



Discovery of Aspiration in Githa Hariharan's "Thousand Faces of Night"

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Abstract

Literature refers to all written art forms that have aesthetic and moral values. To some people, the term "literature" can apply broadly to any symbolic record which can include images and sculpture most only include examples of text composed of letters, or other narrowly defined examples of text symbolic written language. The Indian writing in English is the work written by the writers in India who write in the English language and whose native language is any one of the languages in India. It began with the famous writers like Michael Madhusudhan Dutt, R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. The first book written by the Indian writer in English is Travels of Dean Mahomet. Raja Rao's famous novels are Kanthapura, The serpent and the Rope. Nirad.C.Chaudhuri, a writer of non-fiction, is best known for his The Autobiography of an unknown Indian which is about his life experiences and influence. This paper deals with the aspirations of the characters in Hariharan's Thousand Faces of Night.

Keywords: Discovery, Aspiration, Githa Hariharan, *Thousand Faces of Night*

Githa Hariharan is an Indian author and editor in New Delhi. *The Thousand Faces of Night*, her first novel won the Common Wealth writer's prize in 1993. She was born in Coimbatore and brought up in Mumbai and Manila. She obtained in BA (in English) from university of Mumbai and a MA (Communications) from Fairfield University. Her works are *The winning team, In Times of Siege, When Dreams Travel, The Ghosts of Vasu Master, The Art of Dying, The Thousand Faces of Night, Fugitive Histories*.

Hariharan began her writing career at the age of thirty. She made her beginning as a writer with stories contributed to magazines. She has written five novels and a few books of stories. "Hariharan, the internationally acclaimed Indo – English writer has secured an enviable position for herself among the literary circles today." (*The Atlantic Literary Review* 2007).

All the people have different and varied aspirations in this world. Their aspirations reflect their individuality and specialty. They explore their aspirations naturally or when a problem arises or at some point of time suddenly. The aspirations of the people differ based on their age, gender, situations, social background and opportunities. Some people have to overcome some problems to reach their aspiration. The people's aspirations change from time to time as they grow. Their aspirations develop as they attain maturity.

The youngsters are the pillars of the country. They have different aspirations regarding their studies, job opportunities and employment. The youngsters in the modern days have access to mobile phones and laptops. So, they could update themselves about their



field of interest, current inventions. It shapes or models their aspirations. They also give importance to the family and friends. They have an aspiration about marriage and the quality of their life partner too.

Though different people have different aspirations the society impacts the aspirations. The society unknowingly sets the limits and standards for the individual. The people should overcome these barriers and set their own goals or standards. The men have varied aspirations. They have aspirations regarding material goods and married life. The men and the women have different aspirations regarding job. The women expect high level of job. The men aspire for leadership positions than Women.

The old people have some valuable aspirations. They have aspirations about their future plans. They want to have money for their retirement life. They have aspirations about family life and they want to be in good bonding with the members of the family. The human beings have different aspirations at different stages of their life such as education, employment, marriage, life or work after retirement. The aspirations of women are about their career and family responsibilities. This paper deals about the aspirations of the characters in Hariharan's *Thousand Faces of Night*.

The characters in *Thousand Faces of Night* have different aspirations and different interests in their life at various points of time. The aspiration is a very strong desire to achieve something great or high. The curiosity and desire to know more things gives aspiration and the man explores his aspirations in his life to be successful and happy. The women also have different aspirations, many of which do not materialise because of various problems and therefore necessity arises to explore their aspirations.

In *Thousand Faces of Night*, the women face some problems though they are educated or uneducated. The story centres on Devi, the protagonist who returns from America in the memory of her black lover, Dan. She is an educated woman who is prone to desires and ambitions in the society. She represents modern educated women whose beliefs and perceptions spring from the consciousness of the past as well as intellect and desire for self-satisfaction. First, she rejects Dan because she cannot live an American way of life completely ignoring Indian tradition. She wishes to support her mother and returns to India. She marries Mahesh and lives a life of disillusionment. She visits the garden in her house to overcome the emptiness in her life. She plays veena and learns Sanskrit from her father-in-law. She accepts her duty as a responsible wife.

After marriage, the aspirations and the status of women change. Devi shrinks into a cipher. Her husband is always on tours remains as a shadowy stranger, who views marriage as just another necessity.

She wishes to work and when she discusses it with her husband he disagrees. He sends her to the painting class and she is not interested in it. She is interested to learn Sanskrit so that she can understand her father's-in-law ideas. Her husband brings some guests from the office and advises her to prepare food. She prepares food and asks her to understand that such dinners are needed to develop his business. He makes fun of her that he wants to be a



woman so that he can stay at home. He is a man so he has to go out and work outside. Both Mahesh and Devi fail to understand each other.

Mahesh do not have any strong aspiration. He works as he is a man and not out of interest. Devi is talented and she has an interest to learn and do so many things. But Devi does not get any opportunity to work and improve herself.

Mayamma, the servant of the house suffers a lot in the hands of her mother-in-law and her husband. She endures all the tortures. She takes care of the house. She cooks and involves in all the household activities. She takes rest when she is tired and sick. She represents the women who lead a tortured life. "Mayamma is the archetypal female who accepted her fate, cursed it but never questions it and lives her life exactly as she is expected to." (A Search for Identity: Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* 191).

Sita, Devi's mother has struggled in her life as a single parent. She decides to educate her daughter in America. She has brought up her daughter with best efforts. She has left her passion for playing veena as her father-in-law has not allowed her. She takes a lot of efforts to find a suitable bride for her daughter. She is very strong to face all the difficulties in her life. She finally accepts her daughter.

Sita's behaviour and attitude was greatly appreciated by her husband Mahadevan. Sita learnt that her husband lacked high hope of life. This was totally opposite to her intention of facing the trial awaiting her. At this particular stage of life, a daughter was born and she was Devi. On seeing the baby, the mother's happiness knew no bounds. It seemed as if a new veena that she could play was found and this time she was not going to abandon it easily. The mother then controlled the grown up daughter Devi, very strictly.

At one time, Sita along with Mahadevan went to Africa on an assignment. And on the other hand, Devi was made to go to America. On reaching Africa, Mahadevan proved to be more exhausted. In his fifties, he was a sick old man and he had no taste of his time of beauty and energy. One day Sita saw her husband on his chair and found him dead. She saw everything silently burnt the papers where the body was also burnt. Then, she came back to Chennai.

Now at this moment, Sita's entire hope was upon her only daughter, Devi, She wrote letters to call back her daughter at her home town. She then started looking for a person who could prove him to be an appropriate husband for her daughter. Finally, Mahesh was chosen and Devi was married to him but all of a sudden Devi runs away. Sita was engulfed by violent passion. Her life was full of sacrifices. She tried from different angles to give the best possible that she could offer, to her daughter, with great planning. Devi gave her the impure name of a woman. Sita wrote to Mahesh not to spread scandal. Very unexpectedly after a huge gap of many years, she dusted the broken veena freshly and waited for her daughter as she was expected to come back to the mother. Devi came to her and on entering her house.

Mahesh has no great expectations in his life. He marries because it is a rule to get married. He has no serious interest and true love in marriage. He does not understand the feelings of his wife and he also works just for the reason that he is a man and he has to earn

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money. He arranges dinner in his house just to develop a cordial relationship with his colleagues. He leads a very mechanical life. S. Indira says “Baba’s stories define for Devi the limits of wifehood”. (178) But he too insists on the stories for Devi to be a good wife. He understands the loneliness and emptiness of Devi. But, he does not pay much attention to it.

Mahesh’s father is a brilliant person. He is the retired professor. He is an expert in Sanskrit. He teaches Sanskrit to his daughter-in-law. He is a kind person and he understands the situation of his daughter-in-law. He is such a caring person. He goes to help his daughter in the foreign country as she is pregnant. He has an aspiration to excel in Sanskrit and consequently becomes successful in his profession as a Sanskrit professor.

All the human beings in this world have different and varied aspirations. In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, the characters have varied aspirations and they explore and follow their dreams. But some characters have to give up due to certain problems and difficulties. The characters such as Devi, Mayamma and Sita suffer due to certain problems. They are unable to follow their dreams and suffer because of the conditions and restrictions imposed in the institution of marriage. Mahesh has no great aspiration and he works because a man is expected to work. The aspiration shapes one’s life and creates a purpose and meaning in his life. When one follows aspiration he is happy and happiness marks the success of his life.

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