

## *Chapter IV*

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### *When Dreams Travel as Pastiche*

Pastiche is one of the postmodern techniques which mean to combine, or paste together, multiple elements. “A pastiche is an exercise in literary criticism: it involves changing one or more elements in a work of prose or poetry in order to examine the effects of stylistic variations. Writers can use pastiches to hone their own style, and a pastiche may even lead further, to an original story or essay.”(Webb)

Postmodern literature employs pastiche to presents the cross section of the society which is obviously chaotic and pluralistic. Pastiche is a literary technique wherein themes, concepts and characters are replicated from different literary works. Pastiche does not mock the original works but by imitation it celebrates the famous works that have gained universality. As Fredric Jameson notes in *Postmodernism and Consumer Society* (1983), “The writers and artists of the present day will no longer be able to invent new styles ... only a limited number of combinations are possible; the most unique ones have been thought of already”. Postmodern writers employ pastiche which is intertextual in nature by profusely borrowing from the reservoir of past literature. Further Fredric Jameson described pastiche as “the random cannibalisation of all the styles of the past, the play of stylistic allusion” (qtd in Sim 119).

Githa Hariharan’s *When Dreams Travel* is the re-telling of the tales of the *One Thousand and One Nights*, a matchless monument to the ageless art of story-telling, which has fascinated the imaginations of people all over the world. *The Thousand and One Nights* comprises of stories, encompassing romances, fairy tales, legends, parables

and fable fascinating with adventures. These stories in fact are narrated by the silver tongued Scheherazade. This book is indeed one of the most ancient, perhaps one of the greatest Middle Eastern contributions to world literature.

It is not a straight forward power-relationship of the Sultan oppressing the women and chopping off their heads. There is also Shahrzad's power play, you know, the power of words, the power of female sexuality, of the body.... here is a woman who saves her life through stories. Then to proceed from there, to examine it, I try to give the silent sister a voice. I try to give the servant girl a voice – she was not there in *The Arabian Nights*, I made her up. So when you start off with one woman's voice, Shahrzad's voice, to understand her voice you have to have this whole set of voices, an army of women's voices that needs to be articulated. (Kourtti 21-22)

Githa Hariharan has recreated the myth through the technique of story within a story. The major characters in the novel are taken from the original text of *The Arabian Nights*. The novelist has casted the women characters Shahrzad and Dunyazad with a distinct magnitude to emphasise the feministic aspect that is totally absent in the original text. The tales are narrated by Scheherazade or Shahrazad, who has been introduced as the female protagonist in *When Dreams Travel*. "The novel is also about a women's search for 'her' story. However, what seems to have undergone a sea change is the author's treatment of the subject. Here the author attempts to write a metafiction through an elaborate inter-text that is made to foreground the feminist issue from a fresh perspective" (Sidiqii 61).

Seen from the angle of modern fiction theory this double fiction appears to be a story about storytelling. With the purpose to suggest the ulterior triumph of art over life, of imagination over mundane and cruel reality, or the ennobling effect of art even on an insensitive/insensitized mind, and of course the possibility of art as a liberating device for a woman imprisoned in the "dungeon" of patriarchal norms. (Kundu, "Intertext" 180)

Shahzad narrates stories with growing suspense so that she could keep Shahryar's interest fixed to the story. "If she stops, if she collapses, if she loses Shahryar's interest or attention, the roof could cave in, and with it, all hope of the city's deliverance, or its sultan's redemption" (Hariharan, "Dreams" 7). Through the power of storytelling Shahzad is able to hold the attention of the King: "This self-absorbed scene lives on, shamelessly immortal. It unfolds itself every night for a thousand and one nights" (Hariharan, "Dreams" 7). A satisfactory ending is achieved through the stories, and Shahryar realized his misjudgement of women.

Shahzad's act of storytelling itself is seen as a desperate struggle of the imprisoned genius to channelize its creativity, to achieve a feminine *écriture*; though in the original the stories, supposedly told by her do not carry the mark of the *WL* or the feminine *écriture*; rather they often smack of obscene and rude male chauvinism, and understandably so, since these were actually told/written by male orators in an orthodox culture context which necessarily banished the women indoors. (Kundu, "Intertext" 191)

Hariharan wants to break the tradition of stories written by men, who obviously try to subdue and oppress the intellectual potential of women. Story telling has been used

as a medium to transfer knowledge from one generation to another before the advent of modern technology. Hariharan in her interview with Antonia Navarro says, “There is a quest for both a story teller and a story listener. The mode of quest is itself a story and the protagonist (and reader) are also searching for a story. This strategy becomes most obvious, perhaps, in my novel *When Dreams Travel*” (203).

In this novel, Shahrzad narrates the anguish and longings of women. The story she narrates serves a purpose, it acts as a life-jacket for Shahrzad who has to save herself and other women from the impending catastrophe. Hence her stories are serious, thrilling, and exciting. “Over years, Shahrzad, the narrator of *The Thousands and One Nights*, had emerged to be the archetype for a storyteller, who could feel the curiosity of the listener, keep him in suspense, and thus holds him in thrill under the charm of her magic” (Radhyshyam 178). Storytelling helps Shahrzad to arrest the attention of the King and bring the situation under her control. “They reconstruct their individual past, the terror and sadness, the moments of daring and the subsequent banality, through absurd and often horrible tales, funny yet painful tales of magic realism” (Hariharan, “*Dreams*” 70). In an interview, Githa Hariharan explains the conception of the novel in the following words:

*When Dreams Travel* began, with the mother of all storytellers, Shahrzad. But the real entry point into the novel came as the next step. I saw in the darkness surrounding Shahrzad, a silent accomplice and sister, Dunyazad. I knew my voice could not be grafted onto Shahrzad: I needed a silent space to fill up, a voiceless woman to be made articulate. I hit upon the idea of the sisters and descendents of Shahrzad. (Shubhashree 378)

In Githa Hariharan's *When Dreams Travel*, Shahrzad narrates the story to the King Shahryar. In *The Arabian Nights*, the story swirls around Sultan Shahryar of Shahabad and his younger brother Shahazaman, the Sultan of Samarkand. They both ruled their country and lived an undisputed life without the fear of rivals. Their peaceful life is totally shattered when they happen to discover their queen's infidelity and betrayal. The names of the characters are symbolic: Shahryar means "friend of the city", Master of the city, Shahzaman means shah of time, ruler of the age", Shahrzad, "Born of the city, Dunyazad, "Born of the world" and Dilshad "Happy Heart". (Hariharan, "Dreams" 9)

The two brothers discover the infidelity of their wives. "The two brothers will then confirm together, inevitably, that women, even their wives, their noble queens, are tainted with untrustworthy desire" (Hariharan, "Dreams" 13). The disgusting behaviour of their wives made them to decide and conclude that no women are chaste. Eventually, one of the brothers, Sultan Shahryar decides to marry a virgin every night and kill her the next morning. They think that would be the just punishment for the disloyal wives.

When both the kings become aware of their wife's infidelity, Zaman says, "I am afflicted with a painful sore" (the sore in one version of the story is black; in another a giant; but always a slave. And in all of them Zaman is struck by the fact that he is barely out of his city. What did the woman plan to do once he had actually left" (Hariharan, "Dreams" 12). The above lines of Zaman, reveals the fact that he treats his wife equal to a slave and she is deprived of all privileges of being a King's wife both in his heart as well as in the royal palace. This probably made her to reject him and move on to the other person.

Wazir is the Minister of Sultan Shahryar. He has two daughters, Shahrzad and Dunyazad. The elder daughter is very witty, courageous and intellectual. She is bold, beautiful and an epitome of virtue. She decides to put an end to the King's barbarism. She convinces her father to send her to the Sultan. She also seeks the help of her sister and instructs her to play a key role of demanding a story at every break. Shahrzad's strong will is evident when she asked her father, to give her hands in marriage to the cruellest beast Shahryar. She gets married to the Sultan much against the wish of her father.

The Wazir tells Shahrzad a somewhat double-edged cautionary tale; almost confident that she will not take fright. Once she volunteers to be the bride though she talks of being a saviour or a martyr, not of bridal delights or dreads – there is a chance that this blood thirsty story will head towards a happier ending. With the help of her silent sister Dunyazad she must coax him to repent, and acknowledge that all women need not be killed. (Hariharan, "Dreams" 16)

Shahrzad's storytelling was a means of escapism from the cruel King's practice of marrying a virgin every night and killing her the next morning. This insane activity of the King made everyone worried. This made Jafar, the Wazir helplessly send his daughter to the King. Wazir was very sure and more convinced that his daughter will surely survive and live long and will not become a victim. In fact, Shahrzad is very strong that she never succumbs to male chauvinism.

The King is very surprised by this new Queen Shahrzad. She not only narrates a story but also mentors him as her story bounds with violence, jealousy and misogyny.

She does not exhibit her dominance in the novel but still she is highly intellectual and delivers clear messages with philosophical overtones to the King by means of the entertaining stories. Shahrzad's in-depth knowledge in poetry and philosophy helped her to enrich her stories. This indeed keeps the King's interest sustained throughout.

Shahrzad's creativity is reflected in the following passage:

If the dishes increase in number, it's likely they are from the houses of the neighbors. Shahrzad must remember this too, especially when she slips someone's passing idea into her narrative, or when she cribs a phrase or two, sometimes an entire frame. But she safe - no one looks at a nose or an eye out of the context of a face ... the synthesis will be hers, and in that sense, the authorship.( Hariharan, "Dreams" 133)

Shahrzad very cleverly keeps postponing her day of execution by narrating the stories of unfaithful women. She narrates innumerable stories that keep the Sultan wonderstruck. She carries herself as a mighty warrior and tells stories of women who are not very bad. Through her stories she made the King to understand and realise that he need not condemn the entire women community for the adultery committed by his wife. Shahrzad selected stories never failed to enlighten the King. The King is surprised and asks Shahrzad, "Where did all those stories come from? Shahzaman and I have read and studied more than you have" (Hariharan, "Dreams"20).Shahrzad says, "She who repentant Sultan has crowned with the words chaste and tender, wise and eloquent, replies, "I don't have a sword, so it seems I cannot rule. I cannot rule, I cannot travel, I don't care to weep. But I can dream" (Hariharan, "Dreams"20).



In one of the stories narrated by Shahrzad two brothers renounce their royal state and move about until they meet a woman who is captured by the gigantic jinni. The jinni gazes at the girl's face and falls asleep. "The Jinni her supernatural master, gazes at her with satisfaction, lay his head on her, knees and falls asleep" (Hariharan, "Dreams" 14). No sooner, the jinni fell asleep, immediately the girl seduced the two brothers. "The jinni carried her away in her bridal night when she was still a virgin, but since then has been unfaithful to her master a hundred times always in his presence and without ever being caught" (Hariharan, "Dreams" 15). The woman took a great delight in collecting the rings of men she had confronted and seduced. She remembered that she has collected 100 rings and it indeed gave her rare pleasure to exhibit feminine power over male domination. In Arabian Nights this was the story that Shahrzad narrates to the Kings whereas the novelist depicts the two kings themselves as those two men.

Initially, Shahrzad narrated the stories of unfaithful women, but gradually portrayed the stories of women who were generous, kind and full of good will. These stories that depicted virtuous women impressed the Sultan and his brother. "Though it has bared its cruel fangs before, love has been rediscovered as wide, chase, eloquent..." (Hariharan, "Dreams" 19). These varied stories transformed Shahryar into a humane person. Shahrzad's efficient word play was able to make both the Kings accept the virtuous women characters in her stories to be real. In her stories women prove with their wisdom that they can accomplish more than what they are expected to be. Shahrzad is delivered from the fear of imminent death. Everyone in the palace was delighted by the great surge of change in the King's nature which they have never dreamt of. "A blood thirsty drama in which swords pierce soft, yielding flesh, a happy conclusion is announced. The Sultan,

powerful, noble deluded, has seen the light. He has been brought to his senses by a woman, and with, of all things, her stories, her ready tongue, her cleverness” (Hariharan, “Dreams” 21).

So, every night, Shahrzad begins to narrate an interesting story full of adventure, suspense and magic. Dunyazad also helps her sister to come out with captivating stories. Sultan is so enthralled by the stories that he keeps postponing her death. She keeps the Sultan’s interest sustained and survives for thousand and one nights. Shahrzad chooses the stories to make the King understand that women are endowed with wisdom. Her stories raise the standard of women in the eyes of the Sultan. The stories of Shahrzad makes King Shahryar repent and soon he realises the fact that all women are not disloyal. Sultan rewards Wazir and his two daughters. She emerges successful as the Sultan renounces his barbaric brutal vow and restores peace in the country. She is henceforth regarded as the guardian angel for saving the lives of many women in the country. Shahrzad becomes the stereotypical woman who gains power through her intelligence and thereby promotes independence of the entire women community.

In *The Thousand and One Nights*, Dunyazad is a minor character. In *When Dreams Travel*, Dunyazad is given prime importance as a major character, leaving behind her silent role of “audience, promoter, chorus and heckler” (Hariharan, “Dreams”130). She sits by the side of the Sultan’s bed and exhorts Shahrazad to narrate an interesting tale, to retain the King’s interest. “Shahrzad is left to be reinstated by her accomplice and younger sister, Dunyazad. For Githa Hariharan, the story belongs to two new women ‘silenced’: in the original legend, Dunyazad and Dilshad, a slave girl who each are possessed. Dunyazad is possessed by a missing story teller” (Chaturvedi 157).

In this novel Dunyazad is introduced as a middle-aged woman. Dunyazad was married to Shahryar's brother Shahzaman and was living with him in Samarkand until his death. Being a widow, she makes a visit to the palace of Shahryar, who too has recently become a widower. Dunyazad comes to Shahryar's place to explore the sudden mysterious death of her sister. Shahryar is busy building Martyr tomb to his redeemer, his loving wife Shahrzad. Dunyazad wants to know the reason for her sister's death; she travels far and wide and finally reaches the palace of Shahryar. She understood that her sister is no more. "She is now a myth that must be sought in many places, fleshed in different bodies before her dreams let go of Dunyazad on her descendants." (Hariharan, "Dreams" 25)

Shahzaman hates whenever Dunyazad is praised by his courtiers and common people for her intellectual calibre and quick wit. He was naïve to believe that she will definitely cheat him like his first queen and could not tolerate people admiring her.

Zaman says,

"You know I am no lover of lying fantasies", says Zaman, then nods indulgently. "But now that all serious work for the day is done- perhaps a quick, small one that will give this wine a biting edge...." The others smile and exclaim in praise and admiration and relief, and turn towards Farid who begins: "We all know something of the clever devices of women, don't we? "Think of the first lesson we learn as men: or the lesson we need to relearn every single day." (Hariharan, "Dreams"190)

It is Shahrzad who completely transform the misogynistic nature of Shahryar. She has transformed him to such an extent that he builds a tomb to his redeemer and calls her, his Martyr. She is born with an indomitable spirit which makes her not to yield to

the misogynistic nature of Shahryar. Shahrzad breaks the bars of patriarchy, where men tend to exercise their authority over women.

In *The Thousand and One Nights* Shahryar built a Mausoleum in memory of his wife Shahrzad. “Shahrzad’s tomb. The pearly tear of redeemed lover ... a great splash of light reflecting white. White, the color of death: pure white, dazzling white, omniscient death” (Hariharan, “Dreams” 100). Shahryar who had used women to satisfy his lust had learnt the meaning of true love through Shahrzad. Her stories had educated him to realise to respect the true worth of women. Shahrzad is not recognised for her creative power as a feminine ecriture but for being subservient to the exploitation which is set as the ideal of womanhood by society.

Even her reward, later in the novel, the mausoleum built in her memory, results from the unbending standard of gendered morality in which a woman cannot be revered but for her chastity and virginity. Shahrzad’s martyrdom springs not from her tales and craftsmanship but from ‘virginal blood’ and her redeeming love for Shaharyar. (Chaturvedi 158)

Githa Hariharan alludes to the Indian historical exquisite marvellous monument Taj Mahal, the symbol of love. Taj Mahal is the pride and indeed one of the wonders of the world. The Taj Mahal is a Mausoleum built by the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan who greatly loved and adored his wife Mumtaz. It was built as a tribute to her. The construction began in 1632. The famous mausoleum stands majestically on the bank of river Yamuna and is one of the celebrated architectural marvels of India.

Shahjahan was the well-known renowned King among the Mughal Emperors. He had a very rare and a unique taste in architecture. His rule came to an abrupt end in a

very shameful and humiliating manner. Shahjahan's son, Aurangzeb was very dashing that he did not wait for his father's death. He decided without sympathy to kill his two brothers and confine his own father in the prison and ascended the throne. He exercised a very ruthless and cruel rule. His extreme supremacy and domination resulted in the hatred among the courtesans. Hence construction of the monument was stopped. Endless enemies and wars led to the ultimate fall of the powerful Mughal dynasty, which eventually withered soon after the death of Aurangzeb.

This information about the Taj Mahal plays a unique role in the novel. This historical information is interwoven with the main plot. Prince Umar is similar to Aurangzeb. Prince Umar does not like his father wasting money for the sake of the construction of the Mausoleum. So Prince Umar succeeds to the throne after imprisoning his father. He keeps the Sultan in the Mausoleum which is built by Shahryar for his eternal love Shahrzad. The King says with regrets, "But Umar, our younger prince of the people, thinks he can teach me how to rule. He forgets that I too had a king for a father; that I too waited for the throne. As for my beloved wife - and Shahryar stops" (Hariharan, "Dreams" 62).

Githa Hariharan attaches great importance to the theme of liberation of women in this novel. She highlights the marginalised status of women in different culture and religion. The novelist employs the technique of intertextuality to bring in the major characters from the Arabian Nights as well as from Indian mythologies. She is of the view that women are oppressed by the patriarchal domination at varying degrees. She has meticulously carved out the female characters to be very powerful, independent and endowed with great intellect. Dunyazad is the successor to Shahrzad and she keeps travelling to many

cities and she too wanted to spin stories like her sister but in different dimension. She wants her stories to be unique and prove her skill in storytelling.

It flaunts pretend – Windows that pay homage to a world outside. But they are really there to screen, to enclose, so that she is forced to turn inward, wallow in the past or in the palaces seductive, anachronistic tales. There is a present, in which she must act if she is to act all; surely that is the point of her dusty, hurried flight to Shahabad? (Hariharan, “Dreams” 82)

The stories in the second part of the novel are planned in the course of seven nights and days to be narrated by Dunyazad and Dilshad. “Part Two Entitled “Virgins, Martyrs and Others” - once again has a brief introductory section that is sub-headed as “A Dream, A Mirror,” and is followed by seven pairs of short stories alternately narrated by Dunyazad: Shahrazad’s sister, and Dilshad: Dunyazad’s lover.” (Sankaran 67). Bhattacharji while speaking about organisation of the novel *When Dreams Travel* comments thus:

The organization of this novel is a delight in itself. For instance the second of its two parts “Seven Days and Seven Nights”, is in seven chapters, each with two stories.... Is a man’s narrative different from a woman’s? Can there ever be right narrative? Is knowledge always conveyed through clear and logical language or is a mystifying and mysterious style useful? Like a good storyteller, Hariharan prods readers into finding their own answers.

(qtd in Kottiswari 98)

Dilshad was employed in the court of Shahryar and Shahrzad. She has witnessed the queen’s death and she is the only person who had the close knowledge of the places in the palace and all the hidden secrets of the palace. Dunyazad befriended Dilshad and

she is ready to serve her. Duniyazad has promised to give the transcript of Shahrzad's stories, engraved in gold. On receiving the gift from Duniyazad, Dilshad opens up with the argument and they both decide in telling stories as answer to each other. Duniyazad comes to know about Satyasama and Dilshad had been her follower. Duniyazad assumes herself as Shahrzad and begins with the stories, whereas Dilshad assumes herself as Satyasama and they keep narrating stories to revive their Martyr, Shahrzad.

Duniyazad encounters Dilshad, a slave-girl and the two-tell stories to each other for seven nights and days. This is their way of re-enacting and reviving Shahrzad; at the same time. This is the author's device to rewrite the legend in the post-modern context of feminism and metafiction. The author finds that the legend itself -both the story and the "Story woman" - has a strange life of its own that goes on being re-created over and over again by posterity. (Kundu, *Intertext* 185)

Dilshad comes up with the story of Satyasama. She was found orphaned in the Eternal city by her parents as she shared a very peculiar appearance like a monkey. Her body was covered with fur. She had a narrow nose in her broad face. She looked very grotesque with her single eye. She kept on moving from one tree to another in the city. She had a special liking towards the Peepal tree. It became the one eyed monkey's habit to sit on the tree and sing a melancholic song portraying the dark side of life in the world. Her songs reflected the intense pain and were disliked by many people. She sang whatever came to her mind.

Satyasama was called as a wandering poet in the country where she lived. "Then there were others who heard only snatches of One Eye's song, only those parts they

wanted to hear, and the parts they could twist for their own ends”( Hariharan, “Dreams”146). Satyasama’s statements were considered as an oracle. Many people disliked her prophecy and foretelling and the people stopped her from singing. From then on she decided only to open her mouth for eating and never ever sang. But this did not last long; she could not live without singing. She kept on moaning and weeping all day and night, that nobody could understand her sorrow. All the people, who hate her songs, hurt her physically. Her excruciating pain did not stop her from singing. Her bosom became a seat for hatred and anger. She expressed it deliberately in the song that she sang. Satyasama regarded her talent for singing as the precious gift.

One day Satyasama visited an old woman on her invitation. The old woman started narrating the story of Rupavati. Rupavati was portrayed as a very courageous woman who tore her breast to feed a beggar woman as the beggar woman was forced her to eat her own child due to hunger. Rupavati’s husband was shocked and he never expected such an action from his wife. He raised his hands in prayers towards the sky and asked God to restore her breast, if her action is considered really worthy and true. Immediately a pair of breast flew from the sky and affixed itself to her body. God Indira, the ruler of Heaven was stunned by the spectacular action of Rupavati and offers her the grand position in his court. Later by the divine boon of God Indira, Rupavati fulfilled her wish of becoming a man Rupvata. Rupvata is born as a Brahmin who does not have a breast to donate anyone. Rupvata gave away his blood and flesh to save the tigercub as the mother tigress was about to devour its young one. The flow of the old woman’s story was interrupted by her husband. He rebuked her as there was no accountability of truth in the story. “To begin with, the Buddha even a Buddha – to -be, would never choose to be a



woman. Don't you know why Gautama walked those long dusty miles to plead with her enlightened son? The Buddha did not want a woman in the sangha" (Hariharan, "Dreams"181).

The old man takes his turn and transforms the story according to his whims and fancies. The old woman highlighted the sacrificing nature of woman as Rupavati as she tore her breast to feed the beggar woman's child. This story was rejected by the old man and he asserted that Rupvata, the man gave new lease of life to Rupavati, the beggar woman with a child. According to the old man's description, Rupvata, the man gave food, shelter and the new lease of life to the woman Rupavati. The story highlights how women are subdued by men. The old man's story attempts to project that women are always more dependent on men and that they cannot lead their life without their support. This story explains how women were portrayed in the literature created by men. Male narratives project men as life givers, saviours and women to be eternally in need of men's support. The story of the old man implies men's attempts to keep the woman always dependant on them. "Githa Hariharan's greatest achievement in terms of feminist intervention is to reconstruct a powerful myth. Both the canonized version and this rewriting prove that Shahrzad's myth lives on, as one of the narratives praising women's intelligence" (Sinha 111).

The story narrated by Satyasama takes an entirely different sequence of events. Satyasama narrates the same story, but highlights how Rupavati implements her intellect with a very bold action. Both the husband and wife fed and provided shelter to the poor Brahmin. And when the wife out of hunger was ready to eat the child, the Brahmin asked Rupavati to tear her breast and feed his wife and child. Immediately, Rupavati was triggered into action that she did not wait for a moment; she tore the Brahmin's ears and planted it

in the earth; and his ears planted in the earth later on grew into corns. This dauntless brave act enthralled the sky and the Brahmin was given ears again. Rupavati then fed the hungry woman and her child with those corns.

This story related by Satyasama explains explicitly that women are endowed with wisdom to act with discretion. The two men in story, the Brahmin and Rupavata were not able to arrive at the solution, but Rupavati emerges with a comprehensive solution without delay. But woefully the old man and woman totally absorbed in patriarchy were against the story narrated by Satyasama and they chased her out of their home without mercy. “The story of Satysama challenges the stereotypical view of woman and the exclusive male right to speech and expression. Her songs are subversive and very close to the concept of feminine scripture.” (Chaturvedi 159)

In the story of Rupavati old man describes Rupvata as the “Buddha-to – be was born beautiful, virtuous man” (Hariharan, “Dreams”182) and describes Rupavati and her baby as “two lumpy bundles” (Hariharan, “Dreams”182). The novelist has made it that male centered narratives attach more importance to men and no degree of respect to women. On the other hand, Satyasama’s story has no gender bias as she says about Rupavati and Rupavata thus, “They were ideally matched because both were virtuous” (Hariharan, “Dreams”185).

Githa Hariharan brings out the plight of the revolutionary women writers who were doomed for violating the conventions followed by the male writers. The women characters portrayed in literature created by men are delineated as fragile and incapable of accomplishments. On the contrary, when women writers started writing they created strong willed image of women and infused them with a strong voice to express the

feelings of the subdued women in the society. The life of Satyasama runs parallel to the condition of women in the society ruled by men. Initially, Satyasama was tormented to the core for her singing; this highlights how women's voice for freedom has been ultimately silenced. The tortures she faced depict the obstacles that women faced while they expressed their thoughts. Once, the limbs of Satyasama were totally cut off, this epitomizes how women's freedom to express their creativity is curtailed. In spite of these setbacks, Dilshad and Satyasama stayed strong and continued to stand firm in what they believed.

Satyasama moves to the ruined city, with grief – stricken heart and narrates the story of poison-skin. Nanny, a poor girl keeps grazing her herds of cattle in the country of Vijaya. One fine day, leaving her flock to graze, she takes a nap. Suddenly her sleep was disturbed by an intruder who offered her a boon that she could become a Princess. Nanny did not like this hence she strongly rejected the offer. But the man, who was the Minister of the state was plotting against the Prince, persuaded her to accept. Nanny was ignorant that she easily became a prey to the evil scheme of the minister. The minister promised Nanny that she will glow like gold and would become very rich. Nanny believed him and followed him, where she was bathed and fed, later she was turned into a flawless beauty, that no Prince of any kingdom would reject her.

Nanny was unaware of the trap that was set for her. Only later she knew that she is being used as an instrument to kill the Prince of the enemy state. Nanny was fed with the poisonous potions everyday while she was made to believe that it is given to make her a beautiful Princess. Her body is now full of poison to kill anyone who tries to love her. She is reluctant to kill the Prince as Nanny becomes aware of her nature. But the Minister forces her into the chamber of the Prince. The Prince was enticed and bewitched by the

beauty of Nanny and he reached her. She stopped him who was becoming drowsy in her poisoned skin. She narrated the entire scheme of the Minister to the Prince which alarmed him. The Prince thanked her and was ready to help her. Nanny asked for old clothes and a goat shed to dwell. She lived a chaste life until her last breath.

“Nothing”, she said, “But find someone ugly old clothes and an empty little house so I can hide myself.” She threw away her rich brocade and jewels, but no rags could dull her skin that still glowed like a full virginal moon. Then she parted from the man she had saved by not loving him, and went to the modest house he found for her. Nanny, though she was to remain poison-skin forever, lived the pure life recluse keeping her promise of chastity intact, a shining example to all women. (Hariharan, “Dreams” 207)

Satyasama narrated this story to another goatherd whom she met on her way. The man who listened to her story gave a hearty laugh and declared that poison-skin could never have remained a virgin. The goatherd presented his version of the story of the poison skin. According to the goatherd, Nanny killed the Prince and lived secretly in the goat shed. Gradually, the poison in her skin faded away and she wanted to live peacefully in the shed. She in fact took great pride when she killed the Prince. Later on, she lived happily with the men who frequently visited her. She became notorious far and wide. And once again she met the Minister, who gave her the potion to remove the goat smell but it resulted in turning her skin into goat skin. She lived the rest of her life with goat skin as she thought that it was far better than a poison skin.

The novelist presents the male and female version of the same story to point out that men can never accept women as their equal counterpart. Though they are aware of

the calibre of women, they deliberately deny them as their equals in intellect and wisdom. Women were kept within the domestic domain chained to their cultural mores. In the male narratives, women characters are portrayed with a lack such as the monkey woman Satyasama, Rupavati devoid of her breast and Nanny with a poison skin. Even in the fiction they narrate men create women characters that are submissive to male chauvinism. The experiences of the above women characters realistically depict the condition of the women in the present society. "Feminism raises the question of perspective, what difference does it make to look at the world of men and women from a woman's point of view rather than from men." (Ryan 113)

Dilshad narrated the story about the men she met in the deep forest. Dilshad was too young and innocent that she lost her way in the thick forest and by chance met a man cutting wood with his axe. She sought the help of the man to get away from the forest. The man was enamoured by her beauty that he requested her to marry him and live in the woods. She accepted the offer, but in the long run she was fed up with the monotonous life and decided to run away from the forest. In her attempt of running away, she confronts a strange deer-man. He was struggling to free his horns which were entangled in the twigs. Dilshad helped him and seduced him. She was indeed very proud of her deed of seduction as she considers it to be an act of avenging male domination. The axe man who agitated and furious by her action of deserting him was chasing her and counting her footsteps. Dilshad ran away with the deer-man. The horns were getting shortened and eventually his power of running fast diminished, the deer-man felt exhausted. Dilshad was swift and ran at a remarkable pace. She lost track of his voice and she traced a path out of the forest and reached the city.

The horns of the deer-man stand as the symbol for power, strength and supremacy. He ultimately loses it in the wild chase for life. As he lost his power, he says, “I don’t know why I can’t run as I used to” “I may get the directions wrong – maybe we’re lost” (Hariharan, “Dreams” 231). This eventual loss of strength highlights his loss of physical as well as intellectual power. As the axe man was running behind them, “Dilshad snapped and ran ahead for a while she heard him panting behind her, pleading with her to go slower. Then he grew silent but refused to turn around. Suddenly she’d had enough of it all, mothering and seducing, taking orders and being seduced” (Hariharan, “Dreams” 231).

Dilshad meets a new character named Lonely Voice during her travel. Lonely Voice began narrating a story of Virgin and her four lovers who were gifted with a little charming baby. The baby was a slave but was born with a boon that with the intervention of the Hermit lover, she would get back her charms and virginity. The Hermit lover fell in love with Lonely Voice. “Just then they heard a yell from behind the screen: What! How can you be so stupid? It was the Hermit who restored the woman’s beauty and her chastity. She became what a man desires and do you know a man who doesn’t desire a chaste woman” (Hariharan, “Dreams” 250).

Indian society shows greater gender discrimination; in case of extra marital relationship the man is not subjected to any castigation, but the woman is humiliated and ostracized. The destiny of a woman is written in golden letters by men; hence they are under the shadow of men, whereas in this novel we find the revolutionary characters who do not get entangled in the web of patriarchy. “Women to seek sexual satisfaction on their own terms. It is not merely peeling the layers of social conditioning, but understanding how the body and its pleasures acquire a certain historical and cultural significance” (Kalpana 71).

The novelist revolts against the traditional patriarchal cultural set up that curtails women's liberation.

The character of Ogre explicates the expectation of men over women. Men expect women to be chaste and beautiful. The male centered narratives in every culture restrict and formulate golden rule that no women can enjoy sexual freedom. The term 'chastity' seems to be discovered by men, to be applied exclusively for women. Any woman who is unchaste is considered immoral and condemned in the patriarchal society.

Finally, Dilshad reaches the city and she develops a peculiar interest in Satyasama and that she becomes her successor. Before the death of Satyasama, she gave Dilshad her parting kiss with deep prayers and blessings. Hence forth, Dilshad carried a date - shaped scar, "...parting kiss that left a date-shaped mark of fur on Dilshad's face which was metaphorically, narrative license, a timescale that punctures the ambition, totality and grand scale infinity of thousand nights" (Hariharan, "Dreams"118).

Githa Hariharan has delved deep and fathomed into the exquisite world of fairy tales, and myths about the zealous and fervent women and pasted them in the frame of *When Dreams Travel* as pastiche. With great dexterity, the novelist has blended the old stories with feministic perspective and infused them with the rare splendour of imagination. The structure of the novel is very complicated such that the novel comes to an end after the lapse of thousand one night but continues to reverberate for years henceforth. "Story telling in general and in One Thousand and One Nights in particular consoles us for endings without endless new beginnings. Stories are like genes, they keep part of us alive after the end of our story" (Byatt 166).

The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a mode within a network ... The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands ... its unity is variable and relative. (Foucault 23)

Thus, this novel wonderfully encapsulates women empowerment in every dimension. The plot of the novel is designed by the stories narrated by the four main characters namely Shahrzad, Dunyazad, Dilshad and Satyasama. These characters faced lot of difficulties and trying situations in their life. They overcame various hardships with their presence of mind, patience and intellect. The problems they faced did not make them very fragile and weak; rather they emerged as successful woman in the society. In *The Arabian Nights* both the women returned to their domesticity happily, this was considered as an absurd ending by the feminists. Hariharan presents this situation from her point of view and has chiseled Shahrzad and Dunyazad as icons of postmodern feminism.

The mistake, of course, is to imagine that a happy ending is possible when you have survived a shipwreck in a sea of blood. Shahryar should have killed himself in remorse, or at least renounced the city and the world, become a mad hermit in the desert. And Shahrzad? Can life continue static, people with little events, commonplace milestones, after martyrdom. (Hariharan, "Dreams" 105- 106)

The quest for women's expectation of equality and recognition of their mettle is sprinkled in the novel as dreams and imagination and is expressed through the various



stories they narrate. The stories narrated by Shahrzad to Shahryar abound with astounding imagination which holds his attention thus he transforms into a compassionate person. “In this abnormal climate where imagination through the medium of the word -asserts its power over the blood shedding sword, everyone forgives everyone” (Hariharan, “Dreams” 21).

Dreams and imagination have no boundaries and they travel beyond the borders of the country. These stories move “from India to Persia to Arabia to France to England and back to India.” (Hariharan, “Dreams”25) The imagination runs parallel along with reality. The power of dreams is emphasized thus, “the powerless must have a dream or two, dreams that break walls, dreams that go through walls as if they are powerless” (Hariharan, “Dreams” 25).

Dreams and imagination enables the readers to delve deep into the psyche of the characters. Dunyazad’s dream to be martyr and search for her sister is revealed through her vague dream: “All Dunyazad has to do is cross waters that separate them” (Hariharan, “Dreams”72) and she asserts that she could go beyond limits as far as her dreams are concerned: “They look and they know I will die for my dreams.” (Hariharan, “Dreams”53)

Myths and legends are reviewed, recreated and sometimes capsized to project a new picture to the society. “Githa Hariharan’s story reverberates with echoes from the text of the past and at the same time curves out daring lines of departure from the same both in theme and form” (Kundu “Intertext” 180). Hariharan uses myths as a weapon to point out harsh effects of patriarchy in society, “With pungent irony she exposes the sadism and cynicism behind the androcentric myth about harems: “All Kings are collectors. These valuable items are women of all shape, colours and sizes” (Kundu, “Intertext” 191).

Hariharan re-invents myth which influence and motivates the society to overcome gender bias. “By deconstructing stereotypical characters and plots in storytelling, Hariharan is undoing the implicit morality and prejudice of traditional texts” (Da Silva 102). Shahrzad, a saviour of all the women of her state, accomplishes her goal and attains the status of a martyr. The stories that she narrates leads her to be called as “a myth that must be sought in many places, fleshed in different bodies, before her dreams let go of Dunyazad or her descendants” (Hariharan, “Dreams” 25).

The stories narrated in the novel are filled with mystery and suspense. These characters journeyed to different cities and land as travelling enriched them to know their identity. The novelist says,

The travellers move towards one of the gates of legendary city, showpiece of wealth and high culture, pillar of surrounding countryside that works hard to sustain it. The kingdom needs this nucleus and the fantasies it breeds, both beneficent otherwise. Though tens of centuries may go by, though this city be reduced to rubble and a successor and yet another be built in a distant place, its grand design, of honour and chastity- and power - will never be left behind. (Hariharan, “Dreams” 30)

Githa Hariharan believes that the travel one chooses unravels a new destination which they aspire and make them powerful. Every woman is a story teller and dreams of fulfilling her desire and to succeed in life. But success comes only to those who successfully plan and execute their dream. The dream of every woman can change her family, society and entire history. The stories that journeyed from one century to another have taken up

the overtones of the society's current perception and have created a great impact in transforming the outlook and thought process of the people.

At the end of the story unlike its original anthology in *The Arabian Nights*, He never sought forgiveness for those three years of murder to prove a pointless accusation. At the end of the *Thousand and One Nights*, it was he who granted a magnanimous pardon Shahrzad, allowed her to live, to love and he be loved, to be feted as the saviour of the city, the trial of his reign was over, the chapter closed. (Hariharan, "Dreams" 158)

The novelist brings out the tranquil nature of Shahrazad and the schizophrenic temper of Shahryar. Shahrazad is engrossed in the delusion of the train of virgin women who were killed by him. The love and affection showered on Shahrazad in the *Arabian Nights* was only to acknowledge her skill of storytelling. When the King enquires about her imaginative power, Shahrazad satirically states, "They're nothing-just a rubbishy pile of rough, uncut stones..... 'Besides,' ....only those locked up in hovels and dungeons and palaces can see and hear those dreams. Only those whose necks are naked and at risk can understand them." (Hariharan, "Dreams"20). Later the King understands that only Shahrazad's love had changed him from the brutal beast to a kind human. "Shahryar was a sensitive, imbalanced fellow, and the perennial battle between the sexes made him cynical." (Hariharan, "Dreams"155). His ego does not allow him to accept Shahrazad as his equal. He only wants to prove his upper hand and supremacy.

She sees her past, their futures, curving one into the other, a circle with no beginning or end. She says to them, this old warrior in times of peace: I fought for myself, and yes, for you as well. And you – what will you do when

your turn comes? When the drums roll, and the sword blunted with age, the rusty axe, wake up to be freshly sharpened? (Hariharan, "Dreams" 276)

Githa Hariharan is noted for her views against oppression of women and she always stood for the liberation of women. According to Kate Millet, "The modern times patriarchy is held up chiefly by attitudes rather than political or economic structures. This patriarchy is so deeply ingrained into our thinking that the character structure it creates in both the sexes is more a habit of mind and a way of life than a political system" (60).

Women in the society succumb to the deep wounds of male domination due to patriarchy. She argues that male domination was prevalent and widespread in all the culture and in all ages. But in her novel, women characters take very bold step and readily break the cocoon of patriarchal set up.

Githa Hariharan is very particular to portray her women characters as powerful and brimming with life and always striving to bring a sea change in the society. Her women characters do not accept their destiny and carry the scar of dominance and violence; instead, they take a mighty leap and give a blow to all the deception they experience in the course of their journey. She was against the norm that men can deceive and abuse women whereas women should always remain subservient to men in spite of all the injustice done to her.

This novel mocks misogynistic theory which is employed in Arabian Nights. Women proved their power of intellect and foresight in *When Dreams Travel*. This novel besides being the best Pastiche, it brings out the excruciating pain and suffering of women. In the end, Dunyazad and Dilshad following the path of women's liberation and freedom, achieve their search for identity. Thus, it is very evident in all avenues that

*When Dreams Travel* is undoubtedly a pastiche bringing to limelight the suffering of women from the feminist point of view. Sunita Sinha has observed, “In her third novel *When Dreams Travel* (1999), Githa Hariharan rewrites the canonical text of *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* or *The Thousand and One Nights* from a feminist angle”. (Sinha 111)

Thus, the novelist concentrates on the whole novel to create awareness among women to overcome their marginalization. “Whereas in the original *Arabian Nights* the focus of the text was on the wit of Shahrzad and in the entertainment value of the stories she related, Hariharan’s recast text draws our attention to the fact that it is across the gender divide that the fault lines are very often visible” (Sankaran 69). The theme of the novel is remarkably structured by the novelist. “Writing of tradition and destabilizing it, turning it on its Head and installing an alternative has given a new freedom to her technique and style.” (Kottiswari 97)

*When Dreams Travel* highlights the marginalized status of women in the male-dominated society. The novelist’s prime concern in writing this novel is to provide a convincing harmonious environment, for the women to live. She absolutely wants to set them free from tyranny and subjugation exercised on women by men. Githa Hariharan wants to make the lives of women better and gift them with new vision to live. The technique of pastiche is employed by the novelist to subvert the patriarchal power which dominated the society. “Contemporary women’s fiction is a challenge to master narratives. At a manifest level, it is an attempt to read life and rewrite the notion of subjectivity within the parameters of ‘difference.’ It focuses on ‘differences that make a difference’ to women in a dominant masculine culture.” (Uniyal)

The novelist has employed pastiche to revision the history and cultural representations from feministic perspective. Through the technique of pastiche re-reading of the past literature is done with the motive to subvert the power representations in history. Pastiche, bridges the remote past that needs to be reinterpreted in accordance with the present changes in the cultural ethos of the society. “The promise of sociology is to illuminate the social world such that people can understand it and help themselves to a life lived with greater efficacy, a greater ability to understand and control their lives” (Matson 3).

Githa Hariharan through rewriting the famous fables of the Eastern world tries to repudiate the lack in the way the texts were interpreted in order to rectify the status of women as they were kept under subjugation by the male cantered narratives. Sharad Srivasata opines that, “In pseudo moral system of male dominated society, a woman has been the victim of male hypocrisy, exploitation and violence since the earliest times but she could not freely narrate or openly discuss these experiences” (1).

Gender politics is the crux of the novel and the balance of power between man and woman keeps shifting, finally women triumph with her intellect. “The novel is a tale of fantasy and fiction and reveals gothic, magic, jinni’s, dungeons and mythic. On the surface, it seems to have no foothold in reality, but produces, at the deeper level, a very powerful discourse on sexual politics, gender differences, and the abuse of power” (Chaturvedi 155).

Through reinterpreting the male hegemony represented in literary text, Githa Hariharan not only registers her dissent against patriarchy, but she depicts strong-willed women who triumph amidst oppressive forces who are symbols of positive role models.

Many works of literature are feminist not because they criticise the pathologies of patriarchy but because they offer images of women forming supportive communities or relationship that can enable either the struggle to make a post patriarchal world or the attempt to survive within patriarchy. (Ryan 114).

The feministic adaptation of the myth proves women's solidarity and creative powers. Myths play a pivotal role in creating the collective consciousness of a culture as it carries symbolic significance attached to it. The stereotype of women represented as weak and meek in mythology are prototypes set by male hegemony. Such reinterpretation of mythology is essential to recreate a new cultural history so that gender equality will be reinstated.