

Feminist Elements in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*

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Abstract

In literature, feminism has a multifaceted approach. It has touched almost all life paths, revealing its progressive elements in varied forms of literature, fine arts, and culture. Feminism as a phenomenon has wider ramifications, both in short stories and novels. Writings of Githa Hariharan have been studied from a feminist perspective. The present study deals with Githa Hariharan's ice-breaking book *The Thousand Faces of Night* which is a true revelation of the identity crisis Indian women have been dealt with. This chapter portrays Githa Hariharan's attempt to present the reality of the women of today's generation, and their composite portrait has their existence.

Keywords: Feminism, Patriarchy, tradition, and modernity

Literature is a vehicle of ideas and views. The progressive ideas of a fictional genius spread through their works of literature. These works later on become classic and deserve immortality. They are universally received. These fictional works attain eternity through the ages. Githa Hariharan is one among such ever-memorable celebrities. Indian women writers have tried to depict the feelings of

women effectively. Their writings genuinely examine the social relations of men and women and the progressive elements of feminist ideas. The socio-cultural these writers have brought about realities. Githa Hariharan is a name among such cherished writers.

Githa Hariharan, in her first novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), also mentioned TFN in some places and is confronted at the very outset with a question that makes the work stand out. It shows couples 'surviving' and 'existing' with each other in a social framework of marriage in Indian society. To them, marriage is a social obligation, a necessity, and therefore desirable and inevitable. However, it has nothing to do with love, sentiments, and emotions. It is all about the duties of a wife towards her husband and his family. They, in turn, have almost no duty or obligation towards her except for accommodating her in a family she is expected to serve. Githa Hariharan shows that the situation is the same for an educated modern young woman who has lived abroad all alone and for an educated or uneducated housewife of the earlier generation. The novel has a subversive method adopted in the expression and storytelling mode. In this article, an attempt has been made to highlight the feminist elements recorded by Githa Hariharan from a specific angle.

Patriarchy means 'rule of the father in a male-dominated family.' it is a social and ideological construct that considers men superior to women. Patriarchy is based on a system of power relations that are hierarchical and unequal, where men control women's production, reproduction, and sexuality. It imposes masculinity and femininity character stereotypes in society, strengthening the iniquitous power relations between men and women. Patriarchy is not constant, and gender relations which are dynamic and complex, have changed over history. Patriarchy is the 'father is the head of the family.'

Indian society is traditional and caste based. The system of patriarchy has prevailed in our community since the ancient Vedic period. The epics, 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata' also express the feeling of patriarchy through different angles. Githa Hariharan has carefully shown the Indian social system and has depicted the patriarchic system in her novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night*. Her depiction of patriarchy is based on her precise social inspection and realistic social analysis. Githa Hariharan's *A Thousand Faces of Night* is a fiction that advocates feminist ideology. The theory of feminism is based on the revolt against patriarchy prevailing in human society. Patriarchy is an essential characteristic of Indian society because the Indian social structure is deeply rooted in customs and traditions. The woman is a mirror of society, and societal expressions to be accepted as women are part and parcel of family culture. Githa Hariharan has indeed demonstrated this space search in her novel. The subordination of women is due to the patriarchal system. The logic of male theory is the base behind the sense of patriarchy. The male mind is considered superior to the

female body; therefore, in the marriage market, it does not get the same status as the male mind.

Male-dominated features also appear in the literature. Patriarchal power politics prevails in every traditional society and family system as well. Men in their marital life neglect women's priorities. In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, three women, Devi, Mayyamma, and Sita, are all in the crunch of patriarchy. Hindu men's male bias helps women see their culture through their own eyes. This is what the novelist evokes in this novel. The study of Githa Hariharan's story also shows how these differences are focused. Cultural structure in life has perpetuated patriarchy.

In India, the super cultural sense today is based on patriarchy. The caste system and patriarchy are related to these cultural standpoints. Women's progress in society is not from myth to truth but from legend to the tale, which has caused awe and terror in the community. Women today are facing many complex problems in our society. *A Thousand Faces of Night* is full of such complex issues. Devi's attempt to change old ideas into modern concepts miserably fails. Devi's character stands for the victim of cunning patriarchy. Githa Hariharan also shows the relationship between patriarchy and culture. Sita suppresses the artist in her to achieve her aim of sending her unmarried daughter to America. Thus, *A Thousand Faces of Night* is a novel example of women's sufferings in the patriarchal cultural matrix of Indian traditional society. The author gives a patriarchal instance in the novel, like Devi's grandmother pretending to listen to the other heralds. It looks like Devi; the princess, would not lose sight of her prince; finally, she would get him only, though others divert and tempt her on her way to

achieve her goal. The patriarchy in Indian society has exploited Indian women, kept them in the corner of Indian culture, and kept them in a controlled situation. The patriarchy is a rigid social system that is very complex and makes women suffer greatly. The cogitations made by Githa Hariharan are accurate, realistic, and very much fearless. Her significant works wake up against this patriarchal system and demand social justice for women. Thus the patriarchy described by Githa Hariharan is an outcome of her serious investigation into a systematic model. There has also been an attempt to explain specific features in The thoroughly Thousand Faces of Night. The most significant aspect of it is that the author has been successful in crafting the novel effectively, mainly based on feminism. Initially, the background is given regarding the rise of Githa Hariharan as a novelist. Further, the feminist approach of Githa Hariharan is correctly pinpointed. A particular focus on patriarchy and marriage

relationship in India is given from the literary and sociological perspective. Further, the four essential characters in the novel are described. The struggle between tradition and modernity is also depicted.

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