

Self-expression, Liberation, and Self-assertion in the Novels of Githa Hariharan

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Indian English Literature provided for a more in-depth examination of the Woman's Question. Women were utilised as symbols of insurrection, heroism, and ardent desires. While post-independence Indian authors writing in English condemn the old literary scene and critical tenets as absolute and outmoded, their subject concerns went well beyond Indian borders.

The novel offers a huge "feminine mystique" from Arundhati Roy to Gita Hariharan. These women novelists are conscious of their society, ideals, and ideologies, convention, as well as the power, strengths, and vulnerabilities of the woman, and they write about virtually anything under the sun. The identity, which frequently refers to the 'self,' is the inner person, for whom the notion of divided selves is more significant than the exaltation of the outer personality. A woman's identity is comprised of her humble and personal relationships, such as those of a mother, sister, daughter, wife, and soul. The issue has nothing to do with the woman's physical sex behaviour. Her search for her identity is characterised by a hysterical chain of fragmented selves. Since the development of feminist ideas, Gita Hariharan's works have primarily depicted middle-class cultural settings and survival strategies. From fictional conceptions of feminist individuality and within the structures of marriage and family, the paper follows the progression of women towards independence and the formation of an independent identity. In other words, it describes the heroine's development as measured by the extent of her independence from her family, her opposition, her subversion of beliefs and systems, and her involvement in the outside world.

Literature is a social institution that employs the medium of language through the employment of methods such as symbolism, metre, etc. literature is an expression of life and life is a social reality. Hence, mimicry of life becomes the theme of literature. The literature reflects life. Literature is an expression of Society. This indicates that the literature reflects features of society. That does not mirror the complete life. The author may describe his own life or the beginning of his life, but it would be inaccurate to suggest that he reflects the entirety

of life at a certain moment. Gita Hariharan writes extensively about the sensation of cultural diversity, identity crises, survival strategies, rootlessness, and insecurity. This research examines the depiction and significance of Cultural Diversity, Identity Crisis, and Survival Strategies in Selected Novels by Gita Hariharan.

Githa Hariharan, a prominent Indian-English novelist, is renowned for depicting Indian feminism through her fictional characters. In her writing, her environs and life in cosmopolitan cities are reflected. Her literature mimics social injustices that befall to women in India. She highlighted the significance of women by winning a court challenge and naming her child after herself instead of the father, as is customary. Thus, she champions the cause of women through her writing. Her best-known work, *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), was the first book from Eurasia to win the Commonwealth Literary Award (1993). She has since published a number of short tales and novels, including *The Art of Dying* (1993), *The Ghosts of The Master* (1994), *When Dreams Travel* (1999), *In Days of Siege* (2003), and *Fugitive Histories* (2005). (2009). She edited and translated *A Southern Harvest* into four south Indian languages.

Gita Hariharan holds a special place in contemporary Indian English literature. She has written five significant novels over her career. She has also contributed short fiction. Her books and short stories are replete with feminist themes. The regional writer emphasises and describes the topography, customs, and language of a specific region with a greater emphasis on explanation than simply background material. Situation is frequently used to explain the personality and behaviour of the residents. The related term 'regional sensibility' is a novel coinage that combines the 18th- and 20th-century definitions of sensibility in the context of an area. Gita Hariharan frequently exceeds the limitations imposed by regional writers in expressing the cultural ethos of middle-class individuals, especially Indian women. Her works focus on the physical characteristics, people, life, customs, habits, manners, traditions, languages, and way of life of the local populace.

This does not, however, imply that his art is merely a photographic or factual copy of reality. Her ability to effectively convey the cultural essence of a particular location stresses its distinctiveness, the myriad ways it differs from other locales.

Adaptability is facilitated by the acquisition of new norms and values; nevertheless, newly acquired information may contradict previously acquired information. Throughout the

course of an individual's life, socialisation occurs. It refers to social and personal transformation. Gita Hariharan's works discuss the current day, fundamentalism, and conservatism.

Gita Hariharan asserts that authors must reaffirm their dedication to writing. These are interrogative voices. As a writer, she has expanded her territory in the vast pool known as culture. In her India-based work, she discusses Hindu extremism. In the novel *In Days of Siege*, she employs the metaphor "siege," which she believes is applicable to the rest of the globe. *In Days of Siege* by Hariharan can be analysed as a social, historical, and political fiction. It focuses specifically on Hindu fundamentalism in addressing contemporary fundamentalism's most pressing concerns. The story takes place in India. Hariharan has also highlighted the influence of politics on academics. Githa Hariharan has developed woman-centered techniques that strive to project and interpret experience from a female perspective. She pushes modestly for education as a weapon for women.

Githa Hariharan's writings depict many stages of female development. Her works depict the lengthy journey of Indian women, from subjugation to rebellion against patriarchal oppression and identity assertion. Geetha Hariharan's female characters are of varying ages but all play significant roles in the plot. Mayamma, Devi, Sita, and Meena are present in the protagonists' lives, whereas the other characters exist only in their recollections. Under Elaine Showalter's classification scheme, they are feminine, feminist, and female. Each character, despite being labelled Showalterian, exhibits a form of progression towards the subsequent stage. Under the pretence of a breadwinner, women have cared for families and preserved social bonds and values for ages despite being handicapped in all arenas by men. Women were reduced to simply biological beings, and their intellectual and economic advancements were rendered ineffective. Women were denied their fundamental rights and could not hold a place of respect in society. Being both a social institution and a legal contract, marriage possesses a tremendous lot of societal influence. It has a significant effect on women's psyches. Marriage-related textual scenarios may be identified in Gita's books, which gradually reveal the ever-changing attitudes of women as a result of shifting time periods and its particular sensibility.

Githa's characters Mayamma, Mangala, and Lakshmi, as well as the grandmothers of Vasu and Devi, can be defined as "feminine" because they meet all of the conditions for female development. They are wonderful mothers and competent housewives. Mayamma, the family's

retainer, exemplifies the classic woman who accepts her lot without question and lives her life as expected. She endures the cruelty that patriarchal families impose on daughters, wives, daughters-in-law, moms, and abandoned women. She makes no decisions and her life is predetermined.

Mayamma's life has been riddled with violence and abuse since her marriage at age twelve. Her youthful innocence is shattered by her marriage, as she states, "I picked up the iron skillet before my mother-in-law awoke." (TFN 116)

Even after eleven years of marriage, Mayamma is still childless. She feeds her stale rice since she believes there is no point in nourishing barren ladies. She must perform penance in order to appease the gods. She is instructed to cut her breast open in order to appease the gods and have a son. Her husband calls her a "reprehensible whore" and kicks her out after a night of prostitution in the rain. (TFN 111) Mayamma's sufferings are temporarily alleviated with the birth of a son. Nevertheless, when Mayamma's child is eight years old, her husband abandons her. Later, when he physically assaults her, she recognises her husband in her son. As she refuses to give him money, he strikes her with a cast-iron skillet and rips her diamond studs from her earlobes. However, Mayamma never questions the patriarchal family's horrors, never raises her voice, and never attempts to leave her torment.

Mayamma steadily and brutally learns the skill of survival. When observing protracted disappointments outside her control, she employs her own coping techniques. She makes a silent protest. Since her kid is bedridden, she is neither affectionate or passionate towards him, and at his passing, she burns his horoscope with him (TFN 82).

Her search for the reason of her survival begins after his death. She finds her way into the home of Devi's father-in-law and earns a nice livelihood as a family retainer despite having nowhere to go. Despite her difficult life, she becomes the rock upon which the family rests. This demonstrates the inherent resilience of women, who may return to normal despite their fragility. In search of God, Parvatamma, Devi's mother-in-law, abandons her children and husband Baba, who displays inner bravery in accepting her decision. Mayamma maintains family unity and

Even after Devi's departure, she maintains the residence. From the beginning to the finish of Mayamma, the author demonstrates the will to live and persevere in spite of hardship.

She does not lose her life after her husband and son pass away. She lives outside the boundaries of her family in order to achieve a meaningful existence, which she discovers in Baba's home.

Lakshmi represents the profound sense of anguish and injustice felt by "half of humanity." Vasu had not seen his mother since his childhood, when she passed away. She is understandable based on his grandmother's 'loud, authoritarian' voice as she describes her to him. The fact that his mother was not given a name until she was one year old out of concern for the cost of the naming ceremony illustrates the situation of girl babies. Women are ridiculed for their inability to have sons. Almost a year later, an elderly sweeper woman blesses the girl with the name "Lakshmi."

Due to her modest objectives, she avoids her husband's explosive rage and mother-in-arrogance law's by focusing on domestic duties. She is fighting a lost war on every front. She is abused and eventually disappears into the shadows of the oppressive household. Mangala, despite being the first educated woman in her family, loses her identity and becomes her husband's shadow upon marriage. She speaks very little about her beliefs or anxieties, despite her unusual talent for telling ghost stories. On a perpetual retreat, she becomes inconspicuous.

The institution of the family initially represses the desires of women, forces them into submission, and transforms them into stoic suffering like Mayamma and Eliamma, agents of dominance like Sita and Rekha, or confused conformists like Devi who perpetuate patriarchy's dominance.

Githa Hariharan provides a "speech-action" pair which might empower women with room for self-expression, liberation, and self-assertion, having acknowledged the obligation of deciphering a woman's silence and subverting typical patriarchal standards. The author portrays Devi as a modern Indian woman despite her foreign education. While studying in America, Devi meets Dan, a black man, with whom she forms a bond. His recommendations do not create her past-soaked, myth-laden universe. When Dan points out her reluctance of taking risks, she begins to believe her grandmother's stories about an ideal marriage. Being the epitome of "femininity," she desires to traverse familiar territory. Sita is also successful in bringing her daughter back from America and marrying her to Mahesh, a corporate officer. Mahesh, the unromantic regional manager of a multinational corporation that manufactures

detergents and toothpastes, dashes Devi's hopes for a world of magnificence in her married life (TFN 22).

Parvatiamma, Sita, and Devi are considered "passive feminists." Through Mayamma's comments, Githa Hariharan conveys the character of Parvatiamma, Devi's mother-in-law. Devi has the idea that she was once in love with a kind and 'feminine' woman whose compassion took her away from herself. Indeed, Parvatiamma was seeking spiritual bliss. After the children were gone to boarding schools, she spent most of her time singing Bhajans for God. Her confidence in Mayamma permitted her to leave her husband and children in her care. In her pursuit for God, she renounced the life of a householder. She can be recognised as a feminist since she abandons home and family as a protest against cultural pressures. Typically, marriage, a protection for women, becomes more onerous under the autocratic authority of husbands who imprison them for domestic duties. With a pilgrimage, the grandmother escapes the confines of her family.

In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, Sita, is another major figure in the narrative. She was born into a better social and economic stratum of society, was well-educated, talented, and married before her cousins became moms. Her great skill at playing the 'veena' compensated for her lack of attractiveness, and as a result, she was accepted on the marriage market. Her music permeated her home with her spouse. On one such occasion, while playing the instrument, she ignored a call from her father-in-law. In a flash of wrath, he goes to her and questions whether she is a daughter-in-law. As a form of protest, she ensured that the family was never given the opportunity to complain after the occurrence. She became increasingly odd and appeared to be dominant, even to Devi. In her mind, the bitterness of suppressing her early emotions lay dormant, and she began living a life devoid of any love.

Devi's pursuit of self-satisfaction is endless. When she discovers that neither Mahesh nor Gopal can replace her void in life, she does not experience peace and tranquilly with any of them. Her hopes for a good relationship are dashed when she discovers that they are solely focused on their careers. She feels ashamed by the subordinate position the patriarchy has assigned her. She resolves to rejoin her mother when she is unable to reconcile with Gopal in her second life. As she reaches her mother's home, the sound of the veena reassures her that she will have a strong link with her. Devi, having transgressed the confines of convention, expects that her relationship with her mother will last forever. Devi, a failure in the patriarchal

society, seeks to construct a new life of sharing and caring with her mother, her source of comfort.

Conclusion:

All of the female characters inhabit these limits and attempt to make spaces for themselves in their own unique ways. The depiction of female connection between Devi and her grandmother is effective. The research of female characters reveals that 'feminine' characters are self-pitying and life's victims. They assist others but neglect to assist themselves. The 'feminists' seek to shape their future by altering their mind structure in light of their mediocre past. As they advance, 'female' characters cease to be dependent and begin to be dependable, and they enter relationships with a focus on what they can give rather than what they can receive. Her women are no longer blind traditionalists, passive or uncomplaining victims, or simple armchair critics. They are aware of a larger world and endeavour to occupy it with their own rights. To this purpose, they demand equal status and access to education, and insist on being classified as human beings. Githa Hariharan believes that women's emancipation is contingent upon the awakening of the self, as pointed forth by great philosophers.

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