GENDER INEQUALITY AND GENDER EVOLUTION IN GITHA HARIHARAN’S WHEN DREAMS TRAVEL

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Abstract

Githa hariharan’s novel, *When Dreams Travel* (1999) shows women’s issues from feministic view. *When Dreams Travel* is also on the subject woman’s search for “her” story. It explores the text of *The Thousand and One Nights; When Dreams Travel* plot is harshly different from what had been in *The Thousand and One Nights*; Githa Hariharan fabricates a metatext which examines the story of Shahrzad and Shahryar from all aspects specially the post colonial and feminist.
Githa Hariharan challenges tradition and recreates incidents and presents substitute women characters to show their inner strength, artfulness and determination in a patriarchal world. Githa Hariharan’s rewriting of Shahzad’s story is a postcolonial rewriting of the mother in its numerous materializations. Thus the entire novel is to create women aware about their marginalized spaces by the society. This paper examines the feministic issues and gender identity crisis of the women martyrs.

**Key words:** Meta-fiction, colonized identity, marginalization space, gender identity, gender evolution.

In this novel, Githa Hariharan has written in the form of a Meta-fiction through an intricate inter-text that is made to center the feminist issue from a new perspective. The novel sets storytelling as the tradition of women which is passed from generation to generation. The narrative manner exposes their sufferings, agony and pain and also reveals their longingness for identity. The aim of storytelling is to keep up the thrilling and excitement.

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The discipline of gender studies critically examines how gender shapes our identities, our social interactions and our world. The purpose of gender studies program is to involve the students in this intellectually challenging and engaging way of examining our world. These disciplines study of gender and the intersection of gender with other categories of identity such as ethnicity, sexuality, class, and nationality.
This discipline study also analyses in the fields of history, theory, social science, with broader Global Context. The study topics are wide and engaging, and it includes Feminist Theory, Queer Theory, and the study of Men and Masculinity, and take into great consideration of the entanglements of knowledge, power, advantage, and segregation, and the important ways that these dynamics influence and are influenced by the individual experience of gender and sexuality both personally and on a broader societal range.

Githa Hariharan, the widely celebrated Indian English fiction writer, in her novels When Dreams Travel and The Thousand Faces of Night repeats the theme of exploitation of the women in the hands of the men which can in a way be seen as the colonizer opposing the identity of colonized. She gives the interpretations of colonizer and colonized can be recognised from the fact that is only through the expression of her creative possibilities and a scripting of her home-grown culture that the female characters revoke their self and identity.

The versatile writer recreates ‘her-stories’ of the women who have become pledges or victims at the hands of the cruel patriarchal system embodied in the character of Shahryar. Githa Hariharan breaks the original story of the tales to present Shahrzad not as a deceive hero, but as a victim who plans her own distinctive way to oppose patriarchy. Even as Shahryar indicates tyrannical patriarchy and Shahrzad is the fearless and clever femininity. Sharzad has a terrible attempt for saving her life and other virgins’ life in her land along with her sister Dunyazad. Sharzad tells the stories to Sharyar to save her life.

The power of storytelling is also evident in A River Sutra, The Ghost of Vasu Master and The Thousand Faces of Night but the purpose and need of storytelling is altogether different in When Dreams Travel. This novel looks into how Githa Hariharan’s new queen can be read as the
postcolonial performer reapplying her history and culture through a series of stories, enchanting and powerful.

Shahrzad tells stories so that she could make Shahryar without sensation. She wanted to freeze him and make him unable to act so that she could save her and other women to sacrifice: “If she stops, if she collapses, if she loses Shahryar’s interest or attention, the roof could cave in, and with it, all hope of the city’s deliverance, or its sultan’s redemption” (7) it is the power of storytelling that Shahrzad is able to hold all three people around her: “this is the self-absorbed scene lives on, shamelessly immortal. It unfolds itself of every night for a thousand and one nights” (7)

Shahrzad’s plan to tell Shahryar various stories of Bulukiya becomes successful. It shows the charming powers of storytelling. Both the sisters declare that the night will pass in telling alluring stories and Shahryar will not seduce her. The adventurous of Bulukiya’s stories are filled with surprise; horror and strangeness which are hold him intact:

“In Jahannam, only the least of these, there are thousand mountains of fire. On each mountain there are seventy thousand cities of fire, in each city, seventy thousand castle of fire, in each castle, seventy thousand houses of fire, in each house seventy thousand couches of fire, and on each couch seventy thousand manners of torment”. (128)

The phenomenal writer remains the same storyline but thoroughly transforms her perspective. The narrative renounces the male-centric viewpoint and looks at the entire situation from the woman sufferer’s point of view. Shahrzad expresses her dilemma and her growing victorious, while waiting calamitous consequences.
It gradually obtains the women center-stage, transferring the men to the background. The men are wiped off from the situation and it is the different women. In *When Dreams Travel*, the writer reveals her unique power of storytelling bringing together the story of Shahrzad, the mother of narrators and the plight of her sister Dunyazad, the monkey-woman, the interesting and numerous women who follow the same course of Shahrzad, as “Virgins and Martyrs” in all new explanation. The slave girl, Dilshad, who is lost in the story, calls out in the fairy-tale setting of a forest, “Is there no way out of his old story?” (231). The marginalized and exploited women create a separate principle and a successful in wiping up the history of torture through their trial and harms from life.

Another important impact is created by Dunyazad who plays the role of a keen listener. She is created to act as the shadow of her sister. While the latter acts, she waits in expectation. Githa Hariharan makes the heroine of her threatened version, it is the vague Dunyazad. The writer inserts a new and imaginary plot taking the old story fast-forwarding fifteen to twenty years after the time the original plot comes to an end. Dunyazad rejoin the deconstructed plot disguised as a man leading her caravan from her home Samarkand to Shahabad, Sultan Shahryar’s capital. The transformation of a submissive Dunyazad into a bold also determined middle-aged woman is a remarkable achievement. It appears that the suspicious Dunyazad has finally found her true identity as a fearless woman who knows how to talk her terms in a patriarchal world.

Dunyazad’s journey aims to distinguish the reason of her sister Shahrzad’s sudden downfall. Dunyazad is a widow now, since her husband Shahzaman died a mysterious death. Dunyazad’s irony about her widowhood gives a hint into the liberated psyche of a modern woman who does not lose her identity after her husband’s death, but slightly grows out stronger
and liberator to achieve her personal goal. Dunyazad’s mission is to know more about her sister’s death and take revenge on her death. She constantly remembers as children, Shahrzad and she played the game called The Martyr’s Walk. Living in the shadow of sultan Shahryar’s cruel game of marrying a virgin every night and killing those girls in the morning had made the two sisters aware of their apparent roles in Shahabad. Dunyazad, who knows her sister and brother-in-law too well; Dunyazad plays the role of a female avenger of her sister by flattering an supporter to Shahryar’s son Umar, she succeeds in falling Shahryar and bringing about him imprisonment inside the same monument in the memory of his beloved dead wife. The slave girl, Dilshad motivates Dunyazad against the king. Dilshad unfurls different stories to Dunyazad, she gathers many things about Shahryar through Dilshad. Accomplished her mission, Dunyazad is free to go back to Samarkand or any other place. Dilshad represents marginalized femininity taking on the forces of patriarchy with freedom and knowledge. She attempts to write a new story of a liberated woman.

The three women present the three routes passing through which modern woman can recover her true identity: Githa Hariharan’s rewriting of Shahzad’s story is a postcolonial rewriting of the mother in its numerous materializations. Thus the entire novel is to create women aware about their marginalized spaces by the society.

Githa Hariharan’s fictional characters develop as their evolution from the defenselessness to relative strength. They accomplish psychological and individual wholeness when they are able to fight oppression, whether its source is in the cultural or traditional or societal roles allocated to them.
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