

Chapter I **Introduction**

Literary fiction is the best medium to observe life without participating in it. It is a two-way mirror allowing the outsiders to study the lives of others and gives chance to analyse it. It allows complete, impartial and objective approach which is seldom possible in real life. An individual is either directly or indirectly involved in all aspects and happenings of life and therefore, a detached evaluation is more or less difficult.

One could study and evaluate disassociated lives, an event at societal or world level but then it is almost impossible to do the same with personalised aspects of life and therefore, literary fiction, which depicts real lives and individuals serve as dummies and simulations under examination. There are other forms of artistic representations as well, like painting, performance and so on. However, they are more abstract than concrete. More than any other art form fiction reflects life. What John Peter Joseph in his article “Rukmani as an Epitome of Indian Womanhood: A Critical Consideration of Kamala Markandaya’s *Nectar in a Sieve*” says regarding fiction is of significance in this context:

Fiction, being a unique form of literary expression, has undeniably occupied a significant place in Indian writing in English. In fiction the Indian English novelists naturally find a genuine medium for the expression of their artistic skills and perceptiveness. They manifest in their novels different sections of the Indian pluralistic contemporary society, its cultural ethos and glorious heritage. While experimenting with new stylistic techniques and language nuances the novelists depict not only the socio-political and cultural problems faced by Indians but also the psychological problems such as alienation, rootlessness and search for identity in their works. (54-55)

Indian fiction has gained a very significant place in world literature due to the careful nurturing, watering, trimming and nourishing of it by gardeners like Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao – to name only a few, who looked after the plant night and day. In the modern time, it is being tended and guarded by a number of writers who are reaping a rich harvest with the rewards and recognition they get all over the world. According to Srinivasa Iyengar, “Indian writing in English is but one of the voices in which India speaks. It is a new voice, no doubt, but it is as much Indian as the others” (3).

Fictional literature is agreeable and enjoyable for many different reasons. Short stories and novels can amuse as well as educate as they talk about different people, places and historical times. In fact, a fictional work may inspire one to reflect on the meaning of life itself. It also arouses interest and inquisitiveness in the readers to be acquainted with more and more new things. Consequently, critical inquiries involving both – rationale and imagination stem out.

Novel as a literary genre, when compared to poetry and drama, is not ancient. Further, it has relatively wider popularity among readers. Novel has gained importance in the last part of the nineteenth century. Earlier, reading of novels had been considered a frolicsome activity that serious-minded people should avoid. The famous novelist Jane Austen obviously disagreed with this view. In her novel *Northanger Abbey*, one of the characters named Catherine says, “The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid” (95). A novel is a work of fiction which is sometimes inspired by history or science and at others by human life itself.

Regarding the growth of novel, Srinivasa Iyengar in his book *Indian Writing in English* says:

The ‘novel’ as a literary phenomenon is new to India. Epics, lyrics, dramas, short stories and fables have their respectable ancestries, going back by several centuries, but it is only during a period of little more than a century that the novel

– the long sustained piece of prose fiction–has occurred and taken root in India. . .

. Novels have been, and are being published in a dozen Indian languages, and also

in English (314)

Novels in English by Indian writers have occupied a sizeable space in the international market. As Amar Nath Prasad says in his ‘Foreword’ to the book *Indian Women Writing in English: New Perspectives*, “The seed of Indian Writing in English was sown during the period of the British rule in India. Now the seed has blossomed into an ever green tree with fragrant flowers and ripe fruits. The fruits are being tasted not only by the native people, but they are also being ‘chewed and digested’ by the foreigners” (v).

Indian fictional writers in English have been inspired to use the fictional form of literary expression generously and skillfully. They have won several national and international acclamations, marvelous royalties and esteemed awards. Since the publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s novel *Rajmohan’s Wife* in 1864, the Indian novel in English has grown by leaps and bounds. After the I World War, the Indian English Novel became resolutely more truthful and pragmatic. Evidently, the novels written between the two World Wars depicted the modern social environment and were greatly prejudiced by the Gandhian ethos.

Indian English fiction has received international literary awards like the Booker, the Pulitzer, the Commonwealth – to name only the most famous ones. Indian English novelists like Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy have also earned huge fortunes and worldwide recognition based on their literary abilities. The Indian novel written in English language has an exclusive excellence and distinct place in world literature.

The genre of novel has undergone changes from time to time according to the reading generation, background and writer’s perception. A chronological study of the Indian novel also reveals that the pattern of the novel has changed from time to time. The progress of Indian English novel can be divided into three important stages.

The first stage emerged with the eminent trio – Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao in the mid 1930's. They are the actual precursors of the Indian English novel. The second important stage began with the writers like Arun Joshi, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala and Nayantara Sahgal in the mid 1950's and 1960's. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Bhabani Bhattacharya portrayed the themes of socio-economic and cultural world of the characters whereas writers like Arun Joshi and Anita Desai portrayed the internal world of the characters.

The third important development of Indian English novel evolved in the beginning of 1980's. Thereafter, Indian English writing received international recognition through immigrant writers who have settled abroad. India attained a prestigious position in 1981 when Salman Rushdie won the Booker Prize for his novel *Midnight's Children*. Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Jumpa Lahiri, Githa Hariharan and a few others representing this category have brought several accolades to India.

Among the novelists who have tried their hand to compose intriguing fiction in Bengal, Mulk Raj Anand procured a very prominent place through his novels. His literary collection invited eulogies with meritorious observations and a few of his works are *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940), *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953) and *Morning Face* (1968). The foremost characteristic of Mulk Raj Anand's novels is the authentic representation of the Indian culture – a culture which is blemished by so many iniquitous qualities like dishonesty, misdemeanor, superstitious beliefs, untouchability, political upheavals, racial discrimination and merciless persecution of women in a male-dominated society.

The works of R.K. Narayan have a distinctive quality which has made him unique among the readers. His works are exclusive on many grounds and the fictional setting of Malgudi is purely a construction of his imagination. While Mulk Raj Anand's works focus on the evil

prevailing in the society, Narayan's works focus on a small set of individuals and their oddities. Regarding his novels, Siddhartha Sharma in his book entitled *Arun Joshi's Novels: A Critical Study* opines, "In his novels we meet college boys, teachers, guides, tourists, municipal members, taxi drivers of Malgudi, but through the provincial theme he forges universal vision. Using Western technique but Indian material Narayan has been commendably successful, to use William Walsh's words, 'in making an Indian sensibility at home in English art'" (2). Some of his important works are *Swami and Friends* (1935), *Bachelor of Arts* (1936) *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945), *Mr. Sampath* (1949) *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), and *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1962).

Raja Rao, the youngest of the 'trio' is a scholar in Sanskrit, whose contribution to Indian writing in English is substantial. He has portrayed the sensible and glowing picture of the villages in India of the Gandhian Era. Raja Rao's views from the 'Foreword' of *Kanthapura* are quite remarkable in this context. "We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it" (5). A few of his noteworthy novels are *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *The Cow and Shakespeare* (1965) and *The Cow of the Barricades* (1947), and a collection of short stories.

The second phase witnessed more novelists and diverse themes. Writers like Bhabani Bhattacharya and Manohar Malgonkar focused on the good and evils found in the society with social realism. Bhattacharya intended that impiety of the society should be wiped out with the help of good literature. *So Many Hungers* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He who Rides a Tiger* (1954), and *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960) are a few of his novels. His novel *Shadow from Ladakh* won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1966.

The works of Manohar Malgonkar are different from the works of Bhattacharya. He established himself as a historical novelist. His novel *The Princes (1963)* deals with the life of a prince, as he was caught in the confrontation between an age of change and an age of crisis. His other great novels are *Distant Drum (1960)*, *Combat of Shadows (1962)*, *The Men who killed Gandhi (1978)*, *A Bend in the Ganges (1964)*, etc.

Arun Joshi is another Indian novelist of this period. He is best known for his striking novels, *Foreigner (1968)*, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas (1973)* and *Apprentice (1997)*. He is one among the few Indian writers to have received the Sahitya Academi Award. His other notable works are *The City and the River (1990)* and *Last Labyrinth (1981)*.

The third stage encompasses innumerable changes and aspects in this literary genre of Indian writing in English. This phase is surcharged with burgeoning writers. There are a few newly evolved features. Indian novels in English that have become best sellers are the works of the immigrant writers writing from abroad and the novels of women novelists who have contributed a considerable sum to Indian writing in English.

Chetan Bhagat is one of the most admired and trendy best-selling novelists in India. His works capturing the pulsating life of Indian youngsters have cut him a sizeable slice of readership. His well-read works are *Five Point Someone (2004)*, *One Night @ the Call Centre (2005)*, *The 3 Mistakes of My Life (2008)*, *2 States (2009)* and *Revolution 2020 (2011)*. A couple of his novels are also adopted into films. Besides being a best-selling novelist, Bhagat is also a columnist for the popular Indian English newspaper *The Times of India*.

Karan Bajaj and Ravinder Singh are other best-selling authors producing popular fiction. These writers claim an expansive circulation of their works, enthralling the readers with thrillers and love stories. Bajaj has written *Keep off the Grass (2008)* and *Johnny Gone Down (2010)*. Ravinder Singh is recognised for his works *I too had a Love Story (2008)* and *Can Love Happen Twice? (2011)*.

With writers carrying Indian lineage and foreign citizenship, immigrant literature has come to stay, that too extensively. There are many well-established novelists like, Bharathi Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Rohinton Mistry, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, and Jumpa Lahiri.

Bharati Mukherjee, the winner of a National Book Critic Circles Award is the author of seven novels and two short story collections and co-author of two books of non-fiction. Her fictional works are *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971), *Wife* (1975), *Darkness* (1985), *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988), *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Leave It to Me* (1997), *Desirable Daughters* (2002), *The Tree Bride* (2004) and *Miss New India* (2011). Like other immigrant writers who live in the U.S.A., she portrays their life experience in a new light called post-modernism. She primarily shows her peculiar sensibility for her cross-cultural crisis and the partial psyche of the migrants and their conflict between traditional Indian values and their interest in Western lives.

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a novelist, poet, and short story writer. This gifted and significant writer's works include *Arranged Marriage* (1995), *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001), *Neela: Victory Song* (2002), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), *Queen of Dreams* (2004), *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), and *One Amazing Thing* (2010). She was awarded the American Book Award for *Arranged Marriage*. This award-winning author and poet's work has been published in more than 50 magazines, including the *Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*.

Rohinton Mistry, an Indian born Canadian writer has an international reputation. His works capture the immigrant lives especially that of individuals from Parsi community. His works are *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995), *Family Matters* (2002) and *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) also published as *Swimming Lessons and Other Stories from*

Firozsha Baag (1989). He is the recipient of Governor General's Award for *Such a Long Journey*.

Vikram Seth is another renowned novelist who has to his credit, several novels – *The Golden Gate* (1986), *A Suitable Boy* (1993), *An Equal Music* (1999) and *A Suitable Girl* (2013). His themes vary from personal relationship to national politics. His literary involvement is appreciated with several awards including Padma Shri, Pravasi Bharatiya Samman, WH Smith Literary Award and Crossword Book Award.

Salman Rushdie is worthy of a special accommodation among the Indian immigrant writers. He is illustrious for his unique linguistic expressions and subject matter. He enjoys an international standing for his works: *Grimus* (1975), *Midnight's Children* (1981), *Shame* (1983), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), *Fury* (2001), *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), and *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008).

Jhumpa Lahiri is another immigrant writer living in America. This Indian American author's debut short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) won the Pulitzer Prize in the year 2000 for fiction. Her first novel *The Namesake* (2003) was adapted into a popular film. She has won several awards for her works. Her other notable work is *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). Her works revolve around the lives of individuals who are immigrants in foreign lands particularly the United States.

Indian women novelists have attained a significant position in the realm of fiction. They have given a generous contribution to the growth and the enhancement of Indian novels especially in English. The main focus of these writers has been to establish self-identity. They have portrayed women who struggle to establish their own identity; assert their own individuality fighting against the existing social order of the day. The most noticeable characteristic feature of the contemporary Indian English fiction has been the appearance of feminist literature. The women novelists try to voice out the sufferings, aspirations and assertions of women in a

traditionally male-dominated world. In the book entitled *Contemporary Indian English Novel*, Brahma Dutta Sharma and Susheel Kumar Sharma say:

Though Indian English novel remained male-dominated for quite some time, as all the major English novelists in the pre-Independence period including the three greats, namely, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, and Mulk Raj Anand came from the male section of the society, yet in the post-Independence period there have appeared on the horizon of Indian English novels a number of women writers who have made a significant contribution in the field and have definitely enriched it a great deal. They include Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherji, Kamala Markandaya, Shashi Deshpande, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Gita Mehta, Kusum Ansal and Arundhati Roy. (74)

Through their writings Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Githa Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy and Manju Kapur have captured the Indian ethos very effectively and competently. Their portrayal of the Indian spirit is very realistic. In addition to their insight into human nature, their artistic skill in dealing with the present-day complications bring out their concern with modern themes like tradition and modernity, identity crisis of their protagonists, Indian women's quest for independence, East-West conflict, freedom movement and the traumatic effects of Partition.

The foremost concerns of these women writers are the gender discrimination, women's physical and psychological exploitation and male domination. John Peter Joseph in his article entitled "Rukmani as an Epitome of Indian Womanhood: A Critical Consideration of Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*" illustrates this:

While analysing the character and the inner mind of the Indian woman from the viewpoint of feminine sensibility and insight the women novelists depict how

women struggle not only against aggressive male domination but also against the social, cultural and religious oppression prevalent in contemporary society. They also illustrate how legends, myths and orthodox attitudes and traditional beliefs strengthen the patriarchal practices which have made women inferior creatures and mere objects of pleasure. With their keen understanding and observation of contemporary Indian society women novelists deal with women's aspirations, hopes, desires, anxieties and emotional and social insecurity with artistic discernment. (55)

Kamala Markandaya is a well-known writer who deals with two kinds of cultures – one is cultural heritage and the other is accidental by habitations. She primarily focuses on India's quest for its true identity in the context of cultural changes. Her fictional characters compete for their identity. Her works include *Nectar in a Sieve* (1955), *Some Inner Fury* (1956), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Cofferdams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), and *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977). Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man* reveals the evil and ugly nature of racial prejudice; it is not a protest expressed in a smooth way, but an angry protest against the worldwide problem of racial hatred. This distinctive feature has assigned her a significant place among Indo-English novelists.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala is a contemporary of Kamala Markandaya. She is the first woman novelist of India to win the prestigious Booker Prize in 1975 for her novel *Heat and Dust*. Her novels and short stories are [*To Whom She Will*](#) (1955), [*The Nature of Passion*](#) (1956), [*Esmond in India*](#) (1958), [*The Householder*](#) (1960), [*Get Ready for Battle*](#) (1962), [*A Backward Place*](#) (1965), [*A Stronger Climate*](#) (1968), [*An Experience of India*](#) (1971), [*Heat and Dust*](#) (1975), [*Three Continents*](#) (1987), [*Poet and Dancer*](#) (1993), [*Shards of Memory*](#) (1995), [*My Nine Lives*](#) (2004)

and so on. Jhabvala has lived in India and her life and experiences in this country are recreated in her works. For this reason, her portrayal of Indian character, Indian family system, the Indian society and the Indian sensibility is estimable. Veena Singh in the article entitled “Women Novelists of the Post-colonial India” quotes Khushwant Singh who calls her an ““adopted daughter of India”” (167).

Nayantara Sahgal, the daughter of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and niece of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, is well-known for her novels. She fundamentally deals with the theme of politics. She is also known as a successful political columnist in different newspapers. She is distinguished by her style of writing with simplicity and boldness. Sahgal’s work has been popularised by the affairs of day-to-day political ups and downs with a tinge of Western liberalism. Most of the major characters highlight the twist and turns of politics. Besides politics, she also narrates the problems of Indian women –searching for sexual freedom and self-realisation. Her well known novels are *From Fear Set Free* (1963), *A Time to Be Happy* (1963), *This Time of Morning* (1965), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *Sunlight Surrounds You* (1970), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *Indira Gandhi: Her Road to Power* (1982), *Plans for Departure* (1985), *Rich Like Us* (1985), *A Situation in New Delhi* (1989) and *Lesser Breeds* (2003).

Anita Desai is a renowned novelist and short story writer, who has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times. Her notable contributions to the field of Literature are *Cry, The Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-bye Blackbird* (1971), *The Peacock Garden* (1974), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Cat on a Houseboat* (1976), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Games at Twilight* (1978), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *The Village By The Sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaca* (1995), *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), *Diamond Dust and Other Stories* (2000), and *The Zigzag Way* (2004). Her novel *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) won the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize and Sahitya

Akademi Award. Her children's book *The Village by the Sea* (1982) won the Guardian Children's Fiction Award.

Shashi Deshpande is a well-known name in the field of Indian literature. She published her first collection of short stories in 1978 and her first novel *The Dark Holds No Terror* in 1980. Trained as a journalist, Deshpande's work focuses on the reality and truth of the lives of Indian women. She won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the novel *That Long Silence* in 1990 and the Padma Shri award in 2009. Her other notable works include *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come up and Be Dead* (1983), *The Intrusion and Other Stories* (1993), *Small Remedies* (2000), *A Matter of Time* (2001), *The Binding Vine* (2002), *Moving On* (2004) and *In the Country of Deceit* (2008). She depicts Indian woman as a mute victim who knows how to bend down to the male-dominated society.

Arundhati Roy who won the Booker Prize in 1997 for her novel *The God of Small Things*, has also written two screenplays and several collections of essays. Her characters are able to convince the readers as to how to assume feminist significance by reason. Her novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) reveals the abnormal psychology of men and women in the typical Indian society. In the decade following that momentous achievement, Arundhati Roy has become an ardent advocate of social and economic justice for the country's oppressed minorities.

Manju Kapur who won the famous Commonwealth Writers' Prize for her novel *Difficult Daughters* is presently working as a Professor of English in Delhi University. The novel is autobiographical like Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997). Her other novels are *A Married Woman* (2003), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008) and *Custody* (2011). She effectively describes the personal subtleties especially the psyche of a woman. She also manages to merge the internal with the external.

Anjana Appachana is another woman novelist representing Indian Writing in English. Her first book *Incantations and Other Stories* (1991) is set in the early eighties in India. Her first novel and second book *Listening Now* was published by Random House in 1997. One of her short stories titled *Sharmaji* was included in *Mirrorwork: 50 Years of Indian Writing 1947-1997* a collection edited by Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West. She received the O. Henry Festival Prize and a creative writing fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in the United States. Generally her works deal with the ordinary Indian woman's dreams, passions and frustrations.

Shobha De is an Indian novelist, copywriter, freelancer and columnist. She is best known for her columns in *The Week*. The most important driving force of her novels is the psycho-sexual stream. In 1988, she shot into literary renown with her first novel, *Socialite Evening* which is Lawerencian in expression. She is known as the Indian Jackie Collins and 'The Maharani of Muck.' Her other prominent works are *Starry Nights* (1989), *Sultry Days* (1989), *Sisters* (1992), *Small Betrayals* (1995), *Second Thoughts* (1996), *Surviving Men* (1998) and *Snapshots and Selective Memory* (1998).

Gita Mehta has emerged as an Indian English Novelist of considerable worth representing the postmodern era. The novels *Karma Cola* (1979), *Raj* (1989), *A River Sutra* (1993) and *Snakes and Ladders: Glimpses of Modern India* (1997) have brought her much fame. The river in *River Sutra* is the river of life. *Raj* is about the transfiguring knowledge of her protagonist in post-colonial India. *Karma Cola* focuses on the East-West encounter. On the subject of this novel Brahma Dutta Sharma and Susheel Kumar Sharma in the book entitled *Contemporary Indian English Novel* opine:

. . . here an innocent Westerner, who has come to India in search of a Guru who can enable one to attain spiritual enlightenment, gets cheated by a hypocrite who pretends to be a teacher of spiritual affairs. The Word 'Karma Cola' is analogous

to the word 'Coca Cola' and the suggestion embodied in the novel is that if the West sells Coca Cola to India, Indians have their theory of *Karma* to sell to the West in return, and if the Westerners exploit and cheat the Indians, all Indians are not saints. (79)

Anita Nair lives in Bangalore and her novels are passionately woven on the thread of human nature and values with a female oriented component. Her *Mistress* (2005) was included in the list for the Orange Broadband Prize for fiction. She was working as a creative director of an advertising agency in Bangalore when she wrote her first book, a collection of short stories *Satyr of the Subway* (1997). It was her second novel *Ladies Coupe* (2001), the story of a woman's search for strength and independence, which received wide acclamation and recognition. Anita Nair also writes poetry and cookery books with themes on just about every aspect of life. She is also known for her work *The Better Man* (2000).

The Indian women writers have been gravely considering problems faced by women. They view life psychologically, humanistically and realistically. These women writers bring out the inhuman impositions upon women in the Indian society and try to arouse public consciousness which may lead to their emancipation. As their works serve as an instrument to bring about reforms in the society, their novels have acquired a significant and important place in English Literature.

Independence has encouraged women writers to write focusing on freedom in all aspects. The post-independence women writers try to throw away the age-long traditions and predestined social order – the veil, which covered all their mental abilities and accomplishments. They decide to move out of the four walls and go into the world with a new conviction and resolution.

Every creative artist adopts an effective style of his own. Nayantara Sahgal deals with themes like woman's existence, survival and identity crisis. Man-woman relationship and the unequal status of women in the Indian society have been dealt by Shashi Deshpande.

Psychological state of a lonely woman is depicted by Anita Desai. However, Githa Hariharan uses all these themes and expresses her angry protest against the society. She drives home her message with the help of age-old proverbs, stories, myths and beliefs. Her vision encompasses the holistic development of woman by tracing out the history of woman's role and edifying the entry of a new woman who is true to her ownself.

Githa Hariharan was born in Coimbatore, India, in a Tamil Brahmin family from Palghat, South India. Her father was a journalist in a leading Indian newspaper, *The Times of India* and her mother dedicated all her energies and attention to bringing up her three children. She had a happy childhood, being allowed to grow up in the enthralling company of books, feeding on the early diet of Victorian classics and moving on to discover the delights of the Japanese novels. Her training in Indian Carnatic music engendered in her a deep love for it, a love that later diversified to include jazz within its ambit and spilled over into the symphonic organisation of her fiction.

Githa Hariharan's upbringing was quite traditional but not oppressive. It was fairly liberal. As a child, in addition to being allowed to read what she liked, she could freely engage in discussions and arguments. She received a liberal education in leading public institutions in Bombay, Manila and the United States; she took her Master's Degree in Communication from Fairfield University, Connecticut and subsequently worked briefly as a television scriptwriter in New York.

Githa Hariharan had been working as an editor of social sciences for Orient Longman, a large publishing house from 1979 for ten years in Mumbai, Chennai and New Delhi and then followed it up with a stint as a freelancer. Finally realising her vocation, she took the major decision of abandoning this profession to become a fulltime writer. Githa Hariharan is fiercely protective of her privacy but is nonetheless anxious to involve herself in public as well as political issues. Seeing the bad effects of communal riots, she gathered a small group of women

writers to set up a Movement for Secularism. She has written stories for children, stories which the contributors believed could make a difference. With Shama Futehally, she has co-edited *Sorry, Best Friend!* (1997), a collection of committed secular stories. As part of her ongoing passionate commitment to social and political engagement, she has made it a point to address the issue of women's struggles in the face of global fundamentalism.

Among the contemporary Indian women writers writing in English Githa Hariharan has won a significant place by carving an alcove for herself. In 1995, Githa Hariharan challenged the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act as discriminatory against women. The case, *Githa Hariharan and Another vs. Reserve Bank of India and Another* led to Supreme Court judgement in 1999 on guardianship. So through this case, the legal rights of mothers were promoted, both father and mother having equal rights to be the guardian of a Hindu minor.

Githa Hariharan's published work includes novels, short stories, essays, newspaper articles and columns. Githa Hariharan's debut novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. Githa Hariharan has published a collection of short stories entitled *The Art of Dying* (1993). Her other novels are *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994), *When Dreams Travel* (1999), *In Times of Siege* (2003) and *Fugitive Histories* (2009) and a collection of stories for children *The Winning Team* (2004). She has also edited *A Southern Harvest*, a volume of sixteen short stories translated for the first time into English from the four major languages of South India: Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu. Githa Hariharan's works have also been translated into French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch and Greek. Her essays and fictions have also been included in several collections and anthologies such as Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West's *Mirrorwork: 50 years of Indian Writing 1947-1997*. *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *In Times of Siege* were also published in English in England and the United States. She is a regular columnist for the major Indian newspaper *The Telegraph*. She has been a visiting Professor or

Writer-in-Residence in several Universities including Dartmouth College and George

Washington University of Canterbury at Kent in the UK and Jamia Millia Islamia in India.

In *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), Githa Hariharan constructs a few fictional lives converging at a point. It questions patriarchy and brings to light the struggle of three generations of women for survival. The chief protagonist Devi, the youngest, the United States- returned girl, comes to her native Tamil Nadu in South India to make an inadequate married life. Devi finds herself trapped in loveless domesticity which makes her choose her own way. Another important woman is Sita who tries to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity. The last one is Mayamma, the family retainer in Devi's husband's house who believes that successful married life is to endure pain without murmuring. These women struggle between tradition and modernity.

The Art of Dying (1993) is an outstanding collection of twenty short stories projecting the post-feminist ethos with perfection. The stories are depressing tales of eccentricity. The writer dives deep into the problem of the meaning of life and death, the perception of loss and the insignificant memories that heighten this feeling. The main text runs easily well in the traditional manner maintaining the tradition whereas the muted subtext speaks louder than the voiced narrative. She uses the genre of short story as a penetrating vehicle for expressing the injustice done to women and to project the predicament of women.

The Ghosts of Vasu Master (1994) is a story of Vasu Master, a small town retired teacher from PG Boys' school. The retired life brings loneliness in his life. He relates his past with present and discovers in his own halting but imaginative way, the nature of teaching. This search for identity is hurried up by the arrival of Mani, a mentally retarded child, who cannot –or– will not – speak. Vasu Master begins to tell one story after the other. Githa Hariharan uses fantasy and fable to delineate a host of wonderfully imagined characters, with the humane and philosophical

voice of Vasu Master in the novel. This is a challenge to the likes of which he has never come across before in his long, uneventful career as a teacher.

The novel *When Dreams Travel* (1999) in keeping with her continued interest in legend and myth, draws on the *Arabian Nights* and bravely picks up Shahrzad and her younger sister Dunyazad, as the protagonists of an inventively skilled novel about euphonic dreams. Instantly recalling the likes of Angela Carter, Gabriel, Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie and the magic realist mode, the memories of Dunyazad overflowing with stories, become the impressive point for an original reinterpretation of the archetypal myth. It weaves round Scherazade – or Shahrzad of the thousand and one night – stories that perfectly chart the emotional journeys of characters seeking love beyond the barriers of nations and generations.

In Times of Siege (2003) is the story of Shiv Murthy, a history professor. He is forced to confront the demands of his times and choose a direction for the future. The narrative unfolds the story of ordinary lives of men and women struggling to make sense of hatred, ignorance, love and loyalty in individuals. Sharp and gripping and permeated with a chilling sense of menace, *In Times of Siege* presents an uncompromising mirror of India today.

The storyteller of *The Winning Team* (2004) finds the winning team of friends, Nasira, Gopal, Akbari, Veer, Dulari and Ram. He, like the kahaniwala tells the old stories in which all the happy, clever and funny faces of Tenali Raman, Naseeruddin Hodja, Gopal Bhar, Birbal – change into the people he knows.

Fugitive Histories (2009) deals with the fine crusade of Hindu Muslim dilemma coming from mixed parentage. However, this is a dilemma that all the grown up people who have multiple identities face like the immigrant people. The expression is good; the flow is pleasant and the narration is charming. It is the history of a family running alongside the thoughts of two women and the third one from the current scenario.

Githa Hariharan has demonstrated a variety of characters according to their age, sex and profession. They range from a great grandmother to a kid. However, her characters are varied

and brimming with life. Her responsiveness pierces through the mass and like an x-ray she can read the innermost state of mind. The old characters are shown to be a symbol of the traditional, predictable society.

Characterisation in fiction is a challenging ability demanding observation, experience and imagination. Evidently, Githa Hariharan seems at ease at her task of sketching characters and their imaginary lives. In fact, her characters replicate the real life individuals in general, though sometimes, their approach is radical and unconventional. However, the approach is not far-fetched from reality; indeed, it is a very close likelihood and an inspiration.

Githa Hariharan is careful not to attribute superhuman or supernatural qualities to her characters; however, she integrates superhuman and paranormal beings through myths and fables. She renders characters living ordinary lives, but with strong feelings and emotions which create a considerable positive difference in their lives. Be it, house wives, teenagers or aged parents, she makes an earnest attempt to relate them in a relevant way to her plot and themes.

Moreover, it will not be inappropriate to make an observation that she gives the characters a mind of their own. The world is the same and so are the problems, but, the characters choose to leave an individual impression in the form of decisive output. Each of the character represents some or other aspect of life. There is such a difference among these aspects that one has to not just look but see with critical objectivity. A few represent old age coupled with loneliness; few the boredom of life; few the fickleness and pettiness of national issues and few the ambiguous human relationships.

Like many other Indian writers, Githa Hariharan's writing is not devoid of Indian flavour or tinge. Her mastery in portraying the gaiety of elaborate domesticity, or conflict between tradition and modernity is laudable. She is a writer conscious of each and every detail of Indian life. Githa Hariharan is a contemporary writer extending modern ideas, nevertheless, amplifying traditional ways. To be more exact, she uses traditional subject matter and in a distinct manner

shows both the pros and cons of following tradition. She offers food for thought for the readers in a most simple way.

Thematically analysing, Githa Hariharan's works spot varied and diverse themes. She does not stick to one particular theme or idea, but interrelates multiple ideas. However, all her themes seem interconnected and very imperative. She discusses various themes which can be categorised under heads like – psychology, human relationship, national issues and so on. Githa Hariharan's novels delineate the obscurity of a society which is severely stratified and lives under constant menace of communal, religious and ethnic violence. She brings forth the differences which social elements feed on to light a funeral pyre of peace and harmony in the society.

Narrative technique being the most inevitable device of a writer requires analysis and observation. Githa Hariharan uses a variety of narrative techniques. She has employed first person narration, third person narration and other techniques in an adept manner. She has employed the postmodern narrative technique of intertextuality in a couple of her works too. Her work *When Dreams Travel* abounds in intertextuality.

Githa Hariharan's felicity in relating myth is very natural, deferential and gracious. There are a few writers like, Salman Rushdie and Shashi Tharoor who employ myth in a trivialising and derisive way. Unlike them, Githa Hariharan gives a solemn and considerate touch. Gandhari, Damayanti and Amba are brought with their dignity. They do not belong to the distant past. While, Tharoor displays his characters to scorn and ridicule, Githa Hariharan gives the victim a dignity and respect.

Besides, Rushdie and Shashi Tharoor, there are a few women Indian novelists as well who share a common bond with Hariharan like, Gita Mehta and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. They share their love of India's affluent tradition. Their mythical profusion renders their work a concrete ground.

Rekha and Anup Beniwal in the article entitled “From Re-Presentation to Self-Presentation: The Problematics of Female Body / Sexuality in Contemporary Indian Women Writing” comment on Githa Hariharan’s narratives:

Githa Hariharan’s narratives are a perceptive blend of various concerns – the problematic of body description within/by patriarchy, the visualisation of body as a text or a discursive site, as a seat of desires, emotions and intellect, and sites of suppression and resistance – around female body and try to understand their implications on female body within gendered social organisation. They offer an extensive critique on how patriarchy, in its acts, both overt and covert, positions the female body to its advantage and tries to etch out a blueprint for the emancipation of suppressed/oppressed bodies. (88)

Simplicity and modernity mark Githa Hariharan’s forte. Nonetheless, powerfulness of her ideas is infectious and is conveyed through her writing. Pradeep Trikha in the article entitled “Githa Hariharan’s *The Thousand Faces of Night*: Straight from a Woman’s Life” while appreciating Githa Hariharan says that she, ““has a gifted pen that’s able to dip itself into a trove of refined observations of life and all the pain and plunder it can inflict on the unsuspecting wanderer”” (169).

Githa Hariharan highlights the distinguishing Brahminical ethics which has been in vogue. Similar to T. S. Eliot, she also believes that the objective of the writer is to transform ordinary ideas into a work of art. She is very particular about the contemporary relevance of her ideas devised as literary themes. Urmila Varma in her article entitled “Satire as a Mode of Expression in Gita Hariharan’s *The Thousand Faces of Night*” says, “Githa Hariharan is a new voice which cannot remain stifled or silent any more. It has to resound in order to be heard. It is a

prophetic voice announcing the emergence of a new identity. Her pen, which is mightier than sword, attempts to establish a new order” (104).

Githa Hariharan uses epic and the Puranic tradition as a vantage point. The novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* highlights and analyses the deviation between the real and mythical condition of women. Githa Hariharan exaggerates the pain and tribulations in the lives of these women, when they encounter difficulties for self-assertion. She makes combined use of myth and folklore to widen the space of the lives of ‘real’ people, especially women. She uses some outstanding tales from Hindu folklore and mythology in order to illustrate her narrative and to convey her message straight to the reader.

Githa Hariharan’s work has been reviewed broadly and for the most part positively, revealing the popularity of her work both within India and abroad. The reviewers and literary scholars have explored Githa Hariharan’s works and discovered many underlying ideas and aspects. Meenakshi Bharat appreciates her eloquence in putting forth Hindu Brahmin life. In her article entitled, “Githa Hariharan (1957-)” she states her opinion about the Commonwealth’ award given to her for her, “‘sharp observation of Hindu social life and the subtle depiction of the relationships of women of different generations.’ Even Salman Rushdie in his and Elizabeth West’s *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing: 1947- 1997* has applauded her as ‘one of the most welcome presences’ in the Indian sub-continent” (113).

Githa Hariharan’s narrators differ in age and sex and this has been a subject of interest for many readers and scholars. Shinde in the article entitled “The ‘Feminine Ghosts’ in Githa

Hariharan’s *The Ghosts of Vasu Master*” quotes Shashi Deshpande’s argument:

‘when a man writes of the particular problems a man is facing, he is writing male propaganda. Nobody says that. Why is it said only about women writers?’ *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* is not ‘male propaganda’, because it is written not by a man, but a woman. It is not ‘female propaganda’ either, because the primary

focus is on the problems encountered by Vasu Master as a teacher and not on the problems of his 'feminine ghosts'. . . She makes the reader realize woman's subordinate, inferior position in family and society and the need of the hour to confer on her the rightful, equal, independent status that would act as an impetus to her development as an individual and a social being. (130-131)

Githa Hariharan displays how women's dependence on men causes renunciation of her personal self and interruption of normal life. She tries to inspire the 'male space' to fill it by 'female' resolution. Through her writing Githa Hariharan tries to bring out the freedom of space for women in Indian Society.

Monika Gupta observes in her article entitled "History Versus Politics or Politics Versus History: A Study of Githa Hariharan's *In Times of Siege*" that Githa Hariharan exposes an ordinary, simple and honest person who finds it very difficult to live on the same plane with prejudiced and biased religion of self-destruction within different groups in Indian society. She tries to convey the message that religious fundamentalists have been responsible for the horrific destruction of the world.

Githa Hariharan's *In Times of Siege* deals with very present and burning problems the common man has to face. Fundamentalism is very thorny and barbed. Monika Gupta, in her article entitled "Passive and Active Forms of Resistance in Githa Hariharan's *In Times of Siege*" says "The so-called 'fundoos' try to subdue the voice of people who are intellectual and capable for the sake of cheap publicity. Githa Hariharan tries to portray Shiv's resistance and invokes the readers to come to a sensible conclusion" (95). She vividly portrays the social as well as personal problems, which are hidden for the social purpose. She advocates resistance against prejudice. She presents both forms of resistance – active and passive. 'Resistance' is the main source of disputation in Githa Hariharan's novel but she makes the readers put on their thinking caps. She

does not put the words in the reader's mouth but prickles the intelligence and allows each person to make his choices.

Githa Hariharan has successfully portrayed the battle of woman in the society. She traces out that motherhood is either a power or weakness in her novels. What Avis Joseph in the article entitled "The Intricate Web of Human Relationships in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*" quotes as Paulina Palmer's opinion, is most suitable to Githa Hariharan: "the identification of femininity with an experimentally fluid form of writing which subverts the reader's expectations of linear, rational discourse, merging identities and ego-boundaries in a manner similar to that which occurred in the pre-oedipal, mother-infant bond . . ." (129) is coherent with Githa Hariharan's novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*. She has mastery over the presentation of man – woman relationship and the innermost tensions that a woman has to face.

Interweaving myths, fables and legends with the main narrative is Githa Hariharan's forte. Her mastery in relating traditional literature to her fictional scaffold is awe-inspiring. Few articles discuss the intertextual pattern woven in her novels, right from *The Thousand Faces of Night*.

Pradeep Trikha in the article entitled "Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*: Straight from a Woman's Life" says, "Hariharan writes in a clean and straight-forward manner— all her characters are suitably dealt, they talk and communicate effectively. Stories from Indian epics (the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*) provide scaffolding to the main storyline of the novel" (173). She aptly communicates the significance of epic stories to the contemporary real life.

Pradeep Trikha offers his opinion about Githa Hariharan's understanding of human psychology as well:

Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* compels the reader to undergo an enigmatic experience, along with the protagonist, straight from a woman's life.

She ferrets out the struggle of Indian women in her affiliation with society and

man for the sake of preserving her identity. The novel brings alive the underworld of Indian women's lives – where most dreams are thwarted and the only constant thing is survival. The sharper relevance of the whole issue is on universal suffering of women in the subcontinent. (169)

In the article entitled “Peopled by Ghosts and Absences” Urvashi Butalia says that human and non-human things and ghosts are effectively used by Githa Hariharan. Regarding Githa Hariharan's way of writing, Butalia observes: “It must also take considerable courage, in today's writing-in-English atmosphere, to work against the expectation that women must write about women and men about men. *Vasu Master* is not an easy read. Nor should it be. The subject is not an easy one. But what is clear is that Githa Hariharan is a writer to be taken seriously” (30).

In patriarchal set up, a frustrated woman would undergo the trauma of isolation and loneliness. However, Githa Hariharan has changed the setup, by giving other solutions that propose transformation and joy in a set of different circumstances that overthrow the prevailing social designs and values. She is able to achieve this by making her protagonist understand her womanhood, thus giving a new meaning in her novels.

Premila Paul, in her article entitled “Return to the Veena: Progress towards Self-realization in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*” affirms that Githa Hariharan portrays the struggle of women to attain their space in Indian society. She also presents the effects of patriarchy on women of different social groups and ages, particularly mentioned in the restrictive institution of marriage. She also invokes characters from mythology and the lives of saints and relates them to the characters in the novel. In the words of Premila Paul:

Githa Hariharan shows that all through the ages the society has sustained the same ideal of womanhood by handing down behavioral patterns. But some characters like Sita and Parvati, though they are steeped in the value system, manage to find space and scope for rebellion within the institution they conform to. They use

their state of oppression as a weapon against the very structures that hold them back. This subtle but powerful act of subversion and control makes them feel they have their space and power to direct their destiny and even that of others. But in effect they have internalized marginalization and they contribute considerably to the reinforcement of patriarchal values. (108)

Prabha Pant, in the article entitled “Variations on a Theme: Humanism in Arundhati Roy’s *The Cost of Living* and Githa Hariharan’s *The Art of Dying*” says that, Githa Hariharan easily wins over the reader through her narrative ability and fictional life. The fictional characters and their situations explore the lives of her human protagonists. She also makes her characters overcome or at least make an effort to overcome qualms and worries, which is the key to her appeal. It shows her humanism which helps to sensitise the readers and make the readers to see deep within themselves and also understand the problem of others. Prabha Pant says:

Mulk Raj Anand, the doyen of humanistic literature, averred that art was an illuminating factor in human experience and poetry was a powerful medium through which one could think humanly. Both, Roy and Hariharan, validate this assertion. Their writing is a testimony to the fact that, ‘We all have slumbering realms of sensibility, which can be coaxed into wakefulness by books.’ (101)

Githa Hariharan’s *Sorry, Best Friend!* is a collection of wonderful stories, edited by the author herself. The envisioned reader is aged twelve, but even adults also can enjoy equally. However, when read aloud, readers from all age-groups enjoy these short stories. She tries to convey the message that, if somebody mocks at a person, that person need not bother. Anne M. Dayanandan in the article entitled “Wise and Wonderful” endorses Githa Hariharan’s point, for the reason that one day the disrespectful people will remember and understand that each person has a place in this strange, funny world of ours. (48)

Navtej Sarna, in the article entitled “Oh! For the Realms of the Spirit” says that the first few pages of Githa Hariharan *In Times of Siege* quicken the reader’s pulse. It talks about Professor Murthy’s article and describes Meena’s broken leg, after which Githa Hariharan shifts her gear. “Convinced, it would appear, of the need not just to write a novel, but also to make an unambiguous political statement, she drops the tale of temptations and begins a predictable tale of liberal versus fundamentalists or ‘fundoos’ as we get to know them” (31).

Indira Nityanandam refers to the opinion of Kushwant Singh in the article entitled, “A Search for Identity: Githa Hariharan’s *The Thousand Faces of Night*”: “Githa Hariharan’s world of a South Indian extended family is to me more accurate than R.K. Narayan’s” (183). Damodar Rao says in his article entitled “Penance as Multiple Response in Githa Hariharan’s *The*

Thousand Faces of Night” that it deals with the penance in its innumerable forms: in its familiar and not-so-familiar ways in the context of the exploration of the Indian woman situation. The novel explicates this situation in physical and psychological terms. A strong urge for the expression of penance, in one form or other, permeated the Indian woman’s psyche conditioned as she is by forces that manipulate her submission and surrender. (159)

Githa Hariharan’s short story collection *The Art of Dying* has promoted the ideas of postmodernist ethos. It primarily concentrates on the traditional power equations, as she delicately makes the reader feel the boiling tumult just below the surface. The muffled subtext speaks more powerfully than the uttered narrative. The short story “The Art of Dying” mainly talks about conventional tenor of a woman’s life. Rajul Bhargava in his article entitled “Infidel Heteroglossia? Postmodernist Feminist Configurations in Githa Hariharan’s *The Art of Dying*” says about women’s life:

... ‘wifing’, childbearing’ ‘bleed, dry up, expand with life, ‘peaceful, gentle existence’ but to the woman it is a contraption’ which moves only in one

direction-negation of the self, leading to a ‘yawning emptiness.’ It is in such an undulating current that men like to believe they have securely anchored their women’s lives who in their turn survive on ‘stray bits of flotsam’, their legacy of ‘stubborn dregs of memory’ when they had thought life to be different for them.

(79)

Tripti Garg in his article entitled “Narrative Technique in Githa Hariharan’s *The Thousand Faces of Night*” says about Githa Hariharan’s concern for the pathetic condition of Indian society, fallacies, myths, religious conviction, marriage and love etc. In another article entitled “*The Thousand Faces of Night: Interrogating Conjugal Ideals*” she utters that, the reality of women’s fate is revealed through the three women characters of Devi, Mayamma and Sita. It shows that, even though they belong to three different generations, the reality of women’s fate residues as it is, no change at all. It also replicates her concepts about the plight of wives in India.

Tripti Garg states:

The primary thing that strikes is the insensitivity of Indian husbands to psychology of their wives. Even the educated husbands (like Mahesh, who is representing the whole educated male chauvinistic) fail miserably in this respect. Through this Hariharan has tried to make the readers, especially males, vigilant to widen their thoughts for paying a significant place to the partner’s desires, emotions and feelings [;] otherwise the result will be like Devi’s or Uma’s or

Gauri’s marriage. (94)

Avis Joseph, in the article entitled “The Intricate Web of Human Relationships in Githa Hariharan’s novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*” says, “The intricate web of human relationships, as it was instrumental in the development of the self, was a dominant concern in Githa Hariharan’s novels. Each of her novels is focused on different issues – loneliness, clash

with male ego, the degree of freedom within marriage and the extent to which one could approximate independence” (124).

Anita Singh in one of her books *Indian English Novel in the Nineties and After: A Study of the Text and its Context* points out that, Githa Hariharan’s *In Times of Siege* seems to go deep into the matter of what occurs when people who take pleasure in moderate ideals are put to test. However, it also says that people who might not seem openly biased can in some ways express their suffering and their annoyance during such circumstances. For example, the Emergency, the knocking down of Babri Masjid, the Gujarat carnage and the global level war in Iraq brought such people forward. She further adds:

In Times of Siege provides a compassionate but topical look at our collective lives in the throes of saffronization, communal divide and societal disparities. It is against the environment of this grammar of Indian politics that this novel is written and dedicated. ‘For all those who stand up in times of siege.’ It states Githa Hariharan’s honest commitment to sanctity of human rights to a free and peaceful life. (95-96)

The novel *In Times of Siege* strives to make the mind of readers to have a more liberal and pluralistic vision of the world, a world which contains different religions, nationality and backdrops. People should not clash condemning and disparaging each other, but survive in perfect accord and good relations. She avers that “The text implicitly concludes that basic human rights must be protected not only for the sake of the individuals and countries involved but to preserve the human race” (106).

Anita Singh in her article entitled, “Stairway to the Stars: Women Writing in Contemporary Indian English Fiction” opines that Githa Hariharan’s *When Dreams Travel* is about women’s stories. In the original story of the Arabian Nights, women are hushed and not present. She reflects:

These women include Shahrzad's sister, their mother, and the mother of Shahryar herself. Their predicament illustrates 'Simone de Beauvoir's assertion in *Second Sex* about men's marginalization of women. This view corroborates Michael Foucault's observation about the 'power-sex' correlative . . . According to this observation, the regime assigns roles to women and decrees after social, religious and cosmic concepts convenient to the interest and desires of the ruling class.

(109)

Githa Hariharan's human concern and her obsession for accuracy is quite obvious.

Shobana Bhattacharji gives her idea on *When Dreams Travel*, in her article entitled "Dreams and deeds." Githa Hariharan's novel functions at a less "realistic" level, but the novel seriously questions the evidence of the *Arabian Nights*. In the *Arabian Nights*, a king kills the women after seducing them. Since no woman fully satisfies the king's craving, he selects a virgin for each and every day, seduces her in the night and kills her in the morning. She says, "This self-absorbed scene lives on," writes Hariharan, 'shamelessly immortal'" (11). She further adds, that the novel *When Dreams Travel* seems to be 'sound solemn' and makes the readers feel 'slightly boring' whereas in reality it is not so. It is a combination of magic and different narrative styles which makes the reader feel as if he is reading bed time stories. Shobana Bhattacharji further adds:

Nevertheless, as it careers through jinns, real and imaginary travel, past and present, glorious etymologies of names, Central Asia, India, and much more,

When Dreams Travel affirms what Shelley said:

'To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite,
To forgive wrongs darker than Death or Nights,
To defy Power which seems Omnipotent,
To love and bear; to hope, till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
This, like thy glory, Titan! Is to be Good, great and joyous,
beautiful and free,
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory.' (11)

Carmen Kagal in his article entitled “Fantasy Unlimited” remarks that, “*When Dreams Travel* is worth reading because of the richness of its imagery and the seductiveness of its prose. As a writer Githa Hariharan has perfect pitch, judging the sound and weight of each word to achieve rhythmic balance. As when she speaks of ‘a huge stepped-well, its depths cool in the earth’s embrace?’” (49).

Accordingly, the modern Indian women writers have made use of modern method of narration instead of sticking on to the conventional mode of narration. They have adopted innovative techniques and a lot of experimentation by the frequent use of ‘stream of consciousness’ or ‘interior monologue.’

The review of literature makes it quite obvious that Githa Hariharan’s fictional works render more than just reading. There are ideas and aspects implicit which can be made more palpable by carrying out an analytical study. With the assistance of a theoretical concept, critical inquiry could be further strengthened.

David Emile Durkheim, an eminent French sociologist is the progenitor of the theoretical concept of ‘collective conscience.’

This term has been used in his *Division of Labour in Society* (1893). The concept of ‘collective conscience’ evolved as a result of his arguments on the change of society from mechanical to the organic solidarity, where the former represents the primitive form and the latter the modified and better form. He contemplates on the transformation of human society from its earlier form to its modern state. Vidya Bhushan and D. R. Sachdeva in the book *An Introduction to Sociology* say:

Durkheim—a French philosopher (1858- 1917) was the first modern thinker who emphasised on the reality of society. He laid emphasis on social facts and provided a separate ground to sociology from that of psychology. According to him social facts are exterior and can be the subject of a general science because they can be arranged in categories. He studied division of labour as a social

institution - a collectivity wherein the multiplicity of individuals secure social coherence. (11)

Collective conscience is the sum of beliefs and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society. It is an external force within a social system, not considering race, class, geographic location, economic standing and so on. Collective consciousness or collective conscience is the set of shared beliefs and moral attitudes which operate as a unifying force within society.

Collective conscience is the key to non-material social facts. Social facts are the subject matter pertaining to sociology. These are unique and can be studied scientifically. Social facts are not only external to individuals but also are endowed with coercive power. According to the

Encyclopedia of Social Theory:

As a nonmaterial social fact, the collective conscience is external to and coercive over individuals. However, the collective conscience can be 'realized' only through individual consciousness. Hence, the collective conscience of a given society occurs as an external force throughout the entire societal system regardless of race, class, geographic location, economic standing, and so on, but is made manifest only through its realization in the consciousness of the individual.

(115)

According to Emile Durkheim, social facts can be classified into two – material and non-material. The material social facts have real existence, for instance, bureaucracy or law. On the contrary, the non-material social facts exist within the realms of ideas. Examples for non-material social facts can be norms or values. Moreover, these are intangible.

Durkheim as a sociologist had three goals – to establish sociology as a new discipline; to analyse how societies could maintain their integrity and coherence in the modern era; and to bring forth practical implication of scientific knowledge. His chief focus has been on societies maintaining their integrity and coherence in the state of modernity in addition to what society is

and how it is created and what holds it together. He assumes humans to be egoistic whereas, norms, beliefs and values (collective conscience) form the moral basis of the society resulting in social assimilation.

Collective conscience is of principal importance to the society and is an indispensable constituent without which a society cannot function. It produces a society and holds it together. In fact, it is the psychosomatic base of a social system.

According to Emile Durkheim, traditional cultures experience a high level of social and moral assimilation. Earlier, there was little individualisation and most behaviours were governed by religious institutions. The rituals and beliefs which underlined the living patterns of these individuals are labeled as 'collective conscience' by Emile Durkheim. The collective conscience shrouds individual awareness and there is modest sagacity of personal options.

Emile Durkheim is concerned mainly with two ideas. The first is of the precedence of society over the individual. To be precise, society exists beyond the people. Society is more than the individuals who compose it. It has a life of its own that draws out beyond personal experiences of the individuals. His second idea is that society can be studied scientifically and systematically. Society is made up of social facts that surpass over instinctive understanding and must be investigated through observations and measurements. These ideas are central to the study of a society.

Characteristically, collective conscience is organic in nature. Durkheim methodically studies the organic solidarity developing as a bi-product of the division of labour. In modern society which stands for organic solidarity, individuals take more focused roles and become more divergent in their social experiences, material interest, values and beliefs. Individuals in such a socio-cultural system have less in common; however, they must become more reliant upon each other for their continued existence.

There are four variables of a collective conscience of any society: volume, intensity, determinateness and content. Volume includes values, beliefs and rules shared by the members of

a society. Intensity refers to the idea that collective conscience has power to guide a person's thought and action. Determinateness is the degree of clarity in the components of the collective conscience. Content pertains to the ratio of religions to purely secular symbolism in the collective conscience. Further, Durkheim believes that education is the right instrument to penetrate and amend the collective conscience.

Education is imbibing knowledge, skills and habits. The real meaning of 'education' is to gain knowledge by discovering 'new things.' It is a catalyst in the transformation of personality and approach of an individual. It is a powerful tool for reforming humanity. It is not only a conduit of knowledge but also a light which illumines and shows everything in a lucid glow. It is a supreme advantage to everyone at large.

Education contributes to the growth of a nation. Education is – an essential human virtue, a necessity for society and foundation for a good life. However, the women who are relatively less educated must be given proper education. It is the knowledge and empowerment of one woman which can bring about a change in the family and even in the society as a whole. It is lack of education which makes people think that women do not require education like men.

Education has also been a symbol of social status. In the early times, the upper class of the social system were given the privilege of education, whereas, the other classes were deprived of it. However, the relationship between status and education is not the same anymore. Every one regardless of their status and position is given an opportunity to get education.

Education envelopes many aspects besides knowledge, like, awareness and *raison d'être*. The need of the hour is awareness and action. There are several problems and challenges threatening the world. Whether it is terrorism or global warming or favoritism and terminal

diseases, awareness and education can bring about changes and transform the society if rightly imparted.

The researcher proposes to make a meticulous study of the novels of Githa Hariharan and to explore the 'collective conscience' of some collective individuals who represent the whole lot of the existing society. The review of literature undertaken makes it obvious that the novels are surcharged with several aspects like myth, women's issues, narrative ability, religious intolerance, human dignity, psychological aspects, love and marriage, fundamentalism and human relationships. An in-depth scrutiny, particularising the problem of life in order to fill the recess is intended so that constructive ideas could be contributed. The problems and crises discussed in the novels constitute the research interest.

The present research study aims at:

1. Isolating the major problems and aspects of life as discussed in Githa Hariharan's novels as portrayed through her fictional characters
2. Analysing specific problems and situations particularly faced by the female characters
3. Critically analysing the problems faced by the male characters
4. Deriving realities and aspects of life through myths, legends and fables
5. Drawing out conclusions in the form of social and human values

Fictional worlds act as simulators creating and recreating possible realities. Faiz Ahmed Saleh AL-Gobaei in his article entitled, "Towards the Theory of Fictional Worlds" quotes Miller's view: "the opening sentences of literary works have special force. They are 'Open Sesames' unlocking the door to that particular work's fictive realm. All it takes is a few words, and I become a believer, a seer. I become the fascinated witness of a new virtual reality. More accurately, I become a disembodied observer within that reality" (4).

This study titled "From Fictional Lives to Contemporary Reality: An Analysis of Githa Hariharan's Novels" extends situations and aspects of life through fictional scenarios and characters. The study focuses on a variety of men and women characters and traditional stories. These are devised as media for delineating and scrutinising various conditions and facades of

human life. The critical inquiry along with the sociological concept of 'collective conscience' generates an assortment of constructive ideas and potential implication.

The present study is divided into five chapters including Introduction and Conclusion.

The introductory chapter gives an overview of the prominent Indian writers, with special reference to Githa Hariharan, her achievements and an outline of her works. It also introduces the theoretical concept of 'collective conscience.' This chapter includes a review of literature and thesis statement followed by a briefing of the entire thesis.

Chapter II entitled "Slice of Life from Women's Oven" furnishes reflections on few aspects and scenarios of life by analysing women characters from Githa Hariharan's fictional world. It deals with the women characters who face different kinds of problems in life. The modern women characters are more assertive and strong. They are able to face the difficulties they come across in their life and emerge out of the cages of tradition as new women. They voice forth their feelings and assert their individuality despite the fact that the society and their families try to suppress them.

Chapter III entitled "Fictional Men: Decrypting Living Reality" presents human life from the perspective of the male characters. Similar to the female characters, the male characters face both emotional and spiritual crises. These aspects are both external (social and national level) and personal (at the individual and family level).

Chapter IV entitled "Life Told as a Tale" presents an analysis of stories which are embedded in the main narrative framework and connects them with reality. It deals with myths, fables and legends which enrich human lives. Stories and advices are given as and when they are needed to develop the human characters both mentally and physically. Through these stories, Githa Hariharan brings out the problems faced by the characters like disability, poverty and hunger, illiteracy, materialism, bestiality and fear. These stories help the characters to overcome their obstacles and reach greater heights.

Chapter V attempts to amalgamate an analysis of the previous chapters with the sociological idea of 'collective conscience.' It elucidates Emile Durkheim's theoretical concept of 'collective conscience' and its positive impact on the society. Sociological change for betterment can be brought through the collective consciousness of the society. It can also be employed as a correctional device. Kenneth Thomson endorses the view of Emile Durkheim, when he says, "But we know from experience that there is no moral force superior to the individual, except collective moral force" (26).