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**NOVELS OF GITHA HARIHARAN: A RAINBOW OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS**

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**ABSTRACT**

This brief study discusses various dimensions of human relationships in the novels of Githa Hariharan. She has presented a huge variety of human relationships, like illiterate, well educate, talented Brahmin family background, lower caste, rich and poor etc. This research article explores through these fictional human relationships the main reasons, loose points and gaps of break-up, divorce and destruction of harmonious relationships. The sole aim of this study is to provide learning from the mistakes of these fictional characters so that we cannot repeat the same mistakes in our actual life because life is not so long that we learn by doing own mistakes so we must need to learn from these fictional characters and live with harmonious relationships.

**Key Words:** Dimensions, human relationships, variety, gap, break-up, harmonious, mistakes, destruction, learning etc.

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Githa Hariharan born in 1954, is one of those enigmatic writers, whose works have received wholehearted commendation by critics like Michael Ondaatje and J.M. Coetzee and as well as a tense and bemused condemnation by many critics in India and abroad. Githa Hariharan is not merely a novelist, but a philosopher, a weaver of stories, a teacher, a scholar and a famous literary figure among the literary artists of Indian writing in English.

Githa Hariharan penned several novels, short-stories, essays, newspaper articles and *columns*. She wrote five novels namely *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994), *When Dreams Travel* (1999), *In Times Siege* (2003), and *Fugitive Histories* (2009). Githa Hariharan was not merely a novelist but a short-stories weaver also. A collection of highly acclaimed short-stories published under the title *The Art of Dying* (1993) and a book of stories for children, *The Winning Team* in 2004. Hariharan has also edited a volume of stories in English translation from four major South Indian languages, *A Southern Harvest* (1993) and co-edited a collection of short-stories for children, *Sorry, Best Friend!* (1997).

Hariharan one of the front-ranking women novelists of Indian Writing in English, explores the concept of human relationships in her literary works. Hariharan unties the Gordian knot of complex, religious, traditional and social life by her pen, through the concept of human relationships. One can easily understand Indian life, its cultural religious, mythical and social values after comprehending the concept of relationships, which is a strong binding factor for all the Indians belonging to different castes and faiths.

Hariharan not only deals with the human relationships as per the eastern paradigm, but he views such relationships in the western concept, too. Her works mirror Indian life. One can see the clear picture of man-woman and man to man relationships as analyzed by the novelist after reading all her novels. Githa Hariharan deals in her fiction with various themes but exploration of human relationships in their myriad dimensions is an important area of Githa Hariharan's interest.

Githa Hariharan's first novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), brought her recognition in the form of Commonwealth Writers' Prize in the Eurasian region, in 1992. P. Geetha in her article observes about this



novel, "It (*The Thousand Faces of Night*) is a study of the concept of motherhood done in an innovative manner, drawing upon the oral tradition of story-telling and rereading of epic characters." (50)

In personal relationships, it is man-woman relation which drew her attention most. Hariharan has considered man-woman relation as the pivot for the existence of humanity. She gave secondary place to the relation between man and man, woman and woman and parent and child. To amplify the dimensions of man-woman relation, the novelist included various characters, thereby portraying a rainbow within the ambit of man-woman relationship, such as the husband-wife relation, mother-son relation, boyfriend-girlfriend relation, father-in-law and daughter-in-law relation, and father-daughter relation. In relation between man and man, Hariharan has included only father-son relation. In woman-woman relations, she has covered mother-daughter relation, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relation. The novelist has presented myriad dimensions of these personal relationships.

Personal or Interpersonal Relationships in the Novels of Githa Hariharan, discusses various dimensions of personal interpersonal relationships in her novels. This chapter divides interpersonal relationships which are depicted by Hariharan in her novels into three sub categories as man-woman, man-man, and woman-woman relationships for the sound understanding of these relationships because according to the concept of law that as much as we break any vast subject we can understand it in better way rather than the whole.

In man-woman relationships Githa Hariharan has depicted husband-wife, mother-son, father-daughter and father-in-law to daughter-in-law relationships.

Githa Hariharan in her novels has depicted husband-wife relationship with keen interest and sincerity with its myriad dimensions. In her very first novel, *The Thousand Faces of Night* the relation of Mahesh and Devi presents a husband who always busy, strange and indifferent towards his wife. She returns to India only to be sucked in by the old order of things— a demanding mother's love, a conventional but hollow marriage and an unsuitable lover who offers a brief escape. Disillusioned with men in her life, she returns to her mother "to stay and fight, to make sense of it all ... to start from the very beginning." (Hariharan, *The Thousand Faces of Night*, 139) She finds that she is not suitable for an Indian marriage. She has seen various ups and downs in her life. Baba her father-in-law, a traditional Brahmin, he discourses on Manu's laws for women. "His [stories] define the limit for the women ... their centre point an exacting touch stone, a wife". (Hariharan, *The Thousand Faces of Night*, 54) Mahesh, her husband's matter-of-fact approach to marriage does not favour the blossoming of the fragile flower marriage. After years of married life, Devi's heart remains untouched and not even sought for. Mahesh remains 'a shadowy figure' in her life. Marriage does not provide any space for her. She has no say in any matter. Mahesh views marriage as only a necessity and takes her life with him for granted. He allows her no choice of reading books or taking up a job. With her freedom thwarted and gaping loneliness haunting her, Devi observes:

"This then is marriage ... two or three brief encounters a month ... And the rest? The shadowy stranger snaps his fingers and demands a smiling hand maiden ... My education has left me unprepared for the vast, yawning middle chapters of my womanhood." (Hariharan, *The Thousand Faces of Night*, 54)

The behaviour of this husband is cold, rough and indifferent towards his wife. His relation with his wife is purely physical and that is also unsatisfied. Here the husband fails to fulfill the emotional needs of her wife who is a well educated lady who suffers a lot in the hands of this patriarch husband which force her to leave him and in the last the wife develops an extramarital relationship and leaves the home of her husband for forever. Thus, separation is the tragic end of this relationship. The sole reason behind the breakage of this relation is the cold, rough, strange, and indifferent behaviour of the husband towards his well educated wife.



The relation of Sita and Mahadevan presents a wife who sacrifices her own dreams, ambitions, art, and comforts for the success of her husband. Sita 'self-denial' mother of Devi. She repressed her desires. As a young bride Sita brought a veena (musical instrument) because she is a veena player and she nurtured youthful dreams of artistic genius and fame. But when her father-in-law objected to her playing the veena in the house, "she pulled the strings of veena out of the wooden box and she never touched the veena again." (Hariharan, TFN, 30) Now she focused on one goal in life, i.e., to be a good wife and good mother. She meticulously planned the lives of her husband and her only daughter Devi with clinical precision. She led her husband from promotion to promotion. The result of her sacrifices is this that her husband becomes a well known personality, a Brahmin among Brahmins. Here the wife eats the remaining food. She saves every rupee for the literary works of her husband. It is a saying that behind a successful man there is a hand of a woman and here this woman is a wife. So this relationship presents a wife who sacrifices everything for the success of her husband and a husband who recognizes her sacrifices very late and who does not react against his father who stops his wife to play Veena although the husband knows it that this art is a food of life for his wife. On Devi's return, Sita leads her to the altar of marriage gently and firmly. Suppressing her artistic desires and dreams, she becomes an embodiment of self-denial. By accepting the conventional roles of a wife and mother, she becomes domineering and over possessive. Devi and her father allow themselves to be led by Sita. But they resent her for making them mere puppets in her hands. After Devi's marriage, Sita dared not look back at her life lest she would encounter only emptiness that will reveal to her "a soiled ground of life devoted to being the ideal woman." (Hariharan, *The Thousand Faces of Night*, 107) In fact, she has to pay a heavy price in her life. Sita's decision to discard her veena is an act of both vengeance and self-denial. In her self-destructive anger, Sita is the mythical Gandhari and for Sita as for Gandhari, their self punishment only fuelled their inner anger and remained an ever present reproach in their hearts. Devi realized later that Gandhari's pride and fury that was her life-fire was no piece of fiction. It burnt in Devi's heart also when she was cheated out of her expectations of marriage. Thus grandmother could make a revisionist myth of Gandhari's life and connect it with the real women's life also. Mayamma and her husband relation presents a suffering and a serving wife and a lusty, drunkard husband who hits his wife badly in the night when she tries to sleep. Mayamma, the old maid who is a 'solitary figure', has stoically endured the sufferings inflicted by her husband, mother-in-law and son whose tales of suffering sounded stranger than any tale. Gauri and her husband' relation shows a cruel, inhuman, "animal" husband who treats his wife like "dirt" and a suffering wife. (Hariharan, *The Thousand Faces of Night*, 32) The relation of Uma and her husband presents a suffering wife and an inhuman, cruel husband who beats his wife so badly. Uma, Devi's cousin was "abused both by her husband and her father-in-law." (Hariharan, *The Thousand Faces of Night*, 51) Baba and Parvatiamma's relation shows a patriarch husband who believes in woman slavery and supports it and a religiously obsessed wife who leaves her husband's home in search of gods. So separation is the tragic end of this relation. In *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* Vasu-Mangla relation shows an unhealthy patriarch Brahmin husband who treats his wife as a slave and a timid and submissive wife who always remains in "the background of his (her husband's) memories" and when he remembers her he wonders "who is she?" (*When Dreams Travel*, 43) Mangala is Vasu Master's wife. Mangla- Vasu relationship shows a traditional Indian husband-wife relationship. It is a tragedy on the part of Mangala that though she gave Vasu Master two sons, Vishnu and Venu, he reminds her more as a 'cloudy memory' than as a Person. The focus of his memory always lays somewhere else and she always remains in the background. According to Vasu, "I always saw her in my mind against a seashore in the background, the monotonous slosh and thud of waves against rock and sand drowning out all possibility of words." (Hariharan, *The Ghosts of Vasu Master*, 41) Even in his dreams she 'dressed in silence' and offering him just a partial view. Her character maintains the traditional 'aura of silence' as a major feature of the image of an Indian woman. Another important fact about man-woman relationship as husband and wife is depicted in the novel as it



found in the traditional scene of Indian society. Here for the husband, his wife is not a living person. Venkatesan and his wife present a husband for whom his wife is only a birth machine and a life bound working slave and a wife who is so submissive that she has no identity except a lifelong slave in the home of her husband. Vasu's father, the Auryavedacharya and Lakshmi's relation presents a self-contained patriarchal Brahmin husband who has a firm belief that the wife has only one duty to serve her husband and has no rights and a wife who spends her whole life in the service of her husband and the household. As Duniyazad, the younger sister of the dead queen Shahrzad, is made to look back years later to *The Thousand one Nights* "she sees that it was always Shahrzad who was its central magnetic figure." (Hariharan, *When Dreams Travel*, 105) Husband-wife and man-woman relationships present in the extreme form of patriarchal oppression that was implied in the original tale, but was not criticized or questioned there, has been openly interrogated and exposed by the novelist. Being shocked by the unfaithfulness of their wives the king and his brother decide on a sadistic course which suits their lustful and ruthless ways. The husbands themselves could take countless women—wife or slave—according to their whim or pleasure; but that was, of course, a right taken for granted, not to be questioned. In *When Dreams Travel*, the relation of Sultan Shahzaman and his wife presents an unfaithful wife who develops an extramarital relation with her black slave for sexual pleasures and a husband who cuts his wife into slices after knowing her infidelity. Sultan Shahryar and his favourite Queen's relation shows a wife who has a secret sexual relation with her slave, Masood, she enjoys her sexual pleasures with Masood along with another twenty males and twenty females in an open garden in the absence of her husband and a husband who murders not only his wife and her sexual counterpart along with the other forty male female slaves but who starts an ideal plan of killing a virgin after sexual intercourse with her per day. The relation of Sultan Shahryar and Shahrzad presents a wife who transforms the murderer Shahryar into a good man by her witty and moral stories and saves the virgins of the Shahabad city and a husband who is a killer of thousand of virgins after sex with them, but now he transforms himself after listening the moral and witty stories of Shahrzad and after her death he built a monument in her memory. The relation of Sultan Shahzaman and Duniyazad presents an aged husband than his wife and a wife who unwillingly spends her life with an aged husband. Old man and Old woman's relation shows a quarrelsome couple who in their mature old age always fights with each other. In *Times of Siege*, the relation of Dr. Shiv Murthy and Rekha reveals a husband who starts an extramarital relation in absence of his wife and a wife who is more a supervisor than a life partner in her husband's life. Prof. Shiv Murthy's and his mother's relation exhibits a missing husband and a wife who spends her remaining life in worshipping for coming back of her husband and dies in the last in her worshipping room. The relation of Dr. Arya and Mrs. Arya puts on view a husband who rules on his wife as she is his slave and a wife lives under the cruel command of her husband. Dr. Amita Sen and her husband's relation present a chartered accountant husband who always busy in his income tax files and has no interest in his wife and a well educated wife who due to loneliness and boredom of her life develops an extramarital secretly. In *Fugitive Histories*, the relation of Asad and Mala displays a Muslim husband by birth and secularist by ideology and does love marriage who loves his wife very much and a wife who is a Brahmin by birth and marries to a Muslim, she feels consciously deserted by her husband psychologically. The relation of Bala and her husband presents a bully husband who does not like his wife from the first day of his marriage and a wife becomes mad because of the indifferent behaviour of her husband towards her. Asmin and her husband present a husband and a wife who are lifelong companions of each other in the journey of their life.

Mother-son relationship is the next one in man-woman relationships which has been depicted by Githa Hariharan in her novels with its myriad dimensions. The relation of Baba and his mother reveals a mother who plays the responsibilities of a father and a mother after the death of her husband in the life of her son and an obedient son who loves and respects his mother and values her all decisions. Mayamma and her son Raja present a mother who gives birth to her son after ten long years of barrenness, sufferings, and worshipping, she



take care of her son during his long illness relentlessly day and night and a son threatens to beat his mother in his early age of fourteen and sells her golden bangles and drinks and mistreats his mother even he beats her mother very badly. Lakshamma and his town-living son reveal an old age lonely, suffering mother in her seventies waiting for his son and a son who has no time, no money for his mother who gave birth to him and who never takes his mother along with him to town nor he comes to live with her in village. In *When Dreams Travel*, Sabiha and Umar's relation shows a mother who is not the actual mother of this prince child but a nurse of him but he saves his life by feeding him with her own breasts' milk after his mother's death and she comes to meet him every night and a son who never sleeps without seeing his mother, Sabiha. In *Times of Siege*, the relation of Mrs. Arya and her blind son Akshai presents a mother who loves her son very much but she does not allow bathing her son by her husband and a blind son who totally depends on her mother due to his blindness.

Boyfriend and girlfriend is the another relationship in interpersonal relationships. Hariharan has revealed this relationship with its various angles in her novels. Devi and Dan relation in her very first novel *The Thousand Faces of Night* presents an American black boyfriend who loves very much to his girlfriend and proposes her for marriage and never plays with her body and a girlfriend who rejects the proposal of marriage of her boyfriend due to her submissiveness and her timid nature. In *Fugitive Histories*, the relation of Rajat Shah and Sara shows a boyfriend who develops a sexual relation with his girlfriend and a girlfriend who enjoys this with him physical pleasures.

In Father-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, Hariharan has presented a number of examples to show its various angles. In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, the relation of Sita and her father-in-law presents a furious patriarch father-in-law who stops her daughter-in-law to play Veena and a daughter-in-law who obeys his order and becomes only a wife and a daughter-in-law. Baba and Devi's relation shows a lonely and bore daughter-in-law who respects her father-in-law very much and a retired Brahmin patriarch Prof. of Sanskrit father-in-law who teaches her daughter-in-law through her stories telling method the limits and duties of a wife and the lesson of casteism. Uma and her father-in-law represent a dutiful and suffering daughter-in-law and a lustful drunkard father-in-law who crosses his all limits and lustfully kisses her daughter-in-law. Gauri and her father-in-law show another suffering daughter-in-law and a torturous, cruel, and inhuman father-in-law who treats her daughter-in-law "like dirt." (Hariharan, *The Thousand Faces of Night*, 32)

Father and daughter relationship has also depicted by Githa Hariharan in her novels with its various dimensions. Mahadevan and Devi relation in *The Thousand Faces of Night* present a liberal father who believes in equality of male-female, provides all opportunities to his daughter to that others provide only to their sons and her daughter who both love and respect to her father very much. The relation of Uma and her father presents insincere and careless father who settles her daughter's marriage in a drunkards' family and a motherless daughter who suffers a lot in her whole married life due to the wrong decision of her father. In *When Dreams Travel*, the relation of Wazir and his daughters, Shahrzad and Dunyazad presents a father who trains his daughters as warriors of wit and wisdom and the daughters who love and respect her father as that degree that they ready to sacrifice their lives on his one order. The Wazir is an example of idealistic and loving father, his love for his daughters presents a new dimension in father-daughter relationship. He undergoes three "adventures" in this episode, all three serve as allegories that expose the decadent Narrating to Survive and abusive state of patriarchy under the cruel reign of King Shahryar with his unshakeable thirst for virgins and the moral dilemma this causes to "the high principled wazir," as the father of two daughters himself, and one for whom we are told "virginity holds the city's real treasury in its tight grip" (Hariharan, *When Dreams Travel*, 168) In the first episode, the Wazir finds himself in the middle of an arid, endless desert and in the extremity of exhaustion spies "a gleaming, opal-hued pool" (Hariharan, *When Dreams Travel*, 169) in the distance. As he proceeds towards it, he is stopped by a heavy hand that holds him back and a clear voice,



which he recognizes as either his father's or his teacher's, rings out with authority: "No, you haven't finished... Did you think that was all? A whiff of morality, a pinch of justice and the task is done? Is salvation to be bought so cheaply?" (Hariharan, *When Dreams Travel*, 170) The voice, which could be constructed as the conscientious aspect of patriarchy, instructs him, "The journey, dear wazir, begins here. Be patient; you will have your fill of the pool." (Hariharan, *When Dreams Travel*, 170) But when the Wazir reaches the pool it turns out to be a hellish oasis filled with the dismembered limbs and body parts of the virgins executed night after night by the king. The last dismembered limb that slides up to him he recognizes to be "the capable hand of his first-born." (Hariharan, *When Dreams Travel*, 170) The second episode shows the Wazir hurrying home to be confronted by the Sultan's messenger. He pre-empts the eunuch's words by calling out with a helpless shudder 'Is there a virgin in this house?' When they are interrupted by the call for prayer and the Eunuch rushes off, the Wazir buries his eldest daughter in a hole that he digs in his garden. The Eunuch returns after prayer and asks the house "Do you house a virgin?" (Hariharan, *When Dreams Travel*, 171) The talking house responds in the negative. After the eunuch's departure the Wazir digs up the ground to discover a plump goat in place of his daughter, hinting at the fate decreed to all women in a chauvinistic male centred society. In the novel *In Times of Siege*, the relation of Dr. Shiv Murthy and Tara presents a father who does everything for his daughter, even sends his wife along with his daughter in America and himself lives alone and a daughter who does not like her father and his ideology and she agrees with the majority, however it is right or wrong. In *Fugitive Histories*, the relation of Asad and Sara reveals a liberal father and a daughter who loves her father and feels lucky to be a daughter of such a father. Abba and Yashmin's relation displays a father who provides all possible opportunities to his daughter to educate her and a daughter who ready to take all responsibilities of the household on her shoulders after the missing of her brother.

In the relations of man-woman interaction, Hariharan has emphasized upon the evolution of a harmoniously satisfying relation based upon a mixture of mental impulses and physical sensations catering to a sense of satiation to both the partners involved. She has highlighted the ill-effect of any relation based on either the sensual or spiritual feelings alone. The affinity which satisfied only the mind created physical unrest the one which merely soothed the body caused mental unrest as has been highlighted by two relationships, one of them is Mahesh and Devi relationship where there is unsatisfactory mental bond between them and less physical encounters and second is of Dr. Shiv Murthy and Dr. Amita Sen where the base of their relationship is only physical fulfillment.

In man-man relationships, father-son relationship is the first one which has depicted by Githa Hariharan in her novels. This relationship has its own place in interpersonal relationships. She has presented this relationship with multiple angles. In *The Thousand Faces of Night* the relation of Baba and Mahesh present a father, an ardent follower of Manu and Brahmanism who wishes that his son follows his path and a busy son who has no time for such kind of thoughts of his father. In the novel *The Ghosts of Vasu Master*, Vasu and his father's relation presents a father who is an Auryavedacharya, makes treatments of others but fails to treat his own son's stomach pain disease and a son who afraid from his father, whose *aurvedic* experiments increase his stomach pain problem. The relationship of Vasu and Vishnu presents a busy and selfish son who lives in city and never comes to meet his old unhealthy father and more concerned about his Provident Fund than the health and care of his father and an old retired father who lives alone in the village. Vasu and Venu's relation shows an unhealthy old retired father who lives alone in the village and a clever, selfish son who lives in Bombay who never likes that his father comes to meet him. In *When Dreams Travel*, the relation of Sultan Sassanid and his two sons, Shahryar and Shahzaman presents a father who equally divides his kingdom between his sons and the sons who respect his father from the core of their hearts. Sultan Shahryar and Umar's relation presents a father who deprives his son from fatherly love due to his whole interest in building a monument in the memory of his Queen and a son who imprisons his own father because of his wasting the



public money in building a monument. In *Times of Siege*, Shiv and his father's relation displays a missing father who ghostly guides his son in his problems and a son who lives with the ghostly memories of his father and thinks that the memories of his father is a great inheritance to him. The relation of Dr. Arya and Akshai presents a very careful father and a blind son who totally depends on his parents. In *Fugitive Histories*, the relation of Asad and Samar presents a father who loves his son very much and thinks that his son will also be a secularist like him and a son who accepts Islam against the will of his father.

In woman to woman relationships Githa Hariharan has depicted mother-daughter and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationships and has also shown their myriad dimensions. These relationships are one of the important interpersonal relationships. In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, Hariharan through the relation of Sita and Devi presents a mother who settles her well educated daughter's marriage without asking about her choice and a daughter who suffer a lot in her married life due to this decision of her marriage. In *When Dreams Travel*, the relation of Razia with her daughters, Shahryar and Dunyazad shows a mother who nurtures her daughters like warriors of wit and wisdom and sacrifice them for the sake of city and the daughters who love their mother very much and never sees her again after separation. In *Times of Siege* the relation of Rekha and Tara presents a loving and caring mother and a daughter who loves her mother more than her father. The relation of Sumati and Meena is an example of a mother who knows the value to educate a girl child and sends her to Delhi for higher studies and also arranges a local guardian for her and a daughter whose leg breaks in an accident but she does not informs her mother about it because she does not give any tension to her mother. In *Fugitive Histories* the relation of Mala and her mother shows a stereotype Indian mother who against the decision of love marriage of her daughter and a daughter who loves her mother very much but affirms on her decision of love marriage. Mala and Sara's relation presents a mother who lives alone and a daughter who loves her mother and feels proud to be a daughter of such a mother. Asmin and Yashmin's relation exhibits a mother who loves her daughter very much after missing her son and a daughter who thinks that she never betrays her mother and ready to take all responsibility of family on her shoulders.

In the last Hariharan has presented mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship which is one of the important relationships in interpersonal relationships. In *The Thousand Faces of Night* the relation of Sita and her mother-in-law presents a timid and coward mother-in-law who only active in story-telling and a daughter-in-law who serves her mother-in-law in her best way. The relation of Devi and her unseen mother-in-law who leaves the home of her husband in search of gods and a daughter-in-law for whom her mother-in-law a guardian angel and she follows the path of her mother-in-law when she decides to leaves the home of her husband. Mayamma and her mother-in-law, relation presents a timid, submissive, slave daughter-in-law and a cruel, brutal, inhuman mother-in-law who tortures at an extreme degree to her daughter-in-law. In the novel *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* the relation of Lakshmi and her mother-in-law presents a slave like daughter-in-law and a self contained mother-in-law. Vasu Master says about his mother, "She would have been timid, worrying, little thing, nagging, pestering like a high-pitched mosquito. She did not learn how to bite though." (Hariharan, *The Ghosts of Vasu Master*, 32) Vasu Master's mother had died when he was still a little boy. He remembered her as he says, 'irretrievably mixed' with what he had heard. His mother did not have a name for almost a year because her parents did not want to spend money on a naming ceremony for one more daughter. They also feared that people would laugh at them for not producing a son. This is also present old traditional parent-daughter relationship. The old sweeper woman, who swept their backyard and collected the cowdung, comforted her mistress saying that 'life would have been easier for the child if it had been born with 'a little extra bit of flesh, just a few inches'. But, she added, the child could still be 'the Lakshmi of her husband's house' and this is how the child got the name Lakshmi. Vasu Master recalls: "Her ambitions were on a lower scale – escaping her husband's unpredictable explosions of temper, surviving her mother-in-law's jealous rule of the household, and above all, keeping the house and everyone in it, clean, pure and



unpolluted.” (Hariharan, *The Ghosts of Vasu Master*, 32) She had never exchanged few words with the neighbours, but she was obsessed with them. Neighbors always heard her whispering. Each member of the house tells her to lower her voice, and shut the door. It is an example of high dominating Indian mother-in-law and daughter-in law relationship. Her husband and sometime her mother-in-law enrage her. In *Fugitive Histories* the relation of Mala and her mother-in-law presents a harmonious relation between mother and daughter-in-law though both belong to different religions but both love and respect to each other.

In conclusion, one can say it is the picture of a close-knit society where everybody knows everybody else. The grandmother who narrates the tale knows exactly how everyone is related to everyone else. For instance the novel shows a veritable picture of human relationships in our society. In this novel Hariharan presents the complex web of human relationships in their myriad dimensions, especially, man-woman and husband-wife relationships. In prose that is at once elegant, playful and startlingly inventive, Githa Hariharan portrays with remarkable precision the web of human connections that binds as much as it divides. Hariharan's skills go beyond delving into the political and social problems of her country. She presents myriad dimensions of human relationships through rich and complex characters with compassion. This novel is full of man-woman and man to man relationships. Hariharan presents various dimensions of these relationships. She shows how man-made geographical, social, linguistic and cultural barriers come between harmonious relationships. Thus Githa Hariharan has presented a number of interpersonal relationships in her novels with their myriad dimensions.

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