Chapter I

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Introduction

Postmodernism is an aesthetic, social, cultural, artistic as well as a literary movement that emerged after World War II. Postmodernism has manifested itself as part of the contemporary culture. The movement has spread far and wide in all the disciplines and has created a new cultural epoch. Postmodernism expressed its dissatisfaction with modernist representation of political, cultural and social practices. Hence postmodernism gained prominence and became a significant term not only among the literary theorists but among philosophers, media theorists, sociologists etc.

Postmodernism boldly dishonored all generic conventions, grand narratives and cultural norms. It did not embrace the principles such as determinacy of identity, unity, authority, etc. but associated itself with difference, plurality and skepticism. Postmodernism is hailed as the movement of subversion as it subverts generic conventions such as capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism and the ideologies which are cultural products that uphold the hegemonic power structures. So, postmodernism opens up an epoch of recreating, reinventing new styles of the past in the form of pastiche used for parodying and satirizing. The movement is projected to build an ideal world by revolting against the social practices that has suppressed the voice of the marginalized. This movement gained importance in literature in the 1960s and 1970s and as a consequence the literature of this period rejects tradition.

The term 'postmodernism' is a complex term. It paves way for more debatable question whether postmodernism is a period, a literary movement or a genre. Majority of

theorists treat postmodernism as a sensibility rather than a movement. We live in the

postmodern age and whatever is written during this era is essentially postmodern. Some

theorists consider postmodernism as a socio-cultural phenomenon whereas others look at

it as aesthetic and intellectual phenomenon. People felt that it was the high time to

overthrow the modernist high art. Norris states various definitions for postmodernism

given by a number of writers as follows:

> ... new aesthetic formation (Hassan), a condition (Lyotard, Harvey), a
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> culture (Conner), a cultural dominant (Jameson), a set of artistic movements
>
> employing a parodic mode of self-conscious representation (Hutcheon), an
>
> ethical or political imperative (Bauman), a period in which we have reached
>
> the 'end of history' (Baudrillard, Fukuyama, Vattimo), a 'new horizon of
>
> our cultural, philosophical formation' (Callinicos), or even just a rather
>
> unfortunate mistake (qtn. in Malpas 6-7).

Lyotard, one of the pioneers of postmodern theory, treats 'modernism' and

'postmodernism' as two faces linked with each other. According to Lyotard 'modernism'

came to an end at the beginning of 1960s and its place is occupied by 'postmodernism'.

The prefix 'post' highlights that 'postmodernism' is a project that needs to be completed.

Thus, the argument about the emergence of 'postmodernism' and death of 'modernism'

still continues. 'Post' also indicates a new direction from previous one. Lyotard believes

that postmodernism is continuation of the works of modernists. Thus, postmodernism is a

cultural era after modernism. It is a fact that postmodernism is against ideologies, cultural

practices, values system accepted in modernism. "Postmodern would have to be understood

according to the paradox of the future (post) anterior (modo)" (Lyotard 81). He defined 'postmodernism' as a cultural change in the contemporary period.

> Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. [..] It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements--narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on [...] Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside? (Lyotard xxiv-xxv).

It will be more convincing to study postmodernism in the cultural premises which highlights the origin of postmodernism. After the Second World War, the social situation totally changed, thereby bringing out change in the cultural backdrop of postmodern society. As a result of it by the end of 1980s, the theorists began to use the term 'postmodernism' in the context of cultural epoch. Postmodernism interrogated the expression of modernity and the established assumptions. In the new world of information and technology, people embrace consumerist approach towards life that disrupted the deep-rooted traditional beliefs and the strong hold of the grand narratives.

Capitalism and electronic media transformed social and psychic conditions in the postmodern age. People lost interest in historical consciousness and could not understand the socio-cultural totality of human existence. In short, postmodernism became devoid of

historical sense in the contemporary society. As a result, this age lost the possibility of unified self. Everything in this world is commoditized, thus culture, politics and history is understood as the economic structure of the society. Thus Fredric Jameson opines, "Postmodernism not as a style but rather as a cultural dominant: a conception which allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features" (4).

Every new movement spin and bounces ahead with some positive attributes, thoughts and perspectives. The changed socio-cultural situation was studied by many thinkers like Jameson, Lyotard, Baudrillard and many others. Frederic Jameson in a conversation with Anders Stephanson explains the term "difference" in a narrative discourse

> I tried to put this in the slogan "difference relates." The very perception of breaks and difference becomes a meaning in itself; yet not a meaning that has content but one that seems to be a meaningful, yet new, form of unity. This kind of view does not pose the problem "How do we relate those things; how do we turn those things back into continuities or similarities?" It simply says "When you register difference, something positive is happening in your mind." It's a way of getting rid of content. (Docherty 64)

Postmodernism accepts fragmentation as the condition of life because the sense of the society as cohesive unit operating upon the established ideologies had been disrupted. In this present world of rapid technological development, the paradigms of societal norms are no more static but keep evolving and are in a constant flux thus leading to fragmented identities.

A fundamental questioning of the notion of originality and correspondingly a new kind of emphasis on citation and intertextuality, parody and pastiche... fragmentation in the postmodern does not depend on the possibility of an original 'unity' which has been lost.... Another way of thinking about postmodern fragmentation is in terms of dissemination. Dissemination involves a sense of scattering of origins and ends, of identity, centre, and presence. Postmodern fragmentation is without origins, it is dissemination without any assurance of a centre or destination. (Bennet 334)

Postmodernism has enabled Indian writers to experiment with new narrative techniques and literary devices. By using various postmodern techniques Githa Hariharan has expounded the themes specific to the Indian socio-cultural milieu. She has created a unique style by adapting various narrative strategies to effectively discuss the postmodern themes of fragmentation and destabilizing accepted ideologies. Mark Schorer in the essay *Technique as Discovery* emphasizes the importance of technique in narrative fiction thus:

When we speak of technique, then, we speak of nearly everything. For technique is the means by which the writer's experience which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; technique is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and, finally of evaluating it. (Schorer 387)

Intertextuality is an important postmodern technique employed by many writers in their literary works. Intertextuality means the interconnection of one text with other texts. The context of a text is determined by its connection with other texts which it incorporates. These connections can be traced by means of literary techniques such as allusion, parody,

pastiche, imitation and quotes from other texts. To be very precise, the text is understood with reference to other works. The references from other texts are sometimes used in the work in the form of parody. Intertextuality means the references to myths, fairy tales, legends as well as references to popular genres such as detective fiction, epics etc., included in a text. The Indian writers have employed the Indian epics like *The Ramayana, The Mahabharata* and *The Bhagavad Gita* and many other religious and mythological books as a part of intertextuality.

> Intertexuality is the term coined and expounded by Julia Kristeva in her interpretation of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism in her seminal work 'Word, Dialogue and Novel'. The theory of intertexuality postulates that a text cannot exist alone as a self-contained, hermetic whole. It is shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures. The writer is a reader of texts and texts as structures of writing in a narrow sense, text as signifying matters in a broad sense before he is creator of texts. Therefore, the word of art gets inevitably inflected with references, quotations and influences of every kind. (Waghmare 2)

The technique of 'intertextuality' is very complicated as far as its use is concerned. The writers are more inclined to discover something new from the substance of the previous text. The text opens up new avenues and reflects new reality. This does not imply that the text is devoid of originality. In fact, the main objective of this technique is to highlight the contemporary situation. By comparing the past with the present, the author brings about a new understanding of contemporary reality. As Hutcheon points out,

Postmodernism, as I am defining it here, is perhaps somewhat less

promiscuously extensive, the notion of parody as opening the text up,

rather than closing it down, is an important one: among the many things

that postmodern intertextuality challenges are both closure and single,

centralized meaning. It's willed and willful provisionally rests upon its

acceptance of the inevitable textual infiltration of prior discursive

practices. ("Poetics" 127)

Through this technique of intertextuality postmodern writers present a collage of

references in their text to discuss their messages. The postmodern text evokes memories

of other texts. As a result of the use of intertextuality, a postmodern text does not remain

a single entity as it is connecting the past and the present. The main aim of this technique

is to subvert the traditional themes and pave way for new interpretation.

Pastiche is a postmodern technique that is closely related to intertextuality. Pastiche

literally means to combine or paste together multiple elements, styles in a literary work.

In other words, it recounts that an author's literary works can be composed of different

elements borrowed from the works of other writers. Githa Hariharan uses history, Panchatantra,

Arabian tales and Aesop's fables for creating a particular effect of pastiche.

In Pastiche, the contents of previous genres and styles of literature are pasted

to create a new narrative voice. In short, it can be parody or imitation of past styles.

Through pastiche writers represent the pluralistic postmodern society. Through the

combination of multiple texts, the writers create a unique narrative to comment on the

postmodern society.

In fact, the word 'pastiche' is derived from French generic of the Italian noun 'pasticcio'. It has become a fine example of eclecticism in art, mechanism of intertextuality. Through this technique, a writer tries to explore the realities of the contemporary world. The work represents the confused state of society and its pluralistic form.

> Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry. Without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody.
>
> (Jameson 17)

Parody is a technique used in postmodern writing. In parody, a writer deliberately copies somebody's style to amuse and entertain others. In other words, parody is aimed to imitate or mock an element of a literary work. Parody is an exaggerated mimicry of literary style. It is related to burlesque where the serious styles are used to ridicule somebody or something. It brings down the fame of the original work by comically satirizing and exaggerating it. Parody works to give a glimpse of the politics of representation. In this respect, Linda Hutcheon in her *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989) observes: "Instead, I would want to argue that postmodernist parody is a value-problematizing, de-naturalizing form of acknowledging the history (and through irony, the politics) of representations" (90).

Metafiction is an important feature of postmodern literature. In broader sense 'Metafiction' is fiction about fiction or writing about writing. It deliberately comments on

its own fictional status and discusses nature of fiction. It is a typical deconstructionist approach that stresses that narratives take different interpretation to suit the context. The metafictional author reminds the readers or audience that it is fiction. In fact, this technique is employed by the author to undermine the authority of author. In works of metafiction, the book finds its identity through the author's interaction with the reader.

Further, metafiction absorbs the pattern of intertextuality, hybridity, magic realism etc. Apart from this, the prime significance is given to Irony. Italo Calvino's novel *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1979) is a fine example of metafiction. It is about a reader who goes about to read a novel by the same name. Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse – Five* (1969), deals with the process of writing a novel, wherein artificiality of the narrative is emphasised. In John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), offers alternative endings. Thus, metafiction is a typical feature of postmodern literature.

Historiographic metafiction is a category of metafiction. It is another important technique of postmodernism. Historiographic metafiction means to fictionalize actual historical events or figures. The term is coined by Linda Hutcheon to refer to the novel that fictionalizes actual historical events and characters. In fact, literature and history are inseparable. Hence postmodern fiction portrays the fact that to rewrite and revive the past in fiction and in history is to unfold the past events and bring its relevance to the present. In this respect, Linda Hutcheon in her *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) opines: "Historiographic metafiction often points to this fact by using the paratextual conventions of histography to both inscribe and undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanations" (123).

Fabulation is a postmodern narrative technique closely associated with pastiche and magic realism. The term sometimes is used interchangeably with metafiction and it also relates to. In fact, fabulation is a rejection of traditional and established realism. Fabulation is a highly comical and allegorical. It incorporates the form of romance or the picaresque novel. The authors who use the technique of fabulation believe that literary works are nothing but born out of the imagination of the writer with the main objective to create a close picture of reality. It completely rejects the customary notions of literature. The term was popularized mainly by Robert Schotes in his work, *The Fabulators* (1967), where he refers to fabulation in the works of John Barth, Kurt Vonnegut, etc. This type of writing obscures the difference between serious and trivial, tragic and comic. Examples of fabulation are Giannina Brachi's *United States of Banana* and Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* etc.

Irony is one of the quiescent features of postmodernism. The word irony is derived from the Greek word 'eironeia' meaning dissimulation or feigned ignorance. It is a literary technique that is pigeon holed by contrast between expected turn of situation and the reality that bounces back. Irony is further classified into several categories such as verbal irony, dramatic irony and situational irony. Verbal irony is a statement in which the speaker's employed meaning is sharply and stunningly different from the meaning that is expressed. In dramatic irony the information provided to the audience is not known to at least one of the characters. Situational irony describes a sharp disparity between the expressed outcome and actual result in a certain situation. Postmodern writers treat serious subjects ironically.

Temporal Distortion is another significant postmodern literary technique that uses a nonlinear time frame. Temporal distortion is "... breaking up the text into short fragments or

sections, separating by space, titles, numbers or symbols" (Sim 127). In this technique, the author may leap forward or backward in time and it is deliberately used for the sake of irony. For example, in Kurt Vonnegut's works, distortion of time is of prime importance. Secondly, in his most famous work *Slaughterhouse – Five*, Billy Pilgrim becomes unstuck in time. For example, in Ishmael Reed's *Flight to Canada*, Abraham Lincoln uses a telephone which did not exist at that time.

Magic realism is an important postmodern literary technique which infuses fantastic or impossible elements into a narration. Magic realism includes dreams, ghosts, elements of fantasy and quick shifts in time etc. The myths and fairy tales also form a part of narrative which includes unrealistic elements like flying carpets, living dead, moving of trees and so on. There is a perfect blend of realistic and fantasy in surrealistic manner. "Postmodernists feel that there is no point in creating fiction that gives an illusion of life when life itself seems so illusory" (Pillai 29).Fantasy is employed to comment on the contemporary reality. The real is mixed with the strange and reality is defamiliarized through this technique. Gunter Grass's *Die Blechtrommel* (1959), Milan Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1988) are fine examples of magic realism. In this respect, Amy J. Elias in his essay *Meta-mimesis? The Problem of British Postmodern Realism* opines:

> 'Magic realism' implies that the real is invested with the strange in order
> to reinvest the familiar with meaning through the act of de-familiarization:
> magical realism de-familiarizes the real. I would argue that Postmodern
> Realism attempts to record the real but that the real itself has become a
> strange new world: mediated reality. (26)

Techno culture and hyperreality are the other techniques of postmodernism. Postmodernists give importance to the impact of the modern technology on life and society. Postmodern writings reflect the changing social scenario of techno culture in their writings. The techno cultural society represents human life which is influenced by modern science and technology. In postmodern literature popular culture such as all media including film, T.V, video, internet, animation etc. is very well represented. As every sphere of human life is influenced by science and technology the postmodern writers focused on the impacts of technology on human life. Like Fredric Jameson, Baudrillard also believes that in postmodern period, everything is changed into hyperreality in which virtual realities have replaced the real.

'Hyperreality' is a term used in postmodern philosophy to describe difficulty in distinguishing reality from a simulation of reality. It has become very difficult to distinguish the reality from fantasy due to the advancement of modern digital technology. In the world of modern technology there is no hope of genuine representation. Therefore, the postmodern writer believes that today's reality is hyperreality. Baudrillard opines that,

> Hyperreality, the virtual reality in which we live, structured by information and technology, is sustained on an amalgamation of elements which were previously separate, such as production and consumption, and by a dissipation of the system of values based on the illusion that economy and society have a defined meaning or any meaning at all. (qtd. in Roberto)

Paranoia is a representation of the postmodern condition. Paranoia is a psychological condition wherein the affected person experiences unknown fear lurking and lack of trust. Postmodern writers imitated this sense of paranoia in their works. This portrayal gradually

gained momentum and has become an evolving theme. Traditional and conservative people think that there is an ordered system behind the chaos of the world. But postmodernists strongly believe that no such ordering systems prevail, so the search for order becomes absurd. This is because every grand narrative, every doctrine, every system of values are modified and remodeled which results in spreading uncertainty about the prevalent order in society.

Maximalism is a postmodern narrative technique which is a reaction against minimalism. This type of text is disorganized, extensive, bulky and emotionally disconnected. Thomas Pynchon's *Mason and Dixon* makes extensive use of the technique of maximalism. The disorganized text creates controversy about the real purpose of the novel and its purpose.

Minimalism is another postmodern technique in which minimum elements are used to create maximum effect. The author deliberately caricatures the unexceptional characters and events of everyday life as well as strictly minimizes the content. Minimalism is against the absurd details of any kind but provides general meaning and allows the reader's fancy and creativity to mould the story. In this type of novel, the author abstains from all unnecessary information.

Subversion is a postmodern technique that debunks grand narratives, ideologies or any other authority. It is also used to destabilize the deep-rooted notions of truth in traditional culture. So, the nature of postmodern text is subversive. Through this technique, postmodern authors make an attempt to reconstruct truth and ideology,

Exposition of absurdity in the lives of contemporary people especially, the marginalized groups of people is a feature of postmodern literature. The writers by using

the absurd language highlight sense of meaninglessness, purposelessness, illogicality and unreasonableness in life. Absurdism as a literary movement emerged in France after World War II. Absurdism presents illogical and unreasonable actions in the life of characters which are presented through farcical and clownish language. The character being off from their transcendental roots and as a consequence they live a life of absurdity. The followers of this movement present absurdist situations of marginalized groups of people in their works and this literature is called the absurdist literature.

India became independent from the British colonialism in 1947. As a result, the social, cultural, economic and educational situations began to change greatly and new trends of development came up. India restructured itself as a multiregional, multilingual, multireligious, multicultural, secular democratic country with plurality and unity in diversity as its unique feature. During later years of 1980's, Indian literature acquired postmodern tendencies, which is reflected in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Nissim Ezekiel's *Later Day Psalms* (1982).

Thus, the decade of 1980s was considered as a golden age and as the period of second renaissance in Indian English Fiction. This phase is recognized as the postmodern phase of Indian fiction with the recurrence of postmodern playfulness, magic realism and many other postmodern attributes. The concept of postmodernism became the subject of academic study and discussion in the 1980s. Bran Nicol in his book *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction* says:

> In the following decades the term began to figure in academic disciplines
> besides literary criticism and architecture – such as social theory, cultural
> and media studies, visual arts, philosophy, and history. Such wide-ranging

usage meant that the term became overloaded with meaning, chiefly
because it was being used to describe characteristics of the social and
political landscape as well as a whole range of different examples of
cultural production. (1)

The postmodern novelists and short story writers took up the call of changing socio-cultural life in India due to the advancement of science and technology. Novelists like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur, Kiran Desai, Arvind Adiga, Vikram Chandra, Amit Chaudhari, Amit Varma, Rohinton Mistry, Mukul Keshwan, Chitra Bannerji, Githa Hariharan, etc. wrote about changing socio-cultural scenario in the postmodern contemporary India. These writers enriched the genre of fiction and they introduced new narrative techniques and treated the themes entirely in a different perspective.

Githa Hariharan got inspiration from her favourite authors like Amitav Ghosh, Mahashweta Devi, Arundhati Roy and others. She was also influenced by Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. She appreciated reputed literary writers such as A.K. Ramanujan and Girish Karnad. In addition to this, she was inspired by the literary style of the Nobel Prize winner J.M Coetzee. Like Salman Rushdie, Githa Hariharan exposes the socio-cultural realities, problems of marginalized groups of people through her fiction. Githa Hariharan has followed Salman Rushdie's tradition in employing postmodern novelistic technique. Like Salman Rushdie, her narrative technique deals with postmodern narrative strategies such as playfulness, stories within stories, retelling of history, use of magic realism, etc.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is an excellent example of postmodern novel. Critics are of the opinion that postmodernism began with this novel of Salman Rushdie in Indian English literature. He is recognized as the pioneer of postmodern Indian English fiction. Besides, *Midnight's Children* (1981), Salman Rushdie is known for his other novels like *Grimus* (1975), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1995), *Shame* (1983), *The Satanic Verses* (1988), and *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995). *Midnight's Children* is Rushdie's masterpiece. It is considered as a great magic realist fantasy fiction. In *Grimus,* he presents a man searching the meaning of life. The novel *Shame* is set in fictionalized Pakistan and is about what happened in Pakistan after 1947. *The Satanic Verses* is about the struggle between good and evil and *The Moor's Last Sigh* is a satire on Indian politics. The novelist portrays various themes in a postmodern fashion.

The long train of writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Githa Hariharan and many others contributed to the postmodern fiction. They have improved the standard Indian fiction to a new height through their contributions. The postmodern Indian fiction also depicted the loss of faith in religion, declining moral standards, corruption and communal clash. The Indian writers employed mythological allusions taken from the great Indian epics. Indian novelists made use of new narrative techniques such as pastiche, magic realism, folk tales, fables, fantasy, memory, Indian myths in their novels.

Indian women novelists wrote fiction from the point of view of feminism. Their fiction reflected the injustice meted out to women. Shashi Deshpande is a contemporary of Githa Hariharan. Her major novels are *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1988), *Small Remedies* (2000) and *The Binding Vine* (1992) etc. In fact, she is a feminist novelist like Githa Hariharan. Both of them deal with

women's issues in their fiction. Arundhati Roy, won the Booker Prize for *The God of the Small Things* which is her masterpiece. It is a feministic work that visualizes women's issues such as isolation, oppression, depression and frustration. The novel depicts destruction of human identity and oppressive social forces.

Shashi Tharoor's best novels *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), and *Show Business* (1991) display socio-cultural condition in India through linguistic tricks. Upamanyu Chatterjee's *The Last Burden* is a critique of patriarchy and its politics. Further, he shows how new women are empowered. Amitav Ghosh is a contemporary of Githa Hariharan. His *The Circle of Reason* (1986) exposes cultural issues. His famous novel *The Shadow Lines* (1988) deals with several socio-economic, cultural and religious problems. *The Glass Palace* (2000) exposes colonial hegemony. Amitav Ghosh and Githa Hariharan are more similar in handling thematic aspects of approving the ideology of globalization.

Bharati Mukherjee is also her contemporary postmodern woman novelist. She is a postmodern feminist writer. Through her fiction, she has exposed the marginalization of Indian women and their secondary position in the contemporary society. Her fiction *Jasmine* (1989), *The Holder of the World* (1993), *Leave It To Me* (1997), etc. reflect the various images of women in contemporary Indian socio-cultural society. In fact, she is a voice of Indian diaspora in North America. In *Jasmine* (1989), she displays the picture of women suffering in patriarchal setup in contemporary society. Hence, she redefines 'feminism' by presenting female protagonists who appear to be strong, determined, and assertive. Her chief aim in it is to expose the traditionally ingrained practice of patriarchal domination and liberating women by empowering them. Therefore, her protagonists

break the social taboos related to women by rebelling against the patriarchal values. Thus, Bharati Mukherjee is a postmodern author who interrogates the hegemony of centralized power.

Shobha De is another contemporary postmodern novelist. Through her novels such as *Socialite Evening* (1998), *Starry Night* (1990), and *Sister* (1992), she exposes the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of modern society. She writes about the modern women's longing for freedom and emotional independence.

Manju Kapur's debut novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) was awarded the Common wealth Writers' Prize. As a postmodern author; she has developed and projected her protagonists as rebellious and in search of self-identity. She raises her voice against the age-old traditions. Though Viramati's marriage with the Professor is a stigma to her parent's family, she doesn't care for the consequence of her decision. Her family is disgraced and the people begin to look at the Arya Samaj with askance though it encourages education of women. Viramati is the prototype of the new woman. She interrogates the basic values of traditional society. She exhibits the tendency to rebel against the unwarranted practices in the society.

Githa Hariharan, the winner of the prestigious Commonwealth Writers' Prize, was born in Coimbatore in 1954. She grew up in Bombay and Manila. She completed her B.A. in English from Bombay University and M.A. in Communications from Fairfield University, Connecticut in the United States of America. Before returning to India, she worked in the Public Broadcasting System in New York. Later on, she worked as an editor in a publishing house before she became a full-time writer. At present she stays in Delhi. She began to write from her childhood days. Her teachers encouraged her to develop interest in creative writing. When she was working in publishing houses, she started to write short fiction.

Githa Hariharan is a postmodern Indian English writer. Her novel runs deep with postmodern sensibility and the use of postmodern themes and techniques in her works. She follows Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie and other postmodern Indian writers in English. The appearance of Githa Hariharan in the realm of Indian English fiction during the 1990s is a noteworthy occurrence as it includes her in the category of those women writers who not only contributed to the field of literature but also brought radical changes in society by standing up to a feminist and social cause. In 1995, she challenged the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act as biased in the Supreme Court of India and as a result of this, mother and father both began to be considered as natural guardians of a child.

Githa Hariharan started her literary career with the publication of her debut novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), for which she was awarded the Commonwealth Writers` Prize in 1993. The novel has been translated into German, French and Spanish languages. In this novel, she yokes the myths and legends of India with the existential anguish of Indian women existing contemporary scenario. The novel is the adventurous journey of its protagonist, Devi who comes to meet her mother Sita after making herself free from the bondage of arranged marriage. Her second novel, *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994), centres on the life of a retired, school teacher Vasu who takes up the most difficult task to teach a differently able student Mani. Mani becomes a big challenge for Vasu but at the end of the novel, he succeeds in enlightening Mani. In her third novel, *When Dreams Travel* (1999), she deals with the theme of subjugation and mistreatment of women in a male dominated society. In her fourth novel, *In Times of Siege* (2003), she expresses her concern for raising fundamentalism and extremism. In the fifth novel, *Fugitive Histories* (2009), she analyses the deplorable and tormenting effect of communal riots on

the lives of people of Gujarat and the necessity to uphold the tenets of secularism.

The Art of Dying (2019) is short story collection depicting the contemporary India.

       The Thousand Faces of Night extensively uses the mythopoeic elements. The novelist has reinterpreted the metanarratives to suit the lives of women who constantly struggle hard to finda space for themselves in the patriarchal society. The novelist has made an attempt to restore and rejuvenate tradition by presenting the mythical Indian stories of Gandhari, Amba, Damayanti etc in a new perspective with the aim of empowering women to strive greater inner strength to fight against injustice. The novelist has focused on the theme of gender disparity to decipher the deep-rooted practices in the Indian culture and its unpropitious social norms which has adversely affected the upward surge of women. In fact, the novel is revolving around the lives of three women Devi, Sita and Mayamma who represent three different generations of traditional, modern and postmodern society respectively. Devi narrates the story of the three women of different generations from the feminine perspective. After the completion of her education in the USA, her mother Sita arranges her marriage with Mahesh, a traditional but a well-educated youth from Bangalore. He shatters Devi's dream of a happy married life. Initially, she was captivated by her father-in-law's stories which depicted women stereotypes who were willing victims to patriarchal ideology but later on she realised that such stereotypical women victims cannot be taken as role models in this postmodern age. Further, she crossed the boundaries of tradition as she fell in love with Gopal, a musician who also could not make her happy. She came to her mother's house at Chennai and her mother Sita welcomed her by playing the Veena, expressing metaphorically that Devi is the new music of her Veena. Thus the author gives expression to the voice of the marginalized women. The novelist transports the readers to

the world of mythology and returns to the postmodern society where women have become very determined, strong and positive in determining their self-identity.

In *The Ghosts of Vasu Master,* the protagonist Vasu Master puts in sincere efforts to enlighten and infuse a new strain of life to the slow learner, Mani. The plot of the novel deals with the retired life of a secondary school teacher, Vasu Master. The subplot is steeped in the world of dreams and fantasy of Vasu Master. After his retirement, Vasu Master feels completely isolated. He keeps reminiscing his past which gives him a kind of relief and peace of mind. He lives alone as his wife, Mangala died twenty years ago and his two sons Vishnu and Venu live away from him. He started spending his life by recalling past memories of his teaching career at P.G. Boys' School, Elipettai. He wants to formulate a new teaching pedagogy out of his past teaching experiences. He devises new constructive teaching methods from his imagination to teach Mani. He narrates several stories, fables, myths and fairy tales to his student. He teaches Mani morality, courage and ambition through these stories. The women characters; his wife Mangala, grandmother, Jameela and Elliamma represent the suppressed and marginalized voice of women.

When Dreams Travel is a retelling of the Arabian legend *The Thousand and One Nights* from a postmodern feminist perspective. The main story in the legend is about two brothers, Shahryar, the Sultan of Shahabad and Shahzaman, the ruler of Samarkhand who had their own separate kingdoms. In the legend, the elder brother Shahryar invites his younger brother Shahzaman to visit Shahabad after many years. The younger brother willingly accepts theinvitation and goes to meet him. During his stay at the camp out of the city, he remembers the gift which he has forgotten to bring as a token of his love. Hence, he goes back to his palace to take the gift with him but to his surprise and sense of shock, he sees

his own wife being embraced in the arms of a black slave. He becomes furious and kills his wife with a sword and sets out to go to Shahabad. When he is alone in his brother's palace, he remembers his wife and her illicit relationship with the slave. Then he happens to notice his brother's wife who embraces black slaves and slave girls. He secretly informs this reality to his brother, Shahryar but initially, the brother doesn't believe in it but later on, he himself witnesses the fact with his own eyes. Since that day, the two brothers make an evil plan. They decide to marry a virgin girl each day, enjoy sex with her and kill her before sunrise. Due to the evil machination of the two brothers, the virgins in the city become scarce in course of time. Finally, Wazir has no choice; he forces his daughter Shahrzad to marry Sultan Shahryar. Shahrzad marries him but she is very witty that she puts an end to Sultan's evil plan by narrating him one story each night and leaving it incomplete with a sense of surprise and mystery and promising him to complete it the following night. Thus, she saves herself as well as other virgins from the blood thirsty sword of the King. The second part of the novel includes Indian folklore which is retold from a feminine perspective. This novel is written from a feministic perspective to bring to light the evils of patriarchy as women had to struggle for their survival.

In Times of Siege highlights the struggle of the champions of secularism and condemns religious fanaticism and fundamentalist ideology. This novel depicts the academic world of Professors at Kasturba Gandhi Open University, Delhi. The novel presents the realistic situation in the educational institutions in metropolitan cities like Delhi which is also not free from discrimination, class consciousness, casteism and religious prejudices. The novel presents the fact that fundamentalism is a threat to the national integrity of India. The chief protagonist, Dr. Shiv Murthy, a Professor of History

at Kasturba Gandhi Open University, Delhi, is the narrator of the novel. Meena, a student of Sociology comes to stay in his home as her leg is fractured. Unfortunately, a new problem disrupts his normal life in the form of module lesson he had written on the twelfth century religious reformer Basava, a Kannada Saint poet. Shiv Murthy praised Basava as a social reformer, a man of vision and as an epitome of sacrifices who dedicated himself for the well-being of common people in his module lesson. A rebellious group, Ithihas Suraksha Manch objects to this module lesson. He is forced to delete his lesson on Basava from the History course module on the ground that the module writer has deviated from the popular belief about Basava and has hurt the sentiments of Hindus. The religious fundamentalists represented by the Ithihas Suraksha Manch compel and pressurize him to seek public pardon and to withdraw the lesson from the History course. Shiv Murthy denies the plea of the Manch with determination. The Head of the Department and the University administration force him to withdraw the module lesson but Shiv decides to face the problem bravely. The protestors turn very violent and rebellious; they shout slogans and indulge in violence. Shiv decides to fight against this injustice bravely and decides not to surrender before them. Hariharan throws light on these disintegrating tendencies among the educated people like postgraduate students and Professors in University. The novelist brings the relevance of past history in the present times.

Fugitive Histories projects the aftermath of prejudice, fanaticism, casteism, religious fundamentalism in the postmodern contemporary India. In this novel, the author voices the agony of minorities and appeals to the readers to strengthen secularism in contemporary India. The novel recapitulates the Gujarat riots of 2002. Sara, the protagonist and the chief narrator who is also a social worker makes an assessment of the realities of

Gujarat riots in 2002 to make a documentary film on it. Sara gets to know the shocking information through different victims representing the marginalized groups in India. The women tell Sara how their houses were set on fire, how they were beaten with hockey sticks, pipes, swords, etc. The re-established colony in which they were staying was termed as the safe zone for Muslims. Being Muslim, they were viewed as if they were terrorists. The author has depicted socio-cultural life in three big cities like Delhi, Mumbai and Ahmadabad which presents the contemporary situation wherein people fail to recognize themselves as Indians but hold on to fragmented indent based on religious allegience. They are the marginalised whose voices are either suppressed or not heard by those who are in power.

The present dissertation entitled 'Postmodern Perception in Githa Hariharan's Select Novels' analyses various postmodern concepts such as pastiche, intertextuality, metafiction, magic realism with reference to the works of Githa Hariharan. The novels taken for study are *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994), *When Dreams Travel* (1999), *In Times of Siege* (2003) and *Fugitive Histories* (2009).*The Thousand Faces of Night* is examined as a revision of metanarratives, elements of magical realism is analyzed in *The Ghosts of Vasu Master, When Dreams Travel* is considered as a pastiche, *In Times of Siege*is analyzed as a historiographic metafiction and the theme of fragmentation is discussed in *Fugitive Histories*. The objective of the research is to prove Githa Hariharan as a postmodern novelist in the Indian context.

The study also throws light on the various aspects of India's socio-cultural life as it has traversed from traditional society to modern society and has become a postmodern

society. Further, this study critiques Indian metanarratives, accepted ideologies such as patriarchy and secularism to present the reality of Indian socio-cultural life where the voices of minority and marginalized groups are muted, discrimination of women still exists, religious fanaticism raise great concern for maintaining the tenets of democracy with the true spirit.

Githa Hariharan is an influential novelist. All her works encapsulate postmodern sensibility, presents postmodern socio-cultural realities in the Indian context. In her works she presents the themes discussed in postmodern fiction such as the condition of the modern man who is in a confused state as he has severed his ties with his cultural moorings. In her works, she profusely advocates feminist ideology and registers her protest against gender discrimination. Githa Hariharan has meticulously observed and examined the cross section of socio-cultural situation of contemporary Indian life such as the politics in educational institutions, women being subjugated under patriarchy and prevailing violence due to religious intolerance.

The objective of the present study is to understand the phenomenon of postmodernism, its socio-cultural, economic foundation in the Indian context and its myriad reflection in literature. The main aim is to explore the postmodern themes and techniques employed in the works of Githa Hariharan. Besides, this study is dedicated to investigate postmodern philosophical concepts and to most suitably apply these concepts in Githa Hariharan's works. The study attempts to analyze the themes and techniques in her fiction from postmodern perspectives. This research is a sincere attempt to assess the contribution of Githa Hariharan to the genre of postmodern fiction. The present study highlights the emergence of postmodernism in Indian English literature especially in Indian English novel.