

**MYTHICAL MISCOMMUNICATION IN GITHA HARIHARAN'S
*THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT***

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Abstract

Myth consists of the stories of the lives of Gods and Goddesses. Through the myth, tradition, culture and life style of a society is constructed. Myth communicates the people through the stories of symbols. The symbols have to be communicated in correct way. For each age has the own significant concepts. So each age differs from each other. It is variable. But the myth is constant. Though zeitgeist varies, concern myth should remain as constant. But the interpreters use the mythical symbols according to their circumstances. They had failed to transform the exact essence. Instead of transformation, only miscommunication is held. So the deviation occurs in the basic cultural habitual. In Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* contains three prominent mythical stories. This paper focuses on how the miscommunication occurs.

Keywords: Mythical miscommunication, culture, Interpretation, Cultural crack, Modern women, Foreign culture, Humanity, Cultural deviation.

A social set up derives the civilization from its attitude. The attitude depends on the people's good manners. The good manner is projected from the life style of the citizens. The life style is constructed by what they have been instructed. The direct instruction to people may create boredom on life. So the instructions had taken the tool of literature. Before the written documentation of literature, oral tradition had played vital role. Even in our present era, there is no written form for some languages, such as Sindhi; oral tradition had only existence. In oral literature, the genre that include such as stories, fables and folktales and folklores. The oral literature may prominently consist with the myths.

Myths are that the stories of events in the life incidents of Gods and Goddesses. It may be considered as imaginative. Of course, myth is imagination but it provides the civilization to the concern society through the symbols in it. M.H.Abrahams renders definition for mythology in his book, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*:

A system of hereditary stories which were believed to be true by a particular cultural group and which served to explain (in terms of the intentions and actions of deities and other supernatural beings) why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish that sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives. Most myths are related to social rituals (230).

Through the mythical stories, a society derives manners and other social rituals. So the indirect instruction is applied through the instruction of mythical stories. It stands as a distinct medium to connect the conscious life and unconscious knowledge. The zeitgeist may vary according to the circumstances. But the myth should remain constant. Zeitgeist communicates the society but myth constructs the society.

Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992) portrays the myth as a prominent feature to indicate one's life with the evidence of life standards.. It has divided into three parts. The story of Devi who returns from America, after the completion of her degree, she is forced for marriage that never ends in good way. Devi listens the mythical stories from the childhood at her grandmother, which is not taught to her in proper way. The mythical stories are told only to convince and to make her comfort her according to the circumstances rather than revealing the actual things.

In Indian mythology, the stories give equivalence, liberty and authority to women. India is the country which is well-known for its manners, culture and tradition. Women are respected as Goddesses. Githa Hariharan uses mythical stories to enrich the evidence of Indian life-style. Sushila Nasta, Research Lecture in Open University, tells, in an interview, to Githa Hariharan and Githa had asked the question about the significance of myth in modern Indian society and women. The reply from Githa as follows:

I think myth has always been important in all cultures. I think today ..., where you have a certain breakdown of conventional frameworks, where institutionalized religion doesn't really work as it did, and so there's a great desire to make contact with this vast, apparently irrational baggage, that you carry around with you. So, I think the myth is always important for people everywhere; there's always the need to reinterpret and see for yourself what myth means for you in your times (23).

The myth may reinterpret according to age. Each and every age has its individuality. It may possess the traces of previous age and key elements for the next age. Here, the reinterpretation starts. While transforming the mythical stories from one age to another, the interpretation may deviate from its syntactical meaning. The mythical stories are weaved with full of symbols and signs. The symbolisms are taken in chaotic manner rather than in unification.

The character of grandmother tells the stories of Devi's childhood. It is the origin point of sowing the cultural seeds into the unconscious knowledge of future minds in Indian society. This is clearly mentioned in *The Thousand Faces of Night*, by Devi:

I must have, as I grew older, begun to see the fine cracks in the bridge my grandmother built between the stories I loved, and the less self-contained, more sordid stories I saw unfolding around me. The cracks I now see are no longer fine, they gape as if the glue that held them together was counterfeit in the first place. But the gap I now see is also a debt: I have to repair it to vindicate my beloved storyteller (31).

Devi declares that the stories would make a bond between her future lives. Though in above lines Githa mentioned the 'cracks' symbolizes the comical way of observation. Though the narrator tells in proper way of interpretation, but the listener may deviate. Amidst the deviations, the fluency may be interrupted and the exact points may be undelivered by the

narrator. The interruption fills the trifles of deviation. When it develops, the entire zeitgeist will collapse in its content.

Firstly, the Grandmother tells the story of Damayanthi to Devi at her childhood. Through the story, grandmother informs about the concept of *swayamvara*. The actual motif of grandmother is to confer the greatness of her granddaughter. She had dreamt about her granddaughter would be led a life like princess and so her bridegroom selection would happen like Damayanti's *swayamvara*, as Devi says:

In my grandmother's stories, there was room for heroes and heroines. Princess grew up secure in the knowledge of what awaited them: love, a prince who was never short of noble and a happy ending. No question, however fine and niggling, took my grandmother by surprise. She twisted it, turned it inside out, and cooked up her own home-made yardsticks for life. 'You too will live like a princess, she (grandmother) would say fondly to me (20).

The grandmother's intention is to view her granddaughter as a princess. The actual strugglings of Damayanti had been hidden. Thus, the myth is interpreted in deviated manner. Thus the problem occurs while delivering the symbolisms. The interpreter uses the symbols in the mythical stories as according to their concerns, than rather emitting the exact things. The comparison had been made in wrong way. Thus, the communication is diverged.

Secondly, the story of Gandhari is interpreted about Devi's mother Sita. The interpreted matter is that Gandhari covered her eyes for the entire life because her husband was blind, likewise, Sita gave up the playing Veena, because of being a responsible wife and daughter-in-law. Sita is an excellent Veena player. It is her passion and playing Veena is the only relaxation of being a typical Indian house-hold. That is forced for making the decision to stop. Gandhari was not forced by anyone for taking the decision to cover her eyes. Gandhari's action comes out of her, because being a Queen, she might have some more way of relaxation. But Sita's concern is that there was no another choice of entertainment to relax herself. Thus, the communication moved away.

Thirdly, the story of Amba is told. The story is never to be accepted by Devi. Because she was quite aware of that the transition of a woman into a man is impossible. So she was not ready to listen the mythical story in interpreter's point-of-view. Devi tells that:

Did my grandmother know what she was saying? On the threshold of serulity for years – she collected in her old age more and more wounded refugees in her house, stray objects of clarity – her stories reached frenzied pitch of fantasy. Close to death, she made me a gift of the ultimate fantasy: a woman avener who could earn manhood through her penance (39-40).

Devi was considered Amba's story as a fantasy. This is the typical thought of modern Indian dynasty. Uma had undergone so many struggles by her family members, there she has to be adjusted or to divorce her husband. Instead of that, she has chosen to persist with all the troubles. Due to the development of science and technology, Modern era established the thought of skepticism in Indian minds. Though the concept was already existed, it had emphasized in this era. Each and everyone started questioning due to the Westernization.

The modern era gives the sophistications of human life through science and technology development. But it takes away the humanity from human beings. People become cultured apes. They have gained more knowledge and at the same time, they forget to obey the elders and to respect others. The day-to-day new arrivals of electronic goods people lost their cultural roots. They do never have the thought of preventing their language, culture and lifestyle. Everyone

goes beyond the foreign culture and economic fulfillment. No one cares about the society. The miscommunication of mythical stories leads to strong base for cultural crack. The further scope of this paper is to go beyond the cultural evolutions in literary texts.

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