

Fearlessness of women in Githa Hariharan's *When Dreams Travel*

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Paper Received on 18-03-2026, Accepted on 27-04-2026
Published on 30-04-26; DOI:10.36993/RJOE.2025.11.01.310

Abstract

India is a country renowned for its diverseness and multifoldedness same could be stated for Indian writing in English also. Githa Hariharan is one of those Indian writers who is famous for her experimental writings like *When Dreams Travel*. This novel is a retelling and rewriting of the thousand nights or the Arabian nights. This work intends to study the fearlessness of two sisters Dunyazad and Shahrzad and their survival strategy, how they became the heroine for the women of Shahabad. Hariharan's women characters are renowned for their fearlessness and bravery acts. Their surviving strategy and fearlessness made them revengeful and independent women. This novel represents those women who have played the roles of a savior for themselves, their father and for the other girls and women of Shahabad, these women are introduced to modern women to make them aware about why and how women are always being remembered. The novel is a blend of myth and mystic with multiples of narrating voices this novel of Hariharan proves Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest.

Keywords: Fearlessness, survivor, Patriarchy, Subjugation

Introduction

Githa Hariharan's writings are always centered on the life and sufferings of women who belong to different sections of Indian society. Through her works she has portrayed thousands of roles Indian women are supposed to perform on daily basis in their surrounding and society. She portrays diverse images and roles of women in a patriarchal society for instance they are calm, dedicated, traumatized, ambitious, fearless. survival is the greatest question for the women of India that's why Hariharan has portrayed in her work when dreams travel the question of

survival as the major theme. it's a survival story of two sisters Shahrzad and Dunyazad, the narrative is about Shahrzad's fight back from her situation of do or die to her transformation as a savior not only for her sister Dunyazad but for the entire Shahabad, she holds the life and destiny of the women of entire region in her tongue. She had that spirit of martyrs within her soul who can sacrifice their life for the survival of others she transformed herself as a great storyteller because that was the only way through which she can save the lives of everyone from the execution. Hariharan has discussed about survival and the survival tricks and techniques as the basic essentials for the survivors, in Hariharan's perspective one crucial aspect of survival is the self-liberation through which women can help themselves come out of their helpless situation another crucial way of survival is female bonding, it's the most powerful mechanism for both survival and protest against patriarchal domination. The bond between shahrzad and dunyazad highlights the greater recognition of the role of female bonding in challenging existing social structure and promoting gender equality. the depiction of female bonding in when dreams Travel plays a significant role in enabling the protagonist oppression and challenge the traditional notions of female powerlessness, the novel proves that female bonding can be an effective means of mounting protest against patriarchal domination, the increasing understanding between the sisters enabled them to cope with the frightening and lethal atmosphere of Shahabad.

The word survival reminds us of one great Victorian writer Charles Darwin who has given the theory of survival in his worldwide famous book on the origin of species published in 1850. In this book he has discussed about the survival trick and techniques used by the survivor. By this theory he says that an individual less suited to the environment are less likely to survive and less likely to reproduce, individuals more suited to the environment are more likely to survive and more likely to reproduce and leave their heritable traits to future generations, which produces the process of natural selection. In his book he has talked about the survival of the fittest the phrase that originated from Darwinian evolutionary theory is a way of describing the mechanism of natural selection, the biological concept of fitness is defined as a reproductive success. However, if we apply the same theory on shahrzad's suffering and struggle, in order to save her life and other women's life of Shahabad from the clutches of sultan Shahryar she dreamed and used those dreams as a weapon for her survival, here the one who can dream is the fittest. Shahrzad prepared herself to dream endlessly she sacrificed her days and nights so that she could equip herself to defeat sultan Shahryar by her storytelling technique. Finally, it took a thousand and

one night to accomplish the task. But the path which she had chosen was not a bed of roses but a bed with an ancient, blood-dripping sword. shahrzad played pivotal role in the lives of Samarkand's virgin, shahrzad and her sister Dunyazad were welcomed by the souls of thousand brides who died in that palace when both the sisters started their dangerous journey towards the palace. now the duty of shahrzad is to talk for herself, her life with confidence.

The novel is not only concerned with the subjects like women empowerment, quest for identity, and women sufferings but additionally Hariharan has expressed the character's inner thoughts, mental psyche and their fearlessness. The characters created by the writer are not emotional, sensible and submissive women characters, these women protagonists are different from general representation of women in her novels both sisters in *When Dreams Travel* are courageous, ambitious and well trained for their survival these women are aware about their identity who they are and what they are mend to do. They are not bewildered and feel dilemma about their position, identity and ability for surviving they are portrayed as brave, Independent and as an individual who has to stand alone for her survival and later on for her entire community. They became voice of the entire women community they became the predecessors of new women of Shahabad. Githa Hariharan herself depicts contradiction in depicting the modern images of women. she also depicts the present status of women and demands for equality through her women. In *when dreams travel* Hariharan paid more attention on the life and dreams of women for that she turns to myth that contains chaste, self-effacing women as well as more ambiguous figure of woman who offers the resistance of the ideal model, her female characters battle for self-identity in a male dominated society. traditionally women protagonists are not portrayed in literature as a rebellious being against their counterparts they have been always portrayed as Sita – Savitri who were submissive, innocent, delicate, soft, and undesirous. In contrary Hariharan has depicted some of the difficult and challenging women characters who are fighting silently against the traditional portrayal of females in Indian literature. Her female characters Shahrzad and Dunyazad in *when dreams travel* took their rebel against that conditioning ideology of the patriarchal culture and tradition of Shahabad, Hariharan had explored and depicted the pathetic condition of the female existence in patriarchy, her pain and anxiety, her struggle for survival desire, choice, freedom or private space and identity. the sultan in *When dreams travel* sees women in traditional roles as a sexual object or as an entertaining thing apart from this they are also supposed to play other roles of women such as submissive, and fidelity but that is not ultimate the major characters reject such

position and definition given by their male dominating culture and society, these women have defined themselves not on the basis of their sexuality but on the basis of their intellectuality and individuality. Hariharan is more focused on the individuality of her female characters her women are aware of their identity, individuality and personality as a woman, they evolved and transformed themselves. Shahrzad and Dunyazad the heroines are an exemplary image created by Hariharan, despite being mythological characters they are capable of teaching the skill of survival to modern women how to cope with their traumatizing situation as they have overcome from their fear of being executed by sultan for thousands of nights they saved not only themselves but their father wazir of sultan and the entire females of Shahabad from sultan's old blood dripping sword.

Conclusion

This novel of Githa Hariharan *When Dreams Travel* is a narrative or a replica of those women who struggle to manage threatening forces without destroying herself and others. The females portrayed in this novel are powerful, capable, and daring to dream for themselves, Shahrzad dared to dream not only for herself but for the women of entire Shahabad, through her dreams she became the savior or the martyr for the Shahabad's women. The novel is a good blend of despair, hope, memories, dreams, reality, identity, freedom, life and death. Dreams play a significant role in this narrative it was the dream of shahrzad which saved her for the thousand and one night from Shahryar's sword, it was her dream which putted an end on the brutal death of the virgin girls of Shahabad. As a writer Hariharan has never judged male or female on the basis of their gender and the role they are supposed to play in the society.

However, Hariharan putted more emphasis on the miserable situation of women in a patriarchal society the suffering of Shahrzad and the scenario of the Shahabad is a symbolism of the suppressed and subjugated women of Indian society. Hariharan took influences from different mythological and historical stories for showing the current situation of Indian women and their unending struggle of life. The writer depicts the emotions, pain and mental trauma of her female characters through different incidents and point of views. Hariharan's women didn't suffered submissively, they are ambitious with all their strength and willingness for fight back. They struggled hard with their problems, dealing with exploitation and suppression at every step of life sometimes with tearful eyes and sometimes with an unbeatable smile on face, they face all the challenges and obstacles society has created for them

without any question. Hariharan's female characters highlights the impacts of patriarchy on an individual's self- esteem, freedom and mental wellness.

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How to Cite this Article:

Kumari, Akanksha, and Stuti Prasad. "Fearlessness of Women in Githa Hariharan's *When Dreams Travel*." **Research Journal of English (RJOE)**, vol. 11, no. 2, 2026, Oray's Publications, pp. 305-310. DOI: 10.36993/RJOE.2025.11.01.310.