



# **MYTH, SOCIETY AND IDENTITY: A STUDY OF GITHA HARIHARAN'S SELECTED NOVELS**

**(A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English)**

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## Chapter 6

### Research Findings and Conclusion

#### **6.1. Introduction**

After a thorough reading, explorative and analytical analysis, various significant observations have been carved out from the present research entitled “Myth, Society and Identity: A Study of Githa Hariharan’s Novels”. At the outset, Githa Hariharan works portray life’s journey of women and men in respect to myth and society on individual’s identity. Myth has played vital role in constructing society and later myth is deconstructed. The stories which are myth based bring fantasy into the story. These mythological stories also called as traditional stories. Her works also speak about the feudalism and the conservatism intertwined with politics. She portrays the connection and co-relation of myth, society and identity in the entire set of novels.

#### **6.2. Findings**

##### **Perception of Myth**

In TFN, influence of myth is there on all the generations but the perspective of receiving is different. Devi takes Amba as her role model and fights back the injustice by voicing out her opinion on life and takes an alternate path, then emerged as stronger and transferred wondrous quest to her mother. She identified a possible resolution that made her to exacerbate and worsen the predicament of her husband. Through particular characters she underlined much resentment and bitterness that had bothered on hardened hate and kept harsh realities at bay. Mythology is a tool to justify the characters of the woman expected in the society.

“A system of hereditary stories which were believed to be true by a particular group and which served to explain why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rational for social customs and observances”. (Abrams 178)

The graphical structure to live the life through myth is diverted by Devi as she decoded the ideology to fight against the system and transferred the system to the previous generation (Sita)

than to the next generation. Impact of myth crippled the previous generation and the thoughts initiated by Devi, getting to know Devi's rejection of marriage and the prescribed roles of women, Sita understands the sensible technicalities of Devi and she evolved and picks the *veena* which she had stopped playing.

In WDT, the first generation Raziya mother of Shahrzad and Dunyazad suffers being helpless knowing her children have threat to their life. But in second generation Shahrzad and Dunyazad stops the injustice and portrays the right to live attitude. Fantasy is used as an element to emerge from the conventional setting and to overt reality and acknowledged the symbolism and metaphor as a prosaic reality. WDT is framed by fantasy and magic realism that gives the hint of man women relationship and the feminist issue through the theme and the intertext. In TGVM, the third generation, his mother was also dominated by his father. Vasu himself admits that his mother lived long enough to his father his heir. But the grandmother was very bold and was a follower of Gandhi in nationalism as nationalism paved the way to many people to realize their ‘self’. Vasu’s grandmother lived the rational life whereas Vasu’s wife intoxicated by the myth that transformed to her by the society. In ITS, prevalent myth disturbs the harmony and peace, the freedom of speech is interrupted

when the changes related to the society occurs, as the myth deepened in the minds of people. As Wendy McElroy describes,

“The socialist feminism equally was a socio economic term. Women could be equal only after private property and the economic relationships it encouraged that is capitalism were eliminated”. (Wendy McElroy) To reconstruct the Indian society by emancipating women and by understanding the subaltern consciousness is the echo for the present conflict situation.

### **Construction and Deconstruction of Myths and their Influence on Society and Individuals**

Women should be submissive and the injustice happened to her is absolutely unquestionable. Belief in myth is completely, the injustice happens to women but reverted by the society as the destiny. Mysticism shows that the character overly influenced by the myth but took different way to answer the stereotypes. The testimony of survival instincts is pictured by stepping out of the stereotypes as the characters take the bold steps such as devoid of expected norms, narrating the stories by subverting the tradition and reinventing the inner strength to escape from the patriarchy, and by crossing the borders to educate and explore and navigate to the legacy of prejudiced by hoping changes will occur in the society.

The study advocates to be liberal in the thoughts and receptive to the changes according to the society. The religious dogmas should not be stiff and rigid, and unwilling changes will lead to discord in the national integrity. Women were not meant to be in kitchen but also were made fame in other courageous acts and flowery arts respectively. So these people deconstructed the myths; in fact they made a path for the reconstruction of myth.

### **Politics as a tool**

Construction of the society is politicized on women freedom and body as women are criticized for not bearing the legacy. Feminist scholars argued, ‘body is both socially shaped and colonized’. The power of patriarchy suppresses women by considering the theme of favor sex. The societal compulsion never allowed her to come out of her burqha, as they were expected to unravel the causal chain. When the cultural repression ceases the progression, the character erupted beyond the principle and reversed the politics.

Politics of shaping and reshaping of the society: Here, he uses the political strategy of ruling someone’s body just to curb her freedom and give her more responsibility. In WDT, any progress thing of women is not welcomed by men. She has to be in the chains of women that’s the mindset of men. When a woman has saved so many lives of virgin women suddenly she was made mute this made citizens to have the fear of king again. In a way, he tried to get back his power and fame which was slightly moved towards his wife from the citizens of the society. Shahrzad was unable to accept the reality and was against it. He was in fact played politically to show the power of his chair and his gender. “When the storyteller’s voice fell silent, when her later creations miscarried, it was they who felt the pain of being wrecked apart and orphaned” (WDT 105). This is how men played political strategies to mute women’s voices from the ages. In TGVM, there is reference of Veera Naidu and his ideas on education and his human values, “Veera Naidu denying increments to teachers for the next three years; retrenched two and suspended another with false allegations. And if students want a seat at PG, or if they want to pass, their parents will have to pay up their contributions –do their bit for Naidu’s dream building” (TGVM 183). “Raghavan being a teacher, he has eye on “principal’s plush green

imitation leather chair" (TGVM 184), and Veera Naidu put Raghavan in charge. Though Vasu master was eligible for that post, he was not selected because he was not greedy like Veera Naidu and Raghavan who make money in any considerations, according to these two, education is to mint money not a service based. But, Vasu believes in Gurukul, he tells his students that "I don't want to cheat you with half-truths or intermediate truths. If I am to teach and you are to learn, both of us must use this Gurukul for self-fulfillment" (TGVM 195). For Vasu giving education is service and a noble profession. Curbing one's eligibility and for one's selfish sake giving power to people who corrupt is one of the examples of politics. ITS novel deals with a very serious theme. Thus, it intertwines the threads of political and academic tensions. It also illustrates assertion of modern Indian intellectuals. It criticizes the forces which have curbed the freedom of expression, deny diversity which is an indispensable feature of India. The novel portrays how fundamental rights of human beings are sieged under political domination. *Fugitive Histories* explained how the fundamentalism is spreading across the world. Intolerance has become roots of few vested interests, politically motivated communal hatred; hate killings are disturbing the peace of the world. Githa Hariharan has explained the plight of Muslim women victims of the Godhra riots and its aftermath.

### **Identity Crisis**

The researcher identified that the characters in the Githa hariharan novels underwent identity crisis in different aspects, social identity, personal identity, regional identity and the personal identity. The realization had lit them up with the long overdue quest made them to feel hollow and the passion to emerge ingrained sufferings in different form of embellishment. The magnitude of the sufferings was so hard to surpass and the characters employed the expedient way to riddance their loss

and smashed the lethargy that crept on them. Certain characters have become sullen and drove to the morose silence. Constantly few changed the tack and adopted a fresh strategy from the mighty wielder and released from the futile inexistence. Hence in society people strive to have their identity. Women strive for personal identity in society, majority of women lose their voice and choice of living after marriage forget their ‘self’. Men also search for their identity, though majority of them search for social identity few men search for their personal identity and their true self. In this existing society, the contemporary Indian society it is understood that it is not men or women have identity crisis, on the whole the entire mankind face identity crisis.

Myth is a created one and it can be changeable. Indian society is a phallocentric society, as the society is a male dominated one it constructed the rules for women with the support of folk stories, fictitious stories, referring to the epics etc. Concepts like marriage, motherhood are based on myth. Marriage is based on astrology, as astrology is myth, matching two person’s horoscope and then finalize the marriage is absolutely nonsense because marriage is between two like-minded persons, not two matched horoscopes. But till today people of India follow it very strictly.

Extreme violence can be seen in WDT and FH. These two novels represent the cruelty of society on women where they were barbarically killed, raped and sexually harassed by men. Women were used to fulfill men’s desire. In WDT, as society is a phallocentric one, men would like to discharge their powers on weak gender.

‘Religion’ has become matter of prestige for people. In ITS and FH because of the religion people involve in violent activities that paved the way to communal riots. The supremacy of religion is what people are concerned with that leads to violence

there vested interests play the politics for their individual benefit. Political leaders failed to give a safe society to women and children. These religion, caste, and gender politics are very much existing factor in the society. The belief on supremacy of religion, caste and creed is absurd and it is a myth, which is still a prime factor for people to have an identity. Untouchability is purely a myth, but still it is practiced in the society, for the sake of this the minority and the down trodden people still suffer and their identity is just ‘other’.

Politics in education system is portrayed in both ITS and TGVM novels, both the protagonists Vasu master and Dr. Shivarthy have similar features because both are academicians, honest, secular, non political finds their identity through the help of Mani and Meena. Both attain their ‘self’ by understanding the other side of the world which involves in any sort of violence for few people’s political benefit. In both institutions involvement of politics which had curbed the growth of these academicians, lot many injustice they face. The characters directly or indirectly influenced by Gandhi and they understood the real meaning of life and become secular. Their personality was shaped by Gandhi hence society is always play an important role in shaping the identity of people. Through the thorough analysis about the identity crisis of mankind in the society portrayed in Githa Hariharan’s novels it is observed that myth and society play a major role in influencing individual’s identity.

### **Confer the ideas through Symbols and Images**

The writer prodigiously endeared the trait of symbols and images that attributes to each character. The symbols gleaned the pursuit of the ideas and revealed the intimated details in the best chosen way by the novelist. Not surprisingly the symbols and images asymmetrically surveyed the imperfections of the sorrowful

characters inner sense. The writer gave the proclivity for the characters and exquisitely mirrored the murky depths of the characters. The symbols and images pledged their allegiance to maintain the equilibrium and reinstated the dots and made it counterproductive. She opted it with the speculation and achieved the idea of narration with the powerful elementary purpose. She has used simple routine things which we use on our daily basis, as symbols like sari, mirror, newspaper, media, god, ghost, letters, burqa etc. even with simple symbols she tries to get the attention of the reader in explaining the hidden connotational meanings.

### **6.3. Conclusion:**

Literature holds mirror to the society. The activities which are carried out by men and women are closely observed. Eminent writers like Githa Hariharan destroyed the pressure of culture, tradition and rituals upon some characters in the form of dominance of gender ideology in male dominated society. Her works prove that Indian feminism theory analyses the patriarchy in all the dimensions. It has broken the conceptual hold of those traditions of masculine domination. The novels are portraying the sufferings of women as home makers and career oriented women. The novels also deal with the frustrations, social barriers, social agitations, agony and anguish of women. Her works reveal her conscious assumptions of male hegemony and unconscious presumptions on women. Through the rational minded characters, she has deconstructed the past and reconstructed the present for the better future. The modern women gave voice to long muted women to prove womanhood. Githa Hariharn also portrayed the chivalrous women by taking the extreme challenges.

The myths are projected in the feminist point of view. Myths are symbolic narrative containing set of values and role models. Myths have become stereotypes,

the influenced ones follow it. Women revolve around myth that includes the chaste, bounden duty etc. hence women offer struggle to their role models like Sita, Gandhari. Myths had also contained rebellious characters like Ganga, Amba and sometimes myth had stayed as educational.

At the close look at the novel analyzed shows that Indian society is patriarchal in nature. Women are confined to their prescribed roles. The society has suppressed them to live life under the dominance of male order is general feature of woman stereotype because tradition and culture are the unpretty affair. The society thinks in terms of their socially valuable. From centuries women were the targeted group for the social dominance. Hence, society has a major role in bringing the change in deprived women's life. But, in Indian society the role of women in the end of twentieth century and in the beginning of twenty first century has taken enormous evolution in all fields of life. The daring attitude of women breaking the shackles of the past has been remarkable that women gain much confidence to try their hands in all professions. In ITS and FH, the Indian society is portrayed as non violence, tolerance, diversity and co-operation are pre requisite features to be associated with the country like India. This has to be the inbuilt culture and heritage of the nation. There has to be harmonious existence of multi- cultured, multi-coloured, multi- caste and multi-religious has to be the distinct element of the nation.

Githa Hariharan formulates the female identity through the characters in her novels. As Indian society was a gender biased the identity and individualism was unheard by the female gender. She deconstructs the ideas of 'other' for female gender. She has brought the concept of liberation by finding 'self' by self assertive and savior of one's own that is liberating women from feudal society. It is also observed that few men also strive for their identity in this non secularist, communal part of society,

where politics are used as the tools of vested interests for their personal benefits. She has also focused on the symbols and images which also portray the hidden meanings and connotations about the identity and the concepts of myth, culture and male dominated society with reference to the identity. Hence, the construction and deconstruction of myth influence the shaping and reshaping of the society by creating individual's identity of mankind.

#### **6.4. Outcome of the Thesis:**

- The research has explored the dominance of patriarchy, myth and the diffusion of identity in the characters portrayed and there by analysing the gender ideology and theory of Indian feminism to discrete the objectives.
- The research has explored the construction and deconstruction of myths and their influence on the society and the characters and through that how individual characters respond to the situations
- The research has explored the influence of politics in shaping and reshaping the Indian society and how the society advert according to the duties prescribed to them.
- The research has explored the various symbols and images and their role in every individual.

#### **6.5. Limitations of the Study**

Since this research work is undertaken with stipulated time and for the degree of PhD, the researcher could not look into the comparative analysis of myth, society and identity themes in Githa Hariharan's novels i.e. TFN, TGVM, WDT, ITS and FH with western society and western works.

### **6.6. Scope of Future Research:**

Comparative study of myth, society and identity with western society and western works can be done to understand the difference between Hindu myth and Western myth or Greek mythology. The plight of women can be studied under the comparative analysis of eastern society and the western society in the theoretical frame work of both Indian feminism and Western feminism. The comparative analysis of identity crisis of men as well as women can be studied in depth between western and eastern society. How a caste based society is different from class based society and its influence in creating individual's identity.