

Indian english literature iel english literature essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



The history of Indian English Literature is one and a half centuries old, and many writers have contributed to the growth of different genres in it. Unlike other genres in the Indian languages, the novel as a literary form was new to India, and it was introduced in the country owing to the influence of the British writers in the nineteenth century. The novel as a distinct genre of literature, has witnessed phenomenal growth in contemporary society. Since the wide canvas of the novel offers greater flexibility and freedom, it opens up new vistas of experimentation in artistic creativity. This freedom and flexibility of novelistic discourse attracts a number of creative talents to the field. Thus, novel as a genre of literature has registered unprecedented growth in our times, bestowing on novelists a place of prominence. In novelistic discourse, mostly, history, politics, and social life become tools that explicate deep nuances of life. The novel may be roughly defined as a long story in prose. It is primarily meant for entertainment, presenting a realistic picture of life. The Indian novel in English, which has now established itself as a part of Indian literature, has every claim for recognition as a distinct entity. Though the novel's growth in later years far exceeded that of most other forms, fiction was actually the last to arrive on the Indian literary scene. The development of the Indian English fiction can be divided into two phases: the pre-independence period and the post-independence phase. Revolutionary tendencies and militant thoughts impelled writers like K. S. Venkataramani (1891-1951) into creativity. The works of writers like Venkataramani urged the Indians to fight for the country's freedom and work for the regeneration of the nation. In general, Indian novelists in English imitated the British writers, but the writers of the

second phase have deviated from their predecessors so as to establish themselves as original writers. Among the precursors of the Indian English fiction, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-1894) was regarded as the first to write what could be called an English novel. His first novel, *Rajmohan's Wife* was published in 1864. The two women characters, Matagini and Tara portrayed in the novel opened up a gallery of heroic female characters in Indian English Literature. The great trio Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao, who wrote novel and stories in the nineteen thirties, and Nissim Ezekeil, Kamala Das, and A. K. Ramanujan, who wrote poetry in the sixties, had greatly contributed to the creation of a new literature in English in India. Their creative effort got the critical sanction in the hands of critics like K. R. S. Iyengar, C. D. Narasimhaiah and a few others in the nineteen sixties. It was unthinkable to conceive of Indian English Literature as a distinct literature without Iyengar's book, *Indian Writing in English*. Prof. V. K. Gokak in his book *English in India: Its Present and Future* defined Indian English as: The evolution of a distinct standard, Indian English Literature, the body of which is correct English usage, but whose soul is Indian in colour, thought and imagery, and now and then, even in the evolution of an Indian idiom which is expressive of the unique quality of the Indian mind while conforming to the 'correctness' of English usage. It is illustrative of a special type of language phenomenon of a language foreign to the people who use it but accepted by them because of political and, recently, cultural reasons. In other words good Indian English, is simply good English. English that differs little in vocabulary and idiom from good English as written in New York or London, so that it brings out the inwardness of

Indian life and literature. (98)The Indian English fiction took cognizance of the changing facets of Indian life and reality. It ran almost parallel to the country's freedom struggle. In the early phase of its development, in the pre-independence years, writers dealt with themes related to social problems, peasants and their sufferings and endurance, the growing national consciousness, the emergence of industrialization and its impact on the common man. In the post-independence period, writers dealt with themes related to the Indian freedom struggle, the impact of Gandhism, partition of the country and its aftermath, the clash between tradition and modernity, East-West encounter and cultural clashes. Though Indian English novel as a genre had established its identity early, it certainly faced some basic problems. The novel as a form of art has to reflect life objectively; it should portray the reality of life' and deal with human psychology. In the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Bhabani Bhattacharya . and Manogar Malgonkar, realism remains as the essential mode of life in its social context, the central concern of the writers. The remarkable event in the Indian-English literary scene took place mainly with the emergence of the trio—Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao. They were the writers, who established Indian Literature in English incorporates Indian themes and experiences in a framework that blends Indian and Western aesthetics. The works of Indian writers in English revolve round the springs of human action and the motivation behind human behavior. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R. K. Narayan are the foremost Indian English novelists to employ these in their works. They revolutionized their novels by depicting the emotions, feelings, hopes, aspirations, and

traumas experienced by the Indian people. R. K. Narayan is a writer who contributed over many decades and who continued to write till his death recently. He was discovered by Graham Greene in the sense that the latter helped him find a publisher in England. Graham Greene and Narayan remained close friends till the end. Similar to Thomas Hardy's Wessex, Narayan created the fictitious town of Malgudi where he set his novels. Some criticise Narayan for the parochial, detached and closed world that he created in the face of the changing conditions in India at the times in which the stories are set. Others, such as Graham Greene, however, feel that through Malgudi they could vividly understand the Indian experience. Narayan's evocation of small town life and its experiences through the eyes of the endearing child protagonist Swaminathan in *Swami and Friends* is a good sample of his writing style. The Indian English fiction took cognizance of the changing facets of Indian life and reality, and ran almost parallel to the country's freedom struggle. In the early period of its development, in the pre-independence phase, writers dealt with themes related to social problems, peasants and their suffering and endurance, the growing national consciousness, and the emergence of industrialization and its impact on the common man. In the post-independence phase, writers dealt with themes related to the Indian freedom struggle, the impact of Gandhism, partition of the country and its aftermath, the clash between tradition and modernity, East-West encounter, and cultural clashes. Though Indian English novel as a genre established its identity, it certainly faced some basic problems. The novel, as a form of art, had to reflect life objectively. It portrayed the reality of life, and dealt with human psychology. In the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, R.

K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Kamala Markandaya, Bhabani Bhattacharya, and Manohar Malgonkar, realism remained as the essential mode of life in its social context, which was the central concern of the writers. The remarkable event in the Indian English literary scene took place mainly with the emergence of the trio-Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao. These writers established the English novel in India with its distinctive Indian flavour. Subsequently, many novelists appeared and contributed to the growth of the Indian English novel. Indian English Literature from 1930s to the end of the 20th century can be divided into two phases: Modernist and Postmodernist. Former beginning with Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) and the latter beginning with Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), and Nissim Ezekiel's *Latter-Day Psalms* (1982). *Midnight's Children* (1981), Salman Rushdie's Booker Prize winning novel, created an epoch and revolutionized Indian English fiction in the post modern period. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) grabbed the Booker Prize and thus rendered the Indian English fiction an added lusture. Indian English Literature in the post-1980 era is marked by postmodernism. The fiction was the most developed and well received one in the post modern period, both at home and abroad. Celebrated poets, novelists, short-story writers, and playwrights in the post-1980 period include Shiv. K. Kumar, Amitav Ghosh, Amit Chaudhuri, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Deshpande, Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Manoj Das, and a few others. Indian English novel had its luxuriant growth in their hands. With Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize award winning novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997), Indian English novel won International recognition. Indian English novel

enjoyed its luxuriant growth in the hands of Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande and a few others in the nineteen eighties and after. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, a novel that won Booker Prize, could be said to be the epoch-making novel that revolutionized Indian English fiction in the post modern period. Of all the genres of Indian English Literature, fiction is the most developed and well received one in the post modern period both at home and abroad. The main characteristics of postmodern Indian English fiction include the broadening of the thematic range of Indian English novel. There is a shift in emphasis, that is, from the Gandhian era of village centrism to the city centrism of the Post-Emergency era. The locale has shifted from the village to the metropolis of our country and then abroad. East-West encounter which is explained in terms of hybridity in relationship by post-colonial critics, takes a space in Postmodern Indian English Fiction. When the world has become a ' global village' no culture or society is pure or insular today. That is why Indian English Fiction now takes characters, situations both from inside the country and abroad into its orbit and develops them. Critics like Edward Said, and Homi. K. Bhabha have inspired the novelists to write more and more about cultural encounter between the East and the West. The result is Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* and *An Equal Music*. Love, sex and marriage or the failure of it are some of the leading themes of postmodern fiction. The description of love and sex is very bold and rather unconventional. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* contains chapters which to speak the least are outrageous and Shiv. K. Kumar's *A River with Three Banks* depicts love and sex without any inhibition. So is the case with Manju Kapur's *Difficult*

Daughters. Marriage as a social institution has lost its sanctity and relevance in the post 1980 era. Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* is about match making. Post-independence Indian fiction in English revealed a total breakaway from the pre-independence era. In terms of theme, language and style, the variety was immense. Writers moved easily from social and political concerns to individuals, and the working of their minds or thought processes. The question of subject became one of the most recurring concerns in the second half of the twentieth century. Experimentation reached its pinnacle in the last two decades. The coming ages of the entire post independence, English educated generation, with the ability and time to express themselves in English, had contributed intensively in Indian Writing in English. Easy availability of publishers led to a further spurt. The increased introduction of papers in Indian Writing in English, both in India and foreign Universities too contributed to a plethora of writing in English in India. As F. R. Leavis in his book *The Great Tradition* pointed out, " these novelists not only change the possibilities of the art for practitioners and readers but...are significant in terms of human awareness they promote, awareness of the possibilities of life" (43). Lack of faith in religion and declining moral standard and behaviour are some of the predominant themes in postmodern novel. Corruption in public as well as private lives of individuals too appeals to our novelists and they write novels on this theme. Employing national myths and making allusions to national epics like the Mahabharata, the new novelists in the eighties and after, write good novels as ShashiTharoor has done in *The Great Indian Novel*. Shashi Tharoor is a major novelist in the post-1980 period with three novels such as *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *Show*

Business (1994) and Riot (2001) to his credit. The Great Indian Novel, modeled on Mahabharata is an ironic portrayal of the contemporary Indian political situation. Tharoor makes use of a national myth to create a contemporary novel. Thematically, the novel focuses on the striking parallels between the great epic battle as depicted in The Mahabharata and historic freedom struggle and post-independence political maneuvering in our country. While trying to yoke the national myth to contemporary reality, Tharoor is conscious of being accused of erring against proportion. Shashi Tharoor, in his The Great Indian Novel (1989), follows a story-telling (though in a satirical) mode as in the Mahabharata drawing his ideas by going back and forth in time. His work as UN official living outside India has given him a vantage point that helps construct an objective Indianness. Show Business (1991) is a different kind of novel. It is about Bollywood. Ashok Banjara, the protagonist of the novel, the superstar of the Silver screen bears resemblances of Amitab Bachan. Ashok while shooting meets with a serious accident and being taken to the hospital fights for his- life in the Intensive care unit. Prayers are offered by several people at several places for his recovery. Allusions to Amitab Bachan's accident while shooting the Coolie and prayers offered for him all over the country are there for any discerning reader to see. Shashi Tharoor's third novel, Riot centers round the mysterious murder of Priscilla Hart, a young American lady who came to India to participate in a woman's health programme. On the surface level she appears to be a victim of a communal riot between Hindus and Muslims. But at the deep level the mystery of murder becomes elusive. The reason and the consequence of the murder defy any simple answer. The theme of the

novel goes beyond a usual communal riot and seeks to examine issues of complex nature such as religious fanaticism, cultural collision and above all, the trajectory of history. For examining the characteristics of post-modern Indian English fiction, the first thing that stroke was the broadening the thematic range of Indian English novel. There was a shift in emphasis-the focus of the novel moved away from the Gandhian era of village centrism to the city centrism of the post-emergency era. The ' locale' shifted from the village to the metropolis of our country and then abroad. East-West encounter, which was explained in terms of hybridity in relationship by post-colonial critics, took ' a space' in post modern Indian English fiction. When the world became ' a global village', no culture or society was pure or insular. That is why Indian English fiction in recent days took characters, situations both from inside the country and abroad into its orbit and developed them. Critics like Edward Said and Homi. K. Bhabha inspired the novelists to write more about cultural encounter between the east and the west. Postmodern Indian English fiction has a very luxuriant growth with nearly a hundred novels written by Indian English novelists and writers of Indian diaspora. Works of Indian diaspora got well noticed, confirmed, and strengthened in the last two decades of 20th century. Works of Indian diaspora have an international outlook; they aim at reaching wider readers and sympathizers; and they have multi-cultural and pluralistic appeal. Their works envisage a better world of understanding and have become the pioneers of diasporic experience. These writers, most of them, try to imprint their view about the foreign world and their motherland. Most of them write about the alienation, suffering, identity crisis, other world, lost hope, lost

purity, worldliness, and a sense of loss and nostalgia. Some of the creative writers of Indian origin include Salman Rushdie, Barati Mukherjee, Kamala Markandaya, Rohinton Mistry, V. S. Naipaul, Amit Chaudhari, Sasi Tharoor, Githa Metha, Kiran Desai and others. Most of the diaspora writers give vent to their feelings of cultural divide, cultural transmission, search for roots, anxiety, insecurity because of the difference in the world they live in. At the same time, the modern novelists have come out of their traditional themes and styles. They are not idealistic, sentimental, displaced or marginal alone; modern man is their protagonist. Modern writers especially of 1990s were interested in their own times and was not worried about the time past. They believed in multi-culturalism and multiplicity than monoculture or biculturalism. They do not want to be propagandists. They have created a world of their own. Vikram Seth created history in more than one way. He uses a purer English and more realistic themes. Being a self-confessed fan of Jane Austen, his attention is on the story, its details and its twists and turns. He is the first Indian English novelist to write a novel titled *The Golden Gate* (1986) in verse, for which he won the Sahitya Akademi Award for the year 1988. Again he is the first Indian English novelist to get a fabulous amount of rupees two crores as advance for his epoch-making novel *A Suitable Boy* (1993). *The Golden Gate* heralded a new era in Indian English fiction. This novel reminds us of Byron's *Don Juan* or Puskin's *Eugene Onegin*. The novel is written in mellifluous sonnets and is devoid of oriental characters. It contains 594 stanzas, with a stanza each for acknowledgments, dedication, table of contents and a note about the author. It deals with the longing for love, affection and sense of belonging on the part of John, the Silicon Valley

executive. Most of the characters experience loneliness in life and hence, they search for meaning and emotional fulfilment. The happy ending of the novel, therefore, seems to be contrived. *A Suitable Boy* (1993) deals with a simple theme, the quest for a suitable boy for Lata, the younger daughter of Rupa Mehra. Lata is a nineteen-year attractive girl, who has passed just her graduation. She has three suitors—Kabir Durani, Amit Chatterjee, and Haresh Khanna from among whom she has to choose her life partner. Seth meticulously writes about these three suitors and Lata's affairs with each one of them, so that they can be judged objectively and the final choice can be made. Seth's third novel, *An Equal Music* was published in 1999. The story of the novel opens in London with an upcoming musician, Michael Holme, a 35-year old violinist from Rochdale playing with the Maggiore Quartet and giving music lessons to a group of not-so-enthusiastic pupils with one of whom he is carrying on a desultory affair. The novel has a turbulent love story full of passion and pathos. Seth has successfully integrated this love story with the story of music and music lessons. Vikram Chandra who won Commonwealth prize for his book short stories, titled, *Love and Longing in Bombay*, has a brilliant novel, *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995) to his credit. The novel is a combination of history and myth, with the digressions of the epic. Among the later writers, the most notable is Salman Rushdie, born in India, now living in the United Kingdom. Rushdie with his famous work *Midnight's Children* (Booker Prize 1981, Booker of Bookers 1992) ushered in a new trend of writing. He used a hybrid language - English generously peppered with Indian terms - to convey a theme that could be seen as representing the vast canvas of India! He is usually categorized

under the magic realism mode of writing most famously associated with Gabriel Garcia Marquez. In the post-1980 era, love, sex, and marriage or the failure of it were some of the leading themes in Indian English novels. The description of love and sex was very bold and rather unconventional. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Murthy K. Kumar's *A River with Three Banks* depicted love and sex without any inhibition. So is the case with Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*. Marriage as a social institution lost its sanctity and relevance in the post-1980 era. Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* was about match-making. Apart from love, sex and contemporary reality, Indian English women novelists wrote feminist novels. The rights of women should be preserved, and the women novelists seemed to say that Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*, brought men and women on par in our society. Women novelists asserted the rights of women to live their life in their own way. Writers moved easily from social and political concerns to individuals and the working of their minds or thought processes. The Magic Realism technique popularized by Salman Rushdie attracted a large number of novelists of the Postmodern era such as Rukun Advani, Mukul Kesavan and Makarand Paranjape. *Beethoven Among the Cows* (1994) by Rukun Advani, *Looking Through Glass* (1995) by Mukul Kesavan, *The Narrator* (1995) by Makarand Paranjape, *An Angel in Pyjamas* (1996) by Tabish Khair, *Bombay Duck* (1990) by Farukh Dhondy, *The Memory of Elephants* (1988), and *Asylum, U. SA.* (2000), both by Boman Desai are some of the important novels written in the technique of Magic Realism. Kiran Nagarkar won Sahitya Akademi Award for his historical novel, *Cuckold* for the year 2000. *Cuckold* is a different kind of novel, the like of which we don't find in Indian

English literature. It is a culmination of history and legend, artistically woven into the framework of fiction. Nagarkar has done a good deal of research in Rajput history to write the novel. Till time of the novel is the sixteenth century India and the locale is the Rajput Kingdom of Mewar. The novelist has made an attempt to resituate the text in the historical context. The protagonist is Bhojraj, Meerabai's husband and the novel is depicted from his point of view in the first person narrative. The canvas of the novel is vast—it encompasses four kingdoms: Rajput Kingdom of Mewar (Capital: Chittor), Muslim Kingdom of Gujarat (Capital: Ahmedabad), Muslim Kingdom of Malwa (Capital: Mandu), Muslim Kingdom of Delhi (Capital: Delhi)-] and the characters of the novel are drawn from history. This is one of the finest novels written in English in our time. Based on history and myth, the novel acclimatizes our tradition and heritage to English language. It gives a lie to the critics who denigrate Indian English novelists and writers for what they call, the lack of 'authenticity' in their works. It is a novel about India's past which combines the historicity of fiction with fictionality of history. Apart from the new generation of writers writing in the nineteen eighties, we have old generation of writers who have also written during this period. For example, R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Arun Joshi, and Shiv K. Kumar have published excellent novels in the post-1980 era. R. K. Narayan has published four novels during the post-1980 period: *The Tiger for Malgudi* (1983), *Talkative Man* (1983), *The World of Nagaraj* (1990), and *Grandmother's Tale* (1992). Of these novels, only *The Tiger for Malgudi* is a major novel. Mulk Raj Anand published three novels during the post-1980 era. They are, *The Bubble* (1984), *Little Plays of Mahatma Gandhi* (1991) and *Nine Moods of*

Bharata: Novel of a Pilgrimage (1998). Of the three novels only *The Bubble* to some extent repeats the success of Anand's earlier works like *Seven Summers* and *Morning Face*. Shiv K. Kumar made his mark as a novelist with the publication of his first novel, *The Bone's Prayer* in 1979. Subsequently, he published three more novels titled, *Nude Before God* (1983), *A River With three Banks* (1998) and *Infatuation* (2001). Kumar's art of writing fiction is influenced by Joseph Conrad. He chooses his characters from among the people whom he knows and only changes the proper names to avoid controversy. Important women novelists who published their works in the postmodern period are Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Gita Mehta, Shobha De and Kamala Markandaya. They wrote different kinds of novels though some of them use common method of writing fiction. The women novelists deal with the themes of love, marriage, loneliness and search for identity. The women writers took off the capital 'W' from woman which was the hallmark of the earlier strident feminist fiction. These women writers neither flaunted their biological or psychological differences nor raved about the otherness of women. Instead, there was a conviction in their writing about the universality of all human experience. Both men and women were depicted not in water-tight compartments of black and white, but in the grey areas. Women writers in India were moving forward with their strong and sure stridges, matching the pace of the world. One could see them bursting out in full bloom, spreading their own individual fragrances. They were recognized for their originality, versatility, and the indigenous flavour of the soil that they brought to their work. The Indian women writers, like Shashi Deshpande,

Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Kamala Das and Shobha De held their own experiences in the women writers' world of initial rejection, dejection, familial bonds, domesticity etc. It was amazing to note that these writers and many more climbed the ladder of success in a slow and painful way. These women writers gave literary work in India an unmistakable edge. They sensitively portrayed a world that had in it women rich in substance. Their women were real flesh and blood protagonists who made one to look at them with awe in relation to their surroundings, society, men, children, families, mental make-ups and themselves. Indian fiction in English has been enriched by highly talented women novelists including Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Attia Hasain, Santha Rama Rau and Shashi Deshpande. They have written of Indian women, their conflicts and predicaments against the background of contemporary India. While doing so, they have analysed the socio-cultural modes and values that have given Indian women their image and role towards themselves and the society. The changing contexts have placed these women writers in an unenviable position. Their chief contribution is their exploration of the moral and psychic dilemmas and repercussions of their women characters along with their efforts to cope with the challenges and to achieve a new harmony of relationship with themselves and their surroundings. The earlier novels by Indian women novelists project traditional image of women. But as times changed, the portrayal became realistic with a tryst on their sense of frustration and alienation. The characters created by them, like their creators, are torn apart by the conflicting forces of tradition and modernity. Their crisis of value adaptation and attachment with family and home pull

them asunder. The plight of the working woman is still worse, aggravated by her problems of marital adjustment and quest for and assertion of her identity. The predicament of new Indian woman has been taken up for fuller treatment by novelists like Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal. These novelists, however, have generally concentrated on the plights and problems of educated women mostly with an urban base. The self-avowed aim of writing fiction in the case of Indian novelists like Shoba De and Namita Gokhale has been to portray the challenges educated women with an urban base and sensibility have to face. Kamala Markandaya published only one novel titled, *Pleasure City* (1982) after 1980. The novel is about the impact of the multinational corporation on villages. Markandaya gives a vivid picture of a fisherman's family: the old father, his elder son who scorns education, and Rikki, his adopted son, the hero of the novel, who has been educated by missionaries. Toby Tully, the manager, is descended from the Copelands and Tullys administrators under the Raj (Copeland was the sympathetic British official in *The Golden Honeycomb*, 1977). Anita Desai published a number of novels such as *Clear Light Of Day* (1980), *The Village by the Sea: An Indian Family Story* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *A Journey to Ithaca* (1995) and *Fasting, Feasting* (1999) in the last two decades of the twentieth century. *Clear Light of Day* is about two sisters, Bimla and Tara. The novel begins with Tara's visit to Old Delhi, their ancient family home and ends with the departure of her family (i. e., her husband and children). *In Custody* portrays the character of Deven, a temporary lecturer in Hindi in a private college nearly forty miles from Delhi. His pathetic life both at home and in the college makes him a pitiable character. He is also

not above blame for he ill treats his wife and children. This novel is a realistic portrayal of the life of Deven. Baumgartner's Bombay depicts the plights of Hugo Baumgartner who remained a wandering Jew all his life. He had no sense of belonging to anywhere or anyone, and finally died a tragic death. The quest for identity is the main theme of the novel. The protagonist's early life in pre-war Berlin and then, in India (i. e., in Calcutta and Bombay), where he lived for fifty years, could not solve the problem of his identity. With the advantage of a German mother, a Bengali father and having lived both in Germany and in India, Anita Desai naturally feels at home in depicting scenes and characters both German and Indian with equal felicity. What is common for Baumgartner in Germany and in India are the same sort of violence, lawlessness, inhumanity, tyranny and fanaticism. By making Baumgartner experience the same sort of things in both the countries, Anita Desai lends to the novel a universal significance. Anita Desai's insight into human nature, and portrayal of characters particularly women characters and above all, command of language make her novels immensely readable. Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us* (1985), *Plans for Departure* (1985) and *Mistaken Identity* (1988) are novels about history, nationalism and above all, contemporary life. Sahgal won the Sahitya Akademi Award for *Rich Like Us* for the year 1986. The novel is written against the backdrop of Emergency declared in 1975. The political theme is implicit in it. *Plans for Departure* examines Indo-British relationship in artistic terms and *Mistaken Identity* is about Bhushan Singh, who returned home unsuccessfully from U. S. A. These two novels are nowhere near *Rich Like Us* in social commitment and do not have much contemporary relevance. Shashi Deshpande is one of the most

accomplished women novelists of postmodern period. Her novels are titled *The Dark folds No Terrors* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come Up and Be Dead*(1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1986), *The Binding Vine* (1993) and *Small Remedies* (2000). She won the Sahitya Akademi Award for *That Long Silence* for the year 1990. This is one of the most outstanding novels in our time. *That Long Silence* depicts the plight of an educated Indian woman of our time. The significance of the novel depends on how far the reader is able to realize the situation and go along with the author in finding out the meaning. In a way, the protagonist, Jaya, is any modern woman who resents her husband's callousness and becomes the victim of circumstances. By implication the character of Jaya represents modern woman's ambivalent attitude to married life. Shashi Deshpande hints at the modern woman's refusal to comply with the wishes of the husband. The reader is free to interpret the heroine as a woman who failed her husband or otherwise. Alternatively, he may also take her as a representative woman of the contemporary society who is all set to revolt against the husband. Jaya is both an individual and a type, and the reader is free to take her in any manner he likes. Shobha De is known for her erotic novels. Apart from her erotica, her novels have immense literary values in terms of the experimentation in the use of language and creation of an Indian English idiom. Two of her novels, *Sisters* (1992) and *Snapshots* have contemporary relevance. Shobha De's use of language and creation of new idioms by acclimatizing idioms from Indian languages to English language, adds to the charm of the novel. The narrative holds our breath for sensuous opulence and subtlety of variation and the result is that the novel becomes a 'best

seller.' *Snapshots* (1995) is about six women who belong to the upper class society. The world of *Snapshots* is a world of women where women begin to look at things from their point of view. They literally and metaphorically play with men and sometimes are played with by men. The novel depicts the love-play between men and women in great details. 'Morality' is a dirty word for the characters in the novel, for they believe in enjoyment of life, throwing the norms of the society out of window. Within the framework of her novels, Shobha De depicts the breaking up of the institution of marriage. The new concept of marriage envisages complete sexual freedom with no notion of fidelity. In such a situation men and women merely become partners in love. Economic freedom, promiscuity and uncontrolled passion resulting from 'the lust of the blood' make most men and women vulnerable and the resultant frustration in life engulfs them. Shobha De presents love, sex and quarrels within the ambit of fictional framework. Arundhati Roy created history by Winning Booker Prize for her novel *The God of Small Things* for the year 1997. Taking up cudgel for women's right to property and to choose their lovers, the novel also makes references to communist movement in Kerala and allusions to the Mahabharata. This can be taken as a representative post colonial novel for it seeks to restructure the power centre by giving right to women to live their lives in their own way, and fashions a new language for fiction by creating a new Indian English idiom. Manju Kapur, an academic turned writer made a name with her first novel, *Difficult Daughters* (1998) winning the Best First Book Commonwealth writers prize for 1999. The plot of the novel is simple and the story is fascinating. It is the story of a woman, Virmati who was hooked on with her Professor, Harish at the latter's

insistence. The eldest daughter of Suraj Prakash and Kasturi (the eldest of their eleven children), Virmati had an ambition to be highly educated. As chance would have it, she came in contact with Professor Harish who came to stay in her aunt's house as a tenant. The married Professor, Harish was not happy with his illiterate wife. He felt attracted towards Virmati and gradually came closer to her. Virmati though initially resisted his love (illicit love and passion), subsequently gave in. Their affair led to Virmati's refusal to marry Inderjit, an engineer, arranged by her family and then to abortion, while she was still in the college. The whole family turned against her and she went through harrowing experiences. Finally, the Professor took her home as his second wife. Virmati, won the love of the Professor but lost both the families. Then came the partition and they moved to Delhi and Ida, a daughter was born. The novel here almost comes to an end except the epilogue. In the epilogue, we are told about Ida, who like her mother made a disastrous marriage and was divorced. She was 'husbandless, childless.' Both Harish and Virmati passed away. The novel begins with the death of Virmati and her cremation and the story is unfolded to us by Ida, her daughter who learnt all about her mother's past from her aunt. The novel begins with an assertion by Ida, " The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" and ends with her request to the dead mother " Do not haunt me anymore." Some of the writers both old and new published their novels after 1980.

These include Chaman Nahal's (winner of Sahitya Akademi Award for Azadi for the year 1977), The Triumph of the Tricolour (1993), P. V. Narasimhaiah's The Insider (1988), Manoj Das' Cyclones, Raj Gill's Jo Bole (1983), Gautam Bhatia's Short History of Everything (1998), Raj Kamal Jha's The Blue Bed

Spread (1999), Vikram A Chandra's *The Srinagar Conspiracy* (2000), Jamyang Norbu's *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes* (1999), Pankaj Mishra's *The Romantics*, R. K. Laxman's *The Messenger* (1995), R. W. Desai's *Frailty, Thy Name is Woman* (1993), Jai Nimbkar's, *Come Rain* (1993), Radhika Jha's *Smell* (1999), Esther David's *The Walled City* (1997) and Sagarika Ghose's *The Gin Drinkers* (2000). Indian women writers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries always try to raise the issues related to women with a fresh perspective. These women writers have presented life through literature with great vividness. One of the important aspects of these writers is that all of them are highly educated, involved in social issues, and moreover, ready to experiment with their writings. All these writers go behind the traditional theme of love, marital failure, sexual harassment faced by women in the society or the suffering and predicaments they fought with or silently swallowed. Contrary to this Githa Hariharan has made use of a totally different weapon to expose all these problems faced by women. In her novels one can clearly see all these aspects but the way of presentation is totally different from our traditional novelists. Hariharan occupies an outstanding place in the world of Indian English fiction since 1992. She has written five novels and a collection of short stories. Indian women writers have used themes of love, sex and marriage with confidence. But Hariharan articulates these themes in an entirely different perspective with the help of myths, legends and history in order to achieve her means. She attempts to bring out the Indian culture too through her novels. Mythology in Indian context is perhaps the most utilised and most admired for every generation and genre. History bears proof to every fact that Indians from every age,

time and place and dynasty have expressed their ardent desire to be enriched and knowledgeable in myths, legends and folklore. Irrespective of belonging to the contemporary age or being placed in erstwhile era, Indian mythology and its umpteen sections have rested their permanent influence on Indian literature as a whole, which by their own right, can be considered a literary genre itself. Mythology in the Indian context is kind of an all-encompassing and all-inclusive subject, to which everybody wants to be a part of. The traditional, customary and highly esteemed view point of the grandmother-styled art of story-telling has been evolving with time since time immemorial. Mythology and their Himalayan twists, turns, thrills, the evil act of a villain-like Gorgon and the ultimate triumph of good over evil by the knight in shining armour, together with his rescued kingdom and his beautiful princess, have forever influenced Indian writers, beginning from the Vedic Age. As such, mythological themes in Indian literature are just another common aspect, governing one`s daily life and passion for reading.

Mythological themes in Indian literature first bear its most influential and destiny-defying traces in the two epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata. These colossal epics and its umpteen plots, sub-plots and further additional plots make these two stand out from every other mythological series in ancient Indian literature. Indeed, Indian literature is saturated with several types of mythological characters and their portrayal have also been one that bears relevance very much with the contemporary Indian society. For instance, in Mahabharata, the clash of the titans, Pandavas and Kauravas, or their familial ties and cold-wars, Lord Krishna`s rendition of the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna, or even, Shakuni`s infamous and manipulative game of dice and its

consequences owing to sheer greed, makes these episodes stand out manifestly in present Indian context of strife or antagonism with each other. Ramayana too elaborates about lust for kingdom and power and a wife`s devotion to her husband, or a brother`s passionate respect for his elder ones, in the formation of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana or the demon Ravana and his ambition have been hugely celebrated in verse and poetic language, making the writers almost legend and myth-like themselves. Sanskrit literature, from the Vedic Age has time and again, that too incessantly, have poured out mythological characters and their style of leading life in the hands of writers like Kalidasa, Shudraka, Bana, or Bhasa. Leaving these aside, the Vedic Puranas, or the Upanishads are Indian literature depicting mythological themes in every single line and rhythm. The Puranas, with their almost epic-like storyline and the depiction of the various stratum of society residing, just like the side-by-side dwelling of humans, Gods and demons, do still make of the present age wonder about prowess of men during those supposed imaginary era. All the Hindu Gods, like Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Rama, Agni, Vayu, Surya, Varuna or Indra had actually come into existence from the Vedic Period, all of which were contributions of Sanskrit literature; such was the language`s vastness that Sanskritic Age is divided into Vedic Sanskrit, Classical Sanskrit and emergence of modern-day Sanskrit language. Men like Kalidasa with his Meghaduta, Kumarasambhava, Vikramorvasiya or Abhijnanasakuntalam, have tried to concurrently place long lost mythical stories in their exceedingly sublime and ecstatic literature. Mythological themes in Indian literature also are manifested in these Vedic literatures when it is stated that such commonplace human characters with the God-like

characters, that too, with ease and in household comfort, a notion quite unimaginable in contemporary Indian times. Indeed, Hindu myths and folklore during these Vedic and Classical times are so very saturated with supernatural chronicles, that mythological themes in Indian literature seems only a banality when speaking about these ages and the men living in it; literature by ancient writers were perhaps incomplete and could never be envisioned without invoking God, the Almighty, their wrath and conversations and lastly, the demons, their evil-doings and their curse on humanity. Literary praises, extolments or the concept of invoking was such that it is also believed that these medieval writers were blessed enough to have directly encountered the Almighty's venerated blessings and divinity in person. Hindu literature also abounds in other variations in mythological influences, with weapons and weaponry arresting a considerable position. Each prince or king is described to have been endowed with the Omnipotent's special benediction to possess that out-of-this-world tool to fight his adversary. For instance, Arjuna from Mahabharata was known to have been blessed by Lord Brahma Himself, to be gifted with Brahma's peculiar weapon. The demon king of Lanka, Ravana in Ramayana is also believed to have been blessed by Lord Shiva Himself, lending the king with unusual powers. Coming down to Classical Age, a rather later period in Hindu literature, Vaishnava literature, with the influence of Lord Krishna under Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his followers have retold umpteen tales of chivalry, romance, moments of annoyance and love games within Krishna and his love interest Radha. The four Vedas themselves: Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda, are also known to contain umpteen

tales of heroism, bravery, bloodshed, invasions and valorous deeds, that surely only are possible in mythical books, lending additional finery to mythological themes in Indian literature. Besides Hindu literature, mythological themes in Indian literature is also apparent and totally mirrored in Buddhist literature, with the children-friendly Jataka stories and its magical universe. In fact, the solid base as if personified and founder of the sublime religion Buddhism itself, Gautama Buddha, is full of mythical legends. Beginning from Buddha`s birth and ending in his Mahaparinirvana (death of Lord Buddha), mythology has never been far away from India and Indians. Indeed, within Buddhism, Jainism or Islamic religion, minor to major traces of mythological literature have been found in each of the advancing literary sections. The theme of interest however in contemporary times lies with the modern Indian literature and its utilisation of the mythological theme in an extensive sense. This task has too been smoothly accomplished, owing to the ingrained influence of myth and legend to every Indian born in the country or overseas. Everyone likes to come back to the Indian context and backdrop when reminiscing their regional literature. Mythological theme in Indian English literature or regional literature has time and again mesmerised and captivated the section of readers in general. The gigantic proportions, the setting, the concept of families residing in a joint method, or the magnum opus work of art, make these contemporary Indian writers stand out in an entirely different genre altogether. As in Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, or Shashi Tharoor with his The Great Indian Novel, have time and again and recurrently regained stronghold with mythology in their novels. Symbolism and implicit references to mythology is

one guiding factor that presently counts in contemporary Indian literature, known to be quite a hit amongst all ages of readers. Every creative artist adopted an effective mode to give expression to the felt experience. Writers like Kamala Markandaya, Mrs. Jhabwala and Hariharan explored the social background with great realism. The theme of women's existence, survival and identity figured prominently in the novels of Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande. Sahgal dealt with man-woman relationship and the unequal status of lonely women. Shashi Deshpande gave voice to the long suppressed silence of women. Hariharan was rather unique among Indian English writers with in her sensitive portrayal of the Indian characters. She was preoccupied with the inner world of sensibility. She no longer remained satisfied with women's passive role as woman and wife hence, expressed her angry protest. She eroded the age-old wisdom of saying proverbs, stories, myths and beliefs. Her anger expressed itself through the mode of satire, irony and sarcasm. Her vision encompassed the whole history of woman's role and edified the emergence of new woman who was true to her own self. Hariharan, an epoch making star in Indian fiction in English, was born in Coimbatore, grown up in Bombay and Manila. She continued her studies in the US and worked with public television there. She worked as a staff writer in WNET-Channel 13 in New York, and from 1979, she worked in Bombay, Madras and New Delhi as an editor, first in a publishing house, then as a freelancer. She was married, with two sons lives in New Delhi. In 1995, Hariharan challenged the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act as discriminatory against women. She won the right to have the children named after her (instead of carrying the father's name); in this famous case

argued by Indira Jaising, the Supreme Court agreed that the mother was also a "natural guardian" of the child. She won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book in 1993, with her novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992). She also published a collection of short stories entitled *The Art of Dying* (1993) and two novels. *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994), and more recently, *When Dreams Travel* (1999). She published *A Southern Harvest* (1993), an anthology of Indian short stories translated from four major South Indian languages. Her latest novel *In Times of Siege* (2004) focuses on human rights. The most recent work of Hariharan is a collection of stories for young readers entitled *The Winning Team*. Her novels have been translated into a number of European and South Asian languages and both. *The Thousand Faces of Night* and *In Times of Siege* were also published in English in England and the United States. She writes a regular column for the major Indian newspaper *The Telegraph*. She says "I've used myths to help examine contemporary women's lives - to suggest that they might help us to understand these lives, which on the surface seem rather placid and devoid of event". (sawnet)The English term 'myth' is derived from the Greek word 'muthos' meaning 'word' or 'speech', 'the thing spoken' 'the tale told' perhaps, "any information transmitted verbally including both true and false" (Larue, *Ancient Myth and Modern Men* 5). It's a system of "hereditary stories which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain why the world is as it is and things happen as they do" (Abrams, *Glossary of Literary Terms* 102). In the Indian traditional family system, these stories and myths have a unique importance as they pass it from generation to generation. Every society has some basic cultural

patterns which assume a mythic quality in their permanence within a particular culture. Literature is the most important area of art filled with the mythic content. Northrop Frye has well brought out the deep relationship between myth and literature in his article " Myth, Fiction and Displacement": Myth thus provides the main outlines and the circumference of a verbal universe which is later occupied by literature as well. Literature is more flexible than myth, and fills up the universe more completely: a poet or novelist may work in areas of human life apparently remote from the shadowy gods and gigantic story-outlines of mythology. But in all cultures, mythology merges insensibly into, and with, literature. (165)Frye goes on to make the significant observation: Because mythology and literature occupy the same verbal space, so to speak, the framework or context of any work of literature can be found in mythology as well, when its literary tradition is understood. (168)Frye clinches the issue by observing that " literature is a reconstructed mythology, with its structural principles derived from those of myth" (169). Since myths themselves are narrative patterns of man's imaginative reaction to society, and the universe they perform, as Richard Chase in his book *Quest for Myth* observes, " the cathartic function of dramatizing the clashes and harmonies of life in a social and natural environment" (249). They are born and grow in a particular socio-cultural context, and so when the context changes, new myths are born and the old are reinterpreted and sometimes even significantly modified. According to Graves, as he pointed out in the introduction of his book *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*, myth has two main functions: the first is to answer the sort of awkward questions that children ask, such as ' Who made

the world? How will it end? The answers, necessarily graphic and positive, confer enormous power on the various deities credited with the creation and care of souls—and incidently on their priesthoods. The second function of myth is to justify an existing social system and account for the traditional rites and customs. (v)According to White, as quoted by Holden Ronning in the article "Some Reflections on Myth, History and Memory As Determinants of Narrative," "myth emplots stories about specific actions and sets of events as manifesting the consequences of violations or observances of the role of propriety" (144). Bultman defines myth as the expression of "man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives" (qtd. in Holden Rønning 144). To Barthes "myth hides nothing: its function is to distort, not to make disappear" (qtd. in Holden Ronning 145). In other words myths are never transferred identically, they always undergo some kind of metamorphosis, allowing an author to investigate the artistic process by transferring events from the everyday world to that of the supernatural. The creative function of such myths makes them a determinant of the narrative, for as Goodman states: "myths are fictions and the men and women who make them know it. If this were not so, there would not be any role of imagination in mythmaking and myths would be undistinguishable in idiom and setting from literal narratives, whether factual or erroneous" (qtd. in Holden Rønning 145). In other words myths are a narratological way of explaining the world around us, either celebratory or explanatory, also when retold to later generations. This can be linked to the second definition of Graves that myth is sometimes used as a disguised political message or comment on the contemporary world. It is usually connected to a reality

already familiar to people. In the continuous stream of Indian religion, culture and philosophy, the old myths, not often considered as history, are still a living reality pervading the minds of millions of people and providing them moral and spiritual nourishment. The context of these Indian myths has partly changed with respect to the social and economic order which has eroded the deeper layers of faith only in certain urban sections of society. The Indian myths continue to be the sanctuary of religion, philosophy, poetry and ethics for a large number of Indians who, it may be said, still live their myths. From ancient times many of our great minds with profound knowledge have shown deep appreciation for the profound philosophical concepts underlying Indian myths, and have acknowledged the creative role of mythology in India's cultural evolution. Joseph Campbell, Rene Guenon, Mircea Eliade and, above all, Ananda Coomaraswamy have, through their patient researches and perceptive interpretations, removed many of the misconceptions about Indian mythology and enlarged our understanding of the spiritual, aesthetic and social significance of major Indian myths. As a prominent western writer has differentiated myth and legend, myth is a story about a god while a legend is a story about a hero. This distinction between myth and legend has hardly any relevance in the Indian context where gods incarnate themselves and become human heroes going through the entire range of human experience, including death and where human heroes are often elevated to the status of gods. It is true that myths and legends reflect, to a certain extent, the social, political and economic conditions of the age, the genesis of important myths depends on a combination of many factors that transcend the contemporary situation. Indian culture as a whole is

marked by the simultaneous working of two sets of tendencies which appear, on a superficial view, to be mutually exclusive: continuity in the midst of change, and unity in the midst of diversity. To whichever aspect of India's cultural evolution we might turn-intellectual, spiritual, aesthetic or social- we can find these two sets of tendencies at work. Mythology, too, reflects quite clearly this feature of Indian culture. As mythology has a prominent role in the foundation of the cultural pattern of the Indian societies, it shapes the character of the individuals too. Hariharan has successfully delineated the role performed by mythology in shaping the destiny of Indian women in the patriarchal society through her novels. In this study, the researcher attempts an indepth analysis of these aspects in her novels- *The Thousand Faces of Night* , *The Ghosts of Vasu Master*, *In Times of Siege*, and *When Dreams Travel*. Mythology has also exercised a continuous and undiminished influence on creative writers, artists and social and religious reformers. Foreign visitors, when they read Indian newspapers and journals, often express surprise at the fact that even the speeches of the Indian politicians, including those who represent materialistic ideologies, contain frequent allusions to mythological figures, places and events. In mythology, as in other fields, the past is gathered up, reassessed, and carried over into the future. Indian mythology not only reflects the simultaneous working of continuity and change but also shows how India has preserved a basic cultural unity in and through an amazing diversity of expression. Stories from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas have always provided a unifying element in India's national life. Myths about gods and goddesses have brought people close to each other, emotionally and spiritually,

irrespective of differences of language, vocation, life style, religious belief and regional traditions. This closeness is demonstrated vividly when people from different parts of India come together at places of pilgrimage, or at fairs and festivals such as the Kumbhamela at the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna, the Rama Lila which is celebrated throughout India, and the Krishna Janmashtami festival which draws thousands of people to Vrindavan, on the bank of the Yamuna river. Indian mythology has always been very close to the actual life of the people. This is true even in the modern age, inspite of all the changes that technology has brought in the pattern of life, particularly in the cities. The myth connected with Rama and Krishna are encountered everyday in the conversation, festivals and rituals of the Indian people. They have become part and parcel of popular proverbs and songs, ballads and stories and folk plays. Even those who have had no formal education are thoroughly familiar with myths, having picked them up in childhood from everyday conversation in the household. The myth serves as the link between the abstract concepts of the philosopher and the concrete experience of the average member of the community. Hariharan has successfully brought out this connection that the myth has in the society. She subtly encapsulated the effects of the strong winds of change that had brought about far reaching upheavals in women's lives in India. Hariharan urged that the many disruption of civil society had created opportunities as well as hazards, which simultaneously enabled and constrained Indian woman. Even at lower levels of privilege some sense of personal rights percolated into their consciousness so that the stereotype Indian woman as a submissive, mindless object of pity found no concrete example. These

stereotypes existed only for many distanced onlookers and underlined the politics of representation. Through her novels Hariharan has made abundant use of mythical stories and has made subtle connections between her characters and the mythical characters of the past. She has dealt with the question of what it means to be a woman in India, mainly in her novels. To achieve her aim she has made consistent reference to the stories of the past and brings in most of the characters of the Indian epic, the Mahabharata. A mythical narrative is a continuous retelling of a story in which the constituent elements become more and more fixed, the characters become two-dimensional and stereotypic, and the whole tenor of the tale tends to become less flexible, less open to interpretation with each retelling. Authors intent on using traditional material most, therefore, devise a specific modality which, while retaining the mental form of the original tale, transforms the whole narrative into a new being. In this process of change, the narrative acquires a new meaning and significance as the author manages to combine the new material of the collected tradition with the ideas and vision of his imagination. In the process, he even succeeds in breaking down the barriers of his readers' familiarity with the traditional tale, thus making it more flexible, facilitating the author in moulding it into a particular way to serve his fictional purpose. A great many scholars accept the fact that myth serves a major role in their fictional world, both thematically and structurally. They go beyond the traditional verse of the mythical form and take on an altogether different trajectory-the emphasis being not merely on juxtaposing the mythical and the fictional, not even on finding parallels in them, but on placing them side by side to achieve a value

judgement. Through her works, Hariharan unostentatiously intertwined the post modern and feminist perspectives by stressing on the different strategies women adopt to assert themselves. She has subtly encapsulated the effects of the strong winds of change that have brought about far reaching upheavals in women's lives in India. As Hariharan ably demonstrates through her works, an enormous weight of tradition still continues to bear down on us-' though not so much an albatross' as a source of silence and inner ferment. Her first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* presents three women whose different and yet similar stories cut across generations and cross barriers of caste and class. The young, upper class, western educated Devi, her mother Sita and the lower-caste and class servant woman Mayamma have to contend with the same restrictive rules of patriarchy. These rules reduce them to barely-active objects that are totally controlled by men in their lives. The paternalistic laws of Manu, the ancient Indian sage run like a thread through the text. These laws are articulated by Devi's father-in-law. This male discourse is subverted by the female discourse of Devi's grandmother. If Manu speaks of female subordination, the grandmother's discourse glorifies strong, rebellious, angry women- Draupadi and Amba from the Mahabharata, whose just wrath wreaks havoc and destroys entire lives of male controlled dynasties. Through these different stories Hariharan has pictured the different views regarding the behaviour and life style of women in Indian societies. Hindu scriptures and legal texts define women only in relation to men; wifhood confers a respectable status on women and with motherhood a woman reaches the pinnacle of her existence. In *Manusmriti*, women are presented as meek

childlike creatures who have to be protected from their own waywardness by male control. Pita rakshathi kaumareBharthra rakshathi yauvanePuthra rakshathi vardhakyena sthri swathanthryamarhathi. In adolescence a girl is brought up and protected by her father whose role was taken up by her husband at her youth and which was in turn handed over to her son at her old age. Thus the traditional paternalists of India passed on the belief that woman cannot be independent and she must need a strong and ever present support. In Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*, her women Sita, Devi, and Mayamma are separated by the gulf of time and caste but are linked by the shared reductiveness of their gender. Sita sacrifices her immense talent in playing veena for the duties she owes to her family as a daughter-in-law, wife and mother. In her self-destructive anger, she is the mythical Gandhari from *The Mahabharata*, who, in anger at being married off to a blind prince, had tied a piece of cloth over her own eyes. This terrible punishment not only fuelled her own anger but was an ever-present reproach to those who had wronged her. It was her grandmother's stories which provided an escape route for Devi from "the sticky walls" of her mother's womb. Grandmother's stories taught Devi to dream, to fly, to tear, to shred the suffocating veils of femaleness. The old woman's myths, fables, and fantasies subvert analytical, rationalist male discourse. If history is male, then myth is female and predates history. Hariharan uses a combination of western feminist fantasies of flying with stories from the Indian epic, *The Mahabharata*, to create the magical world of the female child Devi. Fed on stories of the vengeful Amba, Devi created her own magical realist world in which she was a female warrior, who "rode a tiger, and cut off evil, magical demons' heads"

(Hariharan, TFN 41). In her fantasy world, Devi imagines herself as " an incarnation of Durga, walking the earth to purge it of fat-jowled, slim-tailed great" (Hariharan, TFN 43). This is a feminist fantasy of decimating exploitative men-an Amazonian desire to inhabit autonomous spaces outside male-ordained enclosures. Devi's idyllic world is shattered when her heroine is killed in battle with a man; the end of the Amazonian fantasy is also decreed by Sita, who issues the edict: " no more of these fantasies. The girl is almost a woman, she must stop dreaming now" (Hariharan, TFN 45). Devi's rebellious spirit is not so easily tamed. In a clever move, Sita gives her a long rope lets her go to the university in U. S, but when the time is ripe Devi is drawn back to India and married off to Mahesh. Marriage once, more traps Devi in manmade enclosures. Her grandmother's stories of vengeful, magnificent, strong women are now replaced by her father-in-law's discourse that is firmly patterned on Manu's laws. If grandmother's stories were " an initiation into the subterranean possibilities of womanhood, the father-in-law's stories define the limits. His stories are for a woman who has already reached the goal that will determine the guise her virtue will wear" (Hariharan, TFN 51). Hariharan is adept at focusing on the history of medieval India, that is the history of Vijaya Nagar empire and the city of Kalyana, which stood as an epitome of glory eight hundred years ago, as one of the main threads of the novel, In Times of Siege. This novel is about a historian who is victimized by a group called the Ithihas Suraksha Manch, the self professed protectors of history for a lesson he has written on the reformer poet Basava. Ideologically, it can be a chain that binds us to the past, forever constraining our visions of the kind of society we might have.

History can be conservative: if people were divided along religious, caste, and class lines in the past, so it must always be. In working out her novel's theory of history, Hariharan does have a few moments of professorial geekiness. At one point, for instance, she writes: Each of us carries within ourselves a history, an encyclopedia of images, a landscape with its distinct patterns of mutilation. A dictionary that speaks the languages of several pasts, that moves across borders, back and forth between different times. Some biographers date Basava's death--or the presumption of death-- as January 1168. But in Shiv's mind, this tentative date creeps forward insidiously. Not to June 7, 1962, when his father disappeared, but to its medieval counterpart, June 7, 1168. Like Shiv's father, Basava disappeared. He was presumed dead. His end would always be shrouded by mysterious circumstances and speculation. Speculative narratives. Narratives of love or faith or revolution. She excavates the rich layers of Indian history and, at the same time, exposes the intricacies of Murthy's internal conflict and personal life, revealing that the past and the present are always more inextricably linked than we presume. This stark, contemporary narrative unfolds the story of ordinary lives besieged, of men and women struggling to make sense of hatred, ignorance, love and loyalty - in individuals, ideas and the nation. Sharp and gripping, and permeated with a chilling sense of menace, *In Times of Siege* holds up an uncompromising mirror to India today. Hariharan has artistically managed to use the stories of Panchatantra well in her novel, *The Ghosts of Vasu Master*. The novel is interspersed with many stories Vasu Master recounts, focussed mainly on those of Grey Mouse, who also learns through experience along the way. Told in short chapters, alternating

between events in the present, stories, and recollections, along with a bit of philosophising on Vasu Master's part, *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* moves at a good pace, and builds up nicely to its conclusion. Hariharan tries to do a great deal here, and not everything is a success, but it is a charming, entertaining, and thoughtful novel. India is a land of beautiful beliefs and cultures. The tradition of India, advocates its natives to consider teachers as equal to the God. It is also believed that a human being attains a quarter of his/her life's knowledge from the Guru (teacher). In this aspect the well-known Indian English writer Hariharan's novel *The Ghosts Of Vasu Master* accomplishes special attention since it is the beautifully narrated story of a retired teacher. Mani is a student who does not-or will not-speak. Vasu Master tells the reticent child one fantastic story after the other as he faces up to the biggest challenge in his teaching career. However this teaching process opens up a new realm in his life. He travels to his childhood, past and own fears as he digs up stories to enlighten the child. Many ghosts in Vasu master's life come alive at this stage. Vasu master realizes that the stories he was told in the childhood weren't at all like the ones other children heard. Now, he can see their power and finds them useful for himself. His dead wife Mangala becomes a strong presence in his present life and the past scenes and recounted so often. At this level Vasu master's training to Mani reaches a psychological level where he tries helping Mani to get free from whatever demons and burdens the latter carries within. The novel is interspersed with many stories Vasu Master recounts. Hariharan has acknowledged the influence of the famous Panchatantra Tales to this novel. Just like Vishnu Sharma teaches the King's sons through short stories, Vasu

master enlighten Mani through his stories. Told in short chapters, alternating between events in the present, stories, and recollections, along with a bit of philosophizing on Vasu Master's part, *The Ghosts Of Vasu Master* moves at a good pace, and builds up nicely to its conclusion. Hariharan is immensely talented to weave stories blending with myth, legend and history which glitters like a gem-encrusted sword as it cleaves its way through layer after layer of fable and allegory. *When Dreams Travel*, a recasting of *The Thousand and One Nights* is a tale of fantasy revelling in magic and geniis, palaces and dungeons and seems to be more in tune with the gothic, the fantastic and the fairy tale world than with reality. She vibrantly reworks the *The Thousand and One Nights*, weaving into the great myth the 'travelled dreams' of other myths and stories—Muslim and Hindu across Asia. A magical tour de force by a writer at the height of her powers, *When Dreams Travel* weaves round Scheherazade—or Shahrzad of the thousand and one nights—a vibrant, inventive story about that old game that's never played out: the quest for love and power. The curtain opens on four figures, two men and two women. There is the sultan who wants a virgin every night; there is his brother, who makes an enemy of darkness and tries to banish it; and there are their ambitious brides, the sisters Shahrzad and Dunyazad, aspiring to be heroines—or martyrs. Travelling in and out of these lives to spellbinding effect is a range of stories, dark, poetic and witty by turns, spanning medieval to contemporary times. With its sharp and lively blend of past and present, its skilful reworking of the historical tradition, and its controlled use of evocative language, Hariharan's multi-voiced narrative assumes the significance of modern myth.