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## The sketch of 'Devi' as role model in thousand faces of night

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### Abstract

The author in her book 'The Thousand Faces of Night' brought to limelight the collective problems of subjugated and concealed women in India. The depiction of women in the novel makes it clear that the individuality of Indian women has really become genuine and conspicuous human problem in recent decades. The passive role assigned to women as a daughter, wife and mother was remonstrated by the author. Hariharan in her book demands for the women a complete and individual personality and opposes the ill-treatment of women in every walk of life. She condemned the Indian notion of subjugation of women for the sake of the pleasures of the man. The treating of wife as means for the flesh goals of her husband is condemned by the author. In this paper an attempt is made to describe the portrayal of women characters in the 'The Thousand Faces of Night' of Githa Hariharan.

**Keywords:** Kinesio tape, McConnell tape, hop test (single leg triple jump test), VAS score, patello-femoral pain syndrome (PFPS)

### Introduction

The novel shows, with exceptional fictional skill, the subtle and everyday way in which women are bludgeoned to play male-scripted subordinate roles. The book is a portrait of Devi, her mother Sita and housekeeper of her husband's house Mayamma. All three ladies had potential but were suppressed in one way or other after marriage.

Devi comes from an orthodox Tamil family. While studying in USA she befriends Dan, a fellow black student. Though it's more than just friendship, Devi does not accept his marriage proposal, returns to India and arranged marries Mahesh. Devi is influenced by her grandmother. She does not really know what she wants in life. Doesn't know what will bring her joy and in her pursuit of it makes one wrong decision after another. It's incomprehensible why she becomes a meek housewife from a foreign educated independent youngster. Devi is continuously on the run. First from America, then from Dan, then from her mother, then from her house, then from her husband and then from Gopal in search of something that she does not know. It's a search for something that she wants to do. She has to confront her own problems and demons, make her own choices, only then her wandering will come to an end.

Devi returns to Madras with an American degree, only to be sucked in by the old order of things-a demanding mother's love, a suitable but hollow marriage, an unsuitable lover who offers a brief escape. But the women of the hoary past come back to claim Devi through myth and story, music and memory. They show her what it is to stay and endure what it is to break free and move on.

Sita is passionate about everything. She longs for perfection in everything. Order is second nature to her. She shapes career of her husband and childhood of her daughter (Devi) impeccably. Sita has been the ideal daughter-in-law, wife and mother. But now that she has arranged a marriage for her daughter Devi, she has to come to terms with an old dream of her own. Mayamma knows how to survive as the old family retainer, bending the way the wind blows. But, through Devi, she too can see a different life.

Mayamma has a happy marriage with abusive husband and mother in law who ill treats her. She sees everything that happens in master's house. She watches occupants and their problems and watches the events unfold while doing her daily chores mechanically and remembering the past.

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## Review of Literature

Manimozhi R. and Dr. R. Shanthi (2013) <sup>[5]</sup> in their paper makes a comparison between Anita Desai's and Githa Hariharan's novels. According to author the two writers illustrate the differences, conflicts and contradictions of the characters and the system that oppresses and suppresses them. The two writers also highlight the complex between family members as well as the inner confrontations of the protagonist 's. Anita Desai and Githa Hariharan are engaged in different degrees with social reforms, what makes them writer-activists, as they are sensitive to gender and caste experiences. Anita Desai 's protagonist Sita accepts the role of typical Indian woman in the traditional society and Hariharan's protagonist Devi rejects the tradition and opted for the positive aspects of modernity. She breaks the tradition and enters the world in which she believes.

Papari Das (2015) <sup>[4]</sup> considers that the plot of the Githa Hariharan's novel revolves round Devi and her experiences of reality as opposed to the world of fantasy and 'illusion', a world of make-belief where she lives from her childhood. Her grandmother was the endless fountain of folk and fairy tales and tales from Indian mythology. According to author Hariharan has tried to offer us a fresh and feministic insight into the same old mythical stories which have so long been used as the hegemonic stratagem of subjugating women by making them accept and internalize the process of suppression unquestionably.

Parvathi V. and laxmee kanthamma J. (2016) <sup>[16]</sup> in their paper explored to reinterpret the concept of myth in Githa Hariharan's novel *Thousand Faces of Night*. The study explores solutions to the questions whether a woman can find her true path within Indian culture. The possibility for woman to choose her own path with the burden of many issues like, family values, related expectations towards her like her own modesty, pride of the family in the society and responsibility to guide her offspring.

Avis Joseph and Rosebel Wilson C (2017) <sup>[7]</sup> in their article depicted how far Githa Hariharan had succeeded in picturizing the concept of womanhood and describing the relevance of this concept in the modern Indian society. It attempted to delineate how women dealt with the sanction of space in Indian society. According to authors Githa Hariharan presented the efforts of patriarchy on women of different social classes and ages particularly the varied reactions to the restrictive institution of marriage especially in *The Thousand Faces of Night*. The authors opine that Gita Hariharan delineated the concepts of woman in a traditional society and the responsibilities and services expected from women.

Chellammal V., (2018) <sup>[8]</sup> in his paper analyzed the subjugation of women in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* by implying the subaltern theory as emphasized by Antonio Gramsci and Gayatri Spivak. It intends to represent the voiceless women who were silenced and enforced to play the male-scripted roles of perfect daughter, wife, daughter-in-law and mother in the patriarchal structure of society. It explores how women were treated as slaves and were enforced to serve their family. It scrutinizes how women were constructed and equipped to adjust, adapt and accept the new environment in which she endures certain sufferings. It depicts how women were subjugated as silent-sufferers who sacrifice all their talents, desires and preferences in order to render and fulfill their endeavor as perfect and ideal women. It gives a picture of

women as sacrificial beings who sacrificed their identity in order to uplift their family to a higher position in the stereotypical society. It portrays how the women were made to believe and accept their roles as subordinates and were supposed to serve their superior beings through certain stereotypical and superstitious beliefs practiced in the patriarchal society during their period.

Aleena Rosmin Abraham (2019) <sup>[9]</sup> opines that Gita Hariharan not only indianized the incidents but also the use of language. According to author she abundantly used the Indian words like agraaharam, ashtapadi, nadaswaram, nagaligapushpa and so on. She takes the Indian culture to the English speaking countries through the chosen Indian vocabulary. She has indianized a genre-English fiction. Several Indian women writers have attempted to transform a woman's status from victimization to empowerment and project a new sense of woman's identity. Githa Hariharan too deals with the question of woman's identity and her innate strength, lies in her struggle for survival. Dissatisfied with age old norms that emphasize woman's passive role as a wife, Githa Hariharan attempts to establish a new order. 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.

## Narration

"Devi" means goddess, the spouse of Shiva, who unites both the personalities: the ferocious and the sublime. It is only Devi- whether benevolent or cruel- who among the goddesses has an independent personality of her own, thus giving a symbolic significance to her name, a woman who looks for her identity, breaking the social barriers, which limit her personality. Devi's grandmother has offered her new possible interpretations of the legends. For Devi, there is a vast difference in her grandmother's tales as compared to those of Baba's tales. Devi feels that Baba's tales were less spectacular, they ramble less" Githa Hariharan displays a control of the medium, a sophistication that would be the envy of any contemporary writer. Her diction is pointed and the textures communicated exquisite. In terms of technique, her writing is masterful... she cannot write of an experience but will animate it with sharp and vivid life.

In the novel, the stories of alluring, self-sacrificing, and avenging goddesses of the Hindu pantheon serve as a backdrop to the triple narrative. Fed by her grandmother's stories of palaces, heroic women, self-sacrificing heroines and women turning into men, Devi realizes that she can relate neither to the aggressive model nor to the benevolent model of femininity.

A subtle and tender tale of women's lives in India, this award-winning novel is structured with the delicacy and precision of a piece of music. Fusing myth, tale and the real voices of different women, *The Thousand Faces of Night* brings alive the underworld of Indian women's lives.

*The Thousand Faces of Night* reacts against the traditional concept that everything in the wife's life is shaped to the single purpose of pleasing her husband. Hariharan has been strikingly different from many contemporary novelists in the sense that her protagonist is neither a superwoman nor a helpless victim of patriarchal society. She erodes the age-old wisdom contained in the sayings, stories, myths and beliefs. She is a "conscious experimentalist".

The institution of marriage is commonly treated by female writers as an area which limits and confines the lives of

women. Adhikari states in her article "Enclosure and Freedom: Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*" that Durga, Sita and Savitri are the creations of male imagination and are either empowered by the male gods Vishnu, Brahma, Mahesh (like Durga) or are the symbols of sacrifice and service expected to live and die for their lords (Sita and Savitri). "The images of women controlled by the institution of marriage are those of suffocation, dwarfing and mental illness. Women writers are constructing successful, self-aware, emancipated protagonists who also manage to continue with the respect worthy ideology of womanhood" Devi's barrenness reduces her place in the family she is attracted towards Gopal, a Hindusthani classical singer and an occasional visitor to her neighbourhood. Gopal's music tempts and seduces her when she is becoming desperate due to her husband's neglect. Devi's penance takes multiple forms of response from self-pity to revenge and from self-inflicted suffering to a strong sense of injustice. She feels suffocated in the atmosphere and plans definite means of escape. She has her own inhibitions about open action. The realization of her helplessness to take drastic action makes her prone to taking quick revenge. "I write elaborate scenarios in my mind for the last act - humiliating Mahesh, saying all the things we have left unsaid. I do something bloody, final, a mark of protest worthy of the heroines I grew up with."

The act of walking out on Mahesh provides substance to her life. Condemning her husband to a lonely life without wife or child and trampling on the marital vows, Devi elopes with Gopal. Her decision to walk out on Mahesh and elope with Gopal can be viewed as her unwillingness to live like Mayamma or Sita, who are the victims of domestic violence in one form or the other. She does not want to end up as a self-sacrificial wife. Mayamma, however, knows well that Devi's relationship with Gopal also will end up in a disaster, but does not discourage her from the plunge. She knows that it is mainly her sense of alienation that has drawn her to him. Like Maya of *Cry, the Peacock*, who craves for Gautama's love, Devi also realizes that she has become a psychological destitute and desires to establish emotional rapport with Mahesh.

For Gopal, women appear superficial since they require a man to provide them with a meaning. The only identity a woman has, according to him, is to be a man's wife or his child's mother. He is surprised at Devi who refuses to be a mother. He says, "You look so fragile, so feminine... It's hard to believe that you don't want a child." (93) Gopal's music means to him what the yearning for a descendant had meant to Mahesh. Devi realizes that Gopal is a beautiful despot, who cannot see beyond either the passion of a raga or the various masks of her discrete lives. She comes to know that she would not be happy with him. It is an act of penance, of protest against Mahesh and against her own self. Gopal is a flirt with aspirations for an aristocratic way of life. She realizes that the euphoria is fading fast, and understands that she occupies only a peripheral status in his life and that their inner selves are not united.

Initially, Devi's relationship with Gopal, is warm and affectionate, and to some extent he succeeds in giving Devi what Mahesh has not. But the moment he lifts his mask, Devi discerns that Gopal is no better than Mahesh. She reflects, "I have made very few choices... But I was too well-prepared, and not prepared at all.

The feminist critics have shown that literature reflects a patriarchal, or a male-dominated perspective of society. Patriarchy is a system where men are family heads, descent is reckoned through the father, men alone are priests, and all laws and norms dictated by male elders are held to be just and right.

### Conclusion

In the 'The Thousand Faces of Night' the author depicted how the three main women characters strictly controlled and played a balancing role. In spite of several hurdles the three women maintained integrity and solidarity in dealing with their kith and kin.

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