

Deconstructing the “Myth” in the Selected Novels of Githa Hariharan

Abstract

Githa Hariharan’s literary oeuvre comprises of variegated socio-cultural problems to political confrontations, religious animosity, gender injustice and the amalgamation of fact and fiction. Hariharan’s vision of a new world with the usage of ancient myths and the reflection of myth in contemporary set-up calls for further critical examination and explorations. This dissertation attempts to analyse Hariharan’s fictional discourse that deconstructs the myth extensively. The fictional works challenge the notion of gender disparity through the deconstruction of myth. Implementation of myth varies as per changing generations across time and space. Supremacy of class distinction and gender disparity is a myth which needs to be transformed according to changing socio-cultural conditions. All five novels of Hariharan deconstruct myth invariably and bring forth fresh perspectives on ways of life. She weaves the myth of the epics of *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* and connects the myth to the lives of her fictional characters. Therefore, the present study explores the influence of myths on the individual identity of women. My research project would examine how Hariharan deconstructs “Myths” as delineated in five of her novels. It can be noted that mythical anecdotes in contemporary literature carry forward the aesthetic and emotional experience to the reader.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters excluding the Introduction and Conclusion- Chapter I on the mythical explorations of the first novel titled, “*The Thousand Faces of Night: A Juncture Where Myth Meets Reality*,” Chapter II on the procedure of healing through mythical tales, titled “*The Ghosts of Vasu Master: Myth as a means of Healing*,” Chapter III on the ways of survival through myths titled, “*When Dreams Travel: Myth as a Means of Survival*,” Chapter IV on the deconstruction of cultural stereotypes, titled “*In Times of Siege: An Enquiry*

into the Supremacy of Myth;" and Chapter V on the myth of unified nation, titled "*Fugitive Histories: Crossing the Lines of Myths Burdened on Nation.*" *The Thousand Faces of Night* examines the influence of myth on individual and society. The inclusion of myths in the main narrative enhances the grandeur of significance of the storyline. Her other two novels, *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* and *When Dreams Travel* mark the importance of storytelling in bringing forth the myth of ideal system of education and gender inequality respectively. While Vasu in *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* challenges the existing notions of teaching, Shahrzad's myth continues to amaze us as the narrative prioritise women's individuality and solidarity. Shahrzad's story can be called a modern myth that works for collective cultural heritage. Hariharan's next novel *In Times of Siege* addresses the issue of the myth of a religion. Hariharan deconstructs the myth of equality in this work of fiction. It is high time to understand that the idea of a homogenised nation is a myth and we should dissect this myth accordingly. The last novel, *Fugitive Histories* critiques the raging fundamentalism in the changing societal structure. This work of Hariharan is a chronicle of religious intolerance and its subsequent repercussions of the mayhem. It is a myth that nationalism eradicates regionalism and this myth of religion has been negated by Hariharan. The dissertation attempts to highlight how the author breaks the myth of a fixed identity through her fictional discourse. Breaking traditional myths and maintaining social justice in terms of religious equation is the main thematic concern here. It can be concluded that Hariharan's novels reject the prevailing notion of myth and underscore the resilience in contemporary times to stand against cultural stereotypes.