



## CONTEMPORARY WOMEN NOVELISTS: A FEMINIST STUDY (Githa Hariharan, and Manju Kapur)

Miss. Seema Ashok Bagul<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Madhavi Pawar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>TMV Scholar.

<sup>2</sup>TMV Guide.

### ABSTRACT :

The present research work is an attempt to portray the woman of modern and current modern India as characterized in the novels of Githa Hariharan, and Manju Kapur, who are devoted to raise feminist and social issue. Their novels are the mirror image of the Indian women of the modern age, is an effort of shaping their life in their own ways, and tackling the differences in the tradition and modern society. In this way we can divide the problem or issues of the woman into two form one is tradition which is output of the belief system which was natured by our primitives in our way of thinking and another is modernization which we have taken as granted with modifying ourselves in such a way that we have forgotten the basics of the life. This gives calls for the balance between the two issues which will help us to develop a better society for the women in which subject like female liberation, gender inequality, subjugation of women, self identity, women security, hygiene and growth will be discussed in open forum. Much of what we do today is the foot print of the past with little more advanced philosophy which is presumed to be based on the human tendency and point of view regarding women and society.

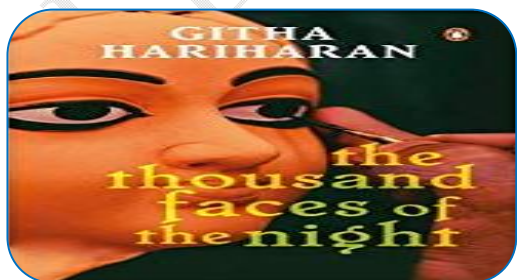
**KEYWORDS :** Feminism, Gender Inequality, Tradition, Modernity.

### INTRODUCTION:

Development of social systems has always been a complicated affair and this is clear from India's as well as world's history. Intermittent failure of society, unscientific philosophy, practices and rural indebtedness, imperishable needs of the society and other risks has ensured that high discrimination between men and women; it is norm rather than an exception with respect to women in the society. This problem was also noticed by our colonial masters and to this date, providing a formal system of Feminism seems to be a challenge even in present situation.

Feminism started out as small grass roots philosophy in Western Europe, North America and Japan in the middle of the last century, however, it is the social issue that is regarded as the prototype of the modern society and the issue which have taken worldwide attention of Feminist.

Most of the writers, social activist, philosophical thinkers and educated people are engaged in preparing a very concrete base and platform for the development of the Feminism all over the world. However, the efforts of these people who have engaged in the development of the Feminism have not yet being so successful in preparing the format or theory for the Feminism and have not been prescribed by Laws of many States. The existing formats or theory or assumption in the world have evolved over a period of time on the basis of



instructions from social thinkers and social needs. There is no uniformity and transparency adopted by Feminist in this field which was being expected by the women long time back.

Feminism is perhaps the most powerful movement that cleaned literary world in the second half of the twentieth century. Main focus of feminism stands for liberation and liberation of women from all forms of domination by the state, by society and by men. GithaHariharan, and ManjuKapur thoroughlytestify all the above-mentioned elements in their novels. Feminism is a progressive ideology, a mission and a movement that champions male and female equity. Feminism in India is not an artificial or duplicate of the west and feminist is not an anti-marriage, anti-men movement imported from the outside or any anti-social act which is against the society but it is an art and science of the development of women in various challenging environment, it is fight for the existence of the women for the freedom and equal human rights. Feminism is a philosophy and a undertaking for ending all forms of domination. It is not against family and marriage. It is all about transforming these institutions to weed out their integral injustices. Indian feminism has thus its own elements and character which are developed as the times have passed with the more experience.

The present research paper attempts to explore and analysis of

#### **Githa Hariharan's two novels:**

- 1) The Thousand Faces of Night and
- 2) When Dreams Travel.

#### **ManjuKapur's two novels:**

- 1) Difficult Daughters
- 2) 'Married Woman
- 3)Home

#### **Aims and Objectives of the research paper**

1. The Present research paper aims to bring out the changing images of an Indian woman in reference to the traditional and modern values.
2. It aims to portray the woman of modern and postmodern India as depicted in the novels of GithaHariharan and,ManjuKapur.

#### **Hypothesis :**

**H 1:** GithaHariharan, ManjuKapur and Anita Nair center their writingon women's position.

**H 2:**GithaHariharan, ManjuKapur and Anita Nair are the feminist novelist

The variety of GithaHariharan's writing varied dimensions to reveal social reality. She was successful in effectively implementing such reality with a precision of style and magical imagery concepts. She has intensely expressed women's hopes and aspirations in her striking collections. Her novels thoroughly testify progressive feminist elements

ManjuKapur in her novels. 'Difficult Daughters', 'A Married Woman (2002), Home (2006), The Immigrant (2007) and 'Custody' (2011)' projects strong self-assured female protagonist who passageway female concerns and show courage to capture their destiny. The crux of ManjuKapur's work rest on addressing issues like female liberation, their physical aspiration and their efforts in representing themselves in the present social environment.

As far as the research study is concerned, the researcher has studied the selected novels of Hariharan, and Kapur,.All the novels of these novelists mainly deal with the experiences of the women protagonists, who face traumatic situations in their family life. Subjugation of women in the predominantly patriarchal family life in India, Lesbianism, rape ----- are some of the issues they have projected in their fiction. Their fiction mainly presents the ethos of the middle class Indian life. The men and women in their

fiction are influenced by the modernity. In an urban middle class life women find themselves entrapped in a male dominated world. They are assigned a secondary position in the family as a result of the social customs and traditional values assigned to an ideal womanhood. In a family life, essentially in India, a woman is forced to occupy a secondary status even if she is an earning member of the family. It is not her femininity, but age old social tradition and the control of education by men which are the factors contributing to the subjugation of women in their family life and the society in general.

The novels under study, give scope for the analysis of a woman's changing images in the modern era, rejecting the traditional ones. These novels focus on the protagonists, who being victims at the natal as well as the marital home, sever all ties and reconstruct their lives. They are not left in the lurch, but there are signs of hopes and rejuvenation in them by restoring themselves as well as their familiar bonds. The novels give a glimpse of the post independent India, where the social notions about woman have considerably been changed. These novelists register these significant changes by creating illustrative situations and characters in different contexts. For Manju Kapur's women resolution always comes to reconciliation with society; while Githa Hariharan's woman emerges as a transformed, empowered and confident individual. Whereas Nair's women have been portrayed as intelligent, questioning women who are not contented with the injustice and rebellion against them. Nevertheless, all their protagonists regain their self, despite numerous barriers.

Manju Kapur's third novel *Home* exposes the still prevalent narrow minded attitude towards the upbringing of a girl child in India. Kapur traces the painful journey of the protagonist, Nisha, from childhood into adulthood in search of self identity. The analysis reveals Nisha's search for home i.e. search for a place of shelter and security. Unfortunately, to a woman in India, home is not a place of comfort and relaxation and it does not ensure them any emotional security, nonetheless, it sometimes does not provide them any physical security. The novel describes the story of an ordinary middle class joint family, settled in Delhi. The physical abuse of children, in the hands of their own relatives, is also discussed through Nisha's sexual abuse by her own cousin, Vicky. A girl is considered as an object of sexual arousal, thus it is expected that she should take care of her physical appearance, to be able to grab the attention of people as a perfect marriageable girl. Nisha's mother, Sona always shoves her to be neat and well dressed like princess. She does not allow her to play in parks with other children because her complexion may become dark. Simone de Beauvoir's observation is relevant in this context:

***"Woman on the contrary, is even required by society to make herself an erotic object. The purpose of the fashions to which she is enslaved is not to reveal her as an independent individual, but rather to offer her as prey to male desires; thus society is not seeking to further her projects but to thwart them. The skirt is less convenient than trousers, high-heeled shoes impeded walking; the least practical gowns and dress shoes, the most fragile hats and stockings, are most elegant; the costume may disguise the body, deform it, or follow its curves; in any case it puts it on display. This is why dressing up is an enchanting game for the little girl, who loves to contemplate herself; later her childish independence rises in rebellion against the constraint imposed by light colored muslins and patent-leather shoes; at the awkward age the girl is torn between the wish and the refusal to display herself; but when she has once accepted her vocation as sexual object, she enjoys adorning herself"* (1997, p-543)**

Kapur's novels tackle the existential problems, faced by the educated Indian woman with authenticity and insight. These novels symbolize a fight against taboos; social restrictions and manmade code of conduct for a woman in a traditional society. Her, heroines, from Virmati to Nisha, are the symbols of the female imagination, responding to pressures and oppressions of patriarchal culture where marriage is seen only as a compromise. Her novels are the stories of a struggle for freedom and search for an existence at various levels. Her protagonists try to sustain a balance all the time. Their sufferings, amidst the dual standards, make them strong and they constantly struggle to exist and to free themselves from the shackles of tradition and various prejudices.

These novelists successfully portray the conflict of tradition and modernity in their characters. Their female characters are not only involved in clangs against male dominated traditional world, but they also

suffer this conflict in the form of the generation gap. In *Difficult Daughters* Kasturi, Virmati and Ida are three chief female characters whose relationships are much affected with the ailment of generation gap that is another modified term for the clash of Tradition versus modernity. Virmati, already a victim of a generation gap between mother and daughter, becomes the perpetrator of the tradition which reflects in Ida's words- **"My mother tightened her reins on me as I grew older; she said it was for my good. As a result I am constantly looking for escape routes"** (DD, P-258). In *A Married Woman* Astha's mother also acts as a patriarch, she never considers her daughter worth discussing her financial matters. In *Home*, Nisha suffers because of her own mother, Sona's traditional attitude, i.e. ignorant towards her studies and also very rudely excludes from her true love, Suresh because of her mother's orthodox attitude about caste system.

Life is a trap of connections. This investigation of Githa Hariharan's books *The Thousand Faces Of Night* and *When Dreams Travel* influences one to presume that to fashion solid connections, the ethical quality of consideration ought to be all inclusive and not confined to ladies, else they will revolt and nullify it, which, thusly, would inspire an unsympathetic world. This issue can be handled just related to men. They should assemble a general public on shared consideration, empathy and participation. According to Jean Baker Miller, **there should be redistribution of responsibilities where We do not offer femaleness and maleness all the meaning we presently give them. There is no reason that serving others has to be a threat to maleness. This, like many other notions, is culturally imposed.** (1976, p- 70)

Githa Hariharan through her novel *When Dreams Travel* extends an old fantasy, yet with a feministic adjustment. Both this modifying and consecrated rendition demonstrates that Shahrzad's legend lives on, as one of the accounts respecting lady's insight and solidarity. Fantasies are symbolical accounts containing good examples and teaching a lot of qualities on its gathering of people. These are one case of what Homi Bhabha called the academic methodologies to describe aggregate personality. Thusly, fantasies are the key references that meddle with oblivious life; a kind of essential models with a compelling passionate appeal. Shahrzad is a case of positive reformulation of ladylike characters, turning around the conventional unfortunate casualty status of lady to a place of strengthening. Also, the bond between two sisters Shahrzad and Dunyazad and the sisterhood of different storytellers in the novel is the case of female holding and advancing lady's dignity. To wrap things up, the ladies characters made by Githa Hariharan are not kidding possibility to think new types of freed women's activist personality, survival, solidarity, imaginative choices, prompting surprising biographies. Subsequently, in the last investigation, Hariharan by blending legend and spoof, over a significant time span, appears to a flag to us that all reality comes to us sifted through dialect and that dialect is gotten a kick out of the chance to control.

A micro study of the two novels leads to a new understanding of the changing times and trends among the contemporary Indian Writers. Githa Hariharan has been successful in raising several issues related to the gender inequality, communal violence and religious politics. She has provided **answers to these problems in her novels**. Githa Hariharan has noted it herself that she has consciously opted for an open ending. On this basis, it is clear that Githa Hariharan's feminism is a protest against the established evils in the Indian social order and she has proclaimed the cause of secularism and social justice. Githa Hariharan is successful in her endeavor to portray different issues related to Indian women, in her own style. In all her novels, Githa Hariharan has strived hard to reconstruct Indian Society based on equality and justice. Myth always need re-telling and re-interpreting, and the women's movement, feminist and post-feminist, has made written contribution to this process. Through her novels, Githa Hariharan has strived to explore myths through a new angle. Her stories, characters and plots try to throw light on multiple cultural identities. Githa Hariharan's every effort is in line with her individual feminism.

Githa Hariharan has challenged the traditional patterns of Indian social structure, and she has tried to strengthen women, the weaker sex. She has also challenged the belief that the woman has her place only in kitchen. She has given a message that 'men have failed lest women should take over'. Githa Hariharan has attacked the out dated traditions which were responsible for social injustice. She has raised the war against these outdated traditions. Githa Hariharan is successful in visualizing the helpless women who are cornered by the system. She has challenged the orthodox social system of India. Githa Hariharan has revolted

against the patriarchal system which is a constant hurdle in the women's development. The realistic expressions of Githa Hariharan must be given credit for authentically reflecting women's agony, grief and sorrow. Thus it comes possible to state that Githa Hariharan is a feminist novelist and her works mostly deal with the feminist elements.

### CONCLUSION-

Researcher has thoroughly studied the two novelists and their novels taken for research paper and comes to conclusion that both the novelists are the feminist writers, though they deny that they are not feminist but their writings have definitely given the Indian Womanhood a "a golden dome" and that is the dome of a "new woman" with a pride of her 'self'. She fulfills what Shodang has quoted what Helen Diner has expressed in her poem, "Seitto" (Blue Stockings), ***"Women when you paint your own portrait, do not forget to put a golden dome on the top of your head"***(49). So the researcher has proved her second hypothesis that all three novelists are the feminist writers.

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**Miss. Seema Ashok Bagul**  
TMV Scholar.