myth is that myths represent different elements of one’s own psyches or souls. Even ancient writers were engaged in this type of interpretation. Roman goddess Venus (Greek Aphrodite), for example, is perhaps the best known symbol: she represents love, especially in its romantic and sometimes erotic aspects. Mars represents war, aggression and assertion; wing-footed Mercury, messenger of the gods, represents messages; Hera, represent the home and hearth etc. According to Albert Einstein, the theory of special relativity determined that the laws of physics are the same for all non-accelerating observers, and he showed that the speed of light within a vacuum is the same, no matter the speed at which an observer travels. As a result, he found that space and time were interwoven into a single continuum known
as space-time. Events that occur at the same time for one observer could occur at different
times for another. A man looks at the world through his eyes, his own prejudices. His
skills, tendencies, desires, likes, dislikes, limits of his intelligence, *karma vasanas
and samskararas* decide how and what he will see. This is the Hindu concept of
subjectivity. Modern science is also coming round to accept this. The objective world
will not decide whether an object is good or bad; each individual will decide that for
himself. Undoubtedly, myths, legends, folk tales and stories are passed on from
generation to generation only through the word of mouth which is very common in
India. Along with this, superstitious beliefs also constitute to be a major part of one’s
life. A myth reflects a religious or a nationalistic belief. Superstitions represent an
illogical and unfounded belief. It stands still in apprehension or awe. According to the
writer Raymond Lamont Brown, superstation is a belief or system of belief, by which
almost religious veneration is attached to things mostly secular; a parody of religious
faith in which there is belief in an occult or magic connection.

This chapter has explored the fusion among myth, tradition and superstitions
with special reference to mythological fiction TFN and TAD. Different meanings
were observed from a historical and critical perspective. In the final analysis, literature
aims at humanizing a person. No society could survive unless its human elements are
good and strong. Myths and legends are the age-old treasures of India. They are found
in other parts of the world also. They speak of some external truth and virtues. Githa
Hariharan’s new voice cannot remain stifled or silent anymore. The novels pierce
quite deep, destroying age old wisdom, dismantling old myths and heralding a new
dawn. There is no necessary co-relation between the existence of a powerful feminine imagery in Hindu religious tradition and an elevated status of women. Hindu women have suffered at the hands of societal attitudes. Some trace this oppression to fear their dual powers of benevolent fertility and malevolent aggression. In India, social reform has to be preached by showing the past. In fact, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* are the two encyclopaedias of the ancient Aryan life and wisdom, portraying an ideal civilization where humanity has yet to aspire after. Some beliefs and superstitions are actually not blind but experiences of people. Before follow these belief one have to find out scientific reasons.

Next chapter sums up the analysis of various aspects mentioned in the previous chapters.