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ENSLAVEMENT TO EMANCIPATION OF WOMAN IN *WHEN DREAMS TRAVEL*

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ABSTRACT

Post-colonial literature is sustained and invigorated by the idea that subjugated and subaltern do get their voice to document their life. It is made uniquely so enriching when writers from 'new cultures' centre their understanding of the world in general and their culture in particular through literature. And they get distinction in various aspects. One of the primary matters of pride for Indian writing in English is that it is enriched by women writers, like Shashi Deshpande, Gita Mehta, Nayantara Sehgal, etc. It is noteworthy to see that they are loaded with feministic substances and they look at things from a feminist point of view. All these writers deal with the themes, issues, matters and problems related to women. Gita Hariharan is one of the representatives of such top- ranking group of novelists, who has earned her name in the field of fiction by documenting feministic concerns. The selected text, *When Dreams Travel* reveals the concerns of women from own perspective. Gita Hariharan does it with the help of recreating myth and dreamy environment. This paper aims to underline how Hariharan documents the quest of women for their identity, which is uniquely so typical and lost in every culture. This study is necessitated by the need to understand the woman, who comprise approximately half of the population of this planet.

Introduction:

With regard to identity formation, political and cultural sensitivities have become acute. Different schools have been reorienting the binary relationship, and to reverse the effect of the hegemonic discourse, cultural boundaries and differences. By re-orienting, they break the essentialist presumptions about the

subjugated leading thus to an approach, known as counter discourse, to center the marginalized. Otherwise center tries to create an ideology with presuppositions which are instrumental to the maintenance and reproduction of social power that leads to the exclusion. Such an ideology entwines itself with the deepest unconscious roots of the subject through the fictitious creation (narratives) emerging in historic legends, myths, narratives, ethics etc. In the process not only is the 'margin' invented as a product, even historic continuity is invented by creating the same kind of past. Traditions are often created in order to legitimize political structures and ideology, and what they actually do, fashion a set of practices that are normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a truth. The practices are of ritual or symbolic nature that seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior through repetition in continuity with the past. Therefore, history is used to legitimize itself. However, post-colonial theorists endeavor to resist this exclusive paradigm through some counter-discursive measures. The counter-discourse is a kind of deconstructive approach to center the marginalized or to reverse the stereotyping assumption of the center. It involves a kind of practice to 'decolonize the mind with ethical interruption of the politics and projection of 'true' perception (Ashcroft, 2004: 850). Aspects of such an intellectual adventure have also been very helping in relinquishing the older modes of literary analysis as inadequate to uncover the ideological subtleties of literary texts. Postcolonial teachings have demonstrated how older beliefs regarding a 'given' texts are discursive ideological constructs relevant to a specific historic time and situation.

Postcolonial critics are concerned with identifying, interrogating and undermining hegemonic structures and to explore the possibilities of constructing alternative versions of truth. The normal 'truth' has been created by speaking from within Centric perspective only. Its interrogation "stresses the acknowledgment of the need of speaking from a different cultural perspectives- no less than from that othered landscape"(Drieson, 1995: XII). Writers and critics have underscored the need for speaking from a different cultural perspective, in which space is spared for the experience of the other as far as possible within a text situated in the mesmerizing dominance of the centre. This is where the counter-discourse comes into play as a mode of displacing the continuing cultural hegemony of the dominant. Edward Said insists that writers should compile their own versions of history of their culture. This 'compiling one's own inventory of traces' is a necessary first step to negotiate the discursive hegemonic terrain (2000: 90). The act of compiling one's 'own' would mean to have an alternative version of the reality beyond that of the center, to make the subaltern aware of the discursive forms working on them, whereby seeking to exploit them.

Feminists have been working now since long to document their experiences and 'compiling their inventory of their own traces- life experiences with women's perspective. It works against those hegemonic forms and processes of 'disidentification' which have been silencing her for centuries. It is a process of weakening the power of the dominant ideologies, and a

confession of the possibility of transformation. The selected text, *When Dreams Travel* reveals the concerns of women from a feministic point of view. Gita Hariharan does it with the help of recreating myth and dreamy environment. It is aimed precisely on a quest of women for their identity. However, it is dealt with a unique approach and manner. In this connection, Rama Kandu observes: “*When Dreams Travel* is also about a woman's search for "her" story. But what seems to have undergone a sea change is the author's treatment of the subject. Here the author attempts to write a meta-fiction through an elaborate inter-text that is made to foreground the feminist issue from a fresh perspective” (2002: 179). The crux of the novel appears to be the power of storytelling, dreams, enriching mythical atmosphere, miseries assertion of female characters. Therefore, the novel can be studied at any level. Rama Kandu says:

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/in sensitized mind, and of course the possibility of art as a liberating device for a woman imprisoned in the "dungeon" of patriarchal norms (2002: 180).

In his article, “*Home, A Saga or pastiche of Every Household*”, Gori Writes: The emergence of women writers in the last quarter of the 19th century carried with it a double significance. It bore testimony to the birth of a new era of emancipation for the Indian women, an era of increased opportunities and a more dynamic participation in the social intellectual life of a country ushered in by the great social reorientations which came at the turn of the century (2017: 213)

The novel *When Dreams Travel* exhibits the suffering in a mythical background. It demonstrates how women are exploited in a society which is patriarchy based, it further elaborates the repercussions of their exploitation. It is a retelling of the *Arabian Nights* or *Thousand and One Nights*. This novel powerfully appeals the reader to contemplate on the male depiction in the famous medieval Arab anthology. Gita Hariharan uses this novel as a rejoinder to answer back predominantly male literary tradition. She further criticizes and erodes the sexual influence of the original text. The novel *When Dreams Travel* reflects the self-assertive tone. It also establishes the storytelling of women passed from one progeny to another. In the novel, it is the woman who creates a story while the man can heed and repeat them.

It can be said that there is a strong manifesto of second-wave feminism in *When Dreams Travel*. Gita Hariharan through this work brings to notice the marginalized to the limelight or centre in varied ways by underlining the colonial and devouring patriarchal power structures. It is worth to note that *Thousand and One Nights* is one of the few texts that made its way from east to west and is included in the annals of world literature too. It was quite inspiring for many authors and its impact was noticeable on various forms and genres of western literature.

When Dreams Travel is divided into two parts, the first part is titled as “Travellers”. This part is a rewriting of the original story *Thousand and One Nights*. The plot unfolds in the first section of this part entitled “In the Embrace of Darkness”. We see the recasting of the myths of Shahryar and Shahrazad in the first two sections of the first part of the novel. While the second part of the novel is titled as “Virgins, Martyrs and Others”. This section carries a brief introduction, which is sub-headed as, A Dream, A Mirror. This is further followed by seven pairs of tales narrated alternatively by Dunyazad (Shahrazad's sister) and Dilshad, (Dunyazad's lover)

Hariharan with a deliberate attempt shifted the narrative scheme to unknot the power struggle in which women are entangled. This is one of the primary differences between Gita Hariharan and the original one. The second section is loaded with some new stories or tales told by Dunyazad and Dilshad from a feministic agenda as well as moral substance, these are completely different from the content of Arab tale collection. The original story goes with two brothers Shahryar and Shahzaman, they are Sultans of two different cities, who discover their wives are adulterous. The two brothers make up for the wrong of adultery by killing, wives, lovers and slaves who attend the harem. Shahryar has made up his mind that no woman is chaste, so he decides to marry a virgin every night and finally executing her in the morning. There is Wazir in the city where this entire course takes place; he has two daughters namely Shahrzad and Dunayzad. However, Shahrzad is considered to be the wittiest, intelligent of the two. She is gifted with an extraordinary memory and has a hold on Philosophy, Physic, History and other disciplines too. She deliberately asked her father to propose her to the king as she wanted to put an end to the barbarity of king, especially the killing of the brides in every morning. To support her in this endeavour she is accompanied by her sister Danyazad.

Hence Shahrzad starts to narrate a tale every night at the time of dawn, these tales are filled with suspense and magic. The tales fascinate Sultan so much that he postpones the killing until he does not listen to the end of the story. She stretches one tale in such a way that it leads to others, having some connection. This is done intentionally by Shahrzad to save others and herself from being killed. There is an unending thread of stories until one thousand and one nights. This makes Sultan realize that Shahrzad is the saviour of many unfortunate events that may have resulted because of the resentment of the Sultan. Therefore, he renounces his barbarous act.

The first section entitled “In the Embrace of Darkness” depicts the scene of the two men and women; Sultan Shahryar is shown listening to tale and laying on the bed. The tale narrator is his wife Shahrzad, while Dunyazad sister of Shahrzad is shown sitting on the floor near the bed of the Sultan. Dunyazad occasionally speaks a few words or sentences that help her to continue the process of storytelling. The person present there is Zaman, brother of Shahryar. In such a static move Shahryar is the only character to have the choice to choose life or death at any time. We see working as an assistant for her sister, while Zaman leaves no stone unturned to provoke hatred of Shahryar

against women. Here, Shahrzad is seen only talking while the rest of the three characters Shahryar, Zaman and Duniyazad are silent.

We can get an idea of the cruel intention of Sultan about the suppression of female identity in the very first section of the novel. Sultan Shahryar (Shahbaad) and his brother Zaman (Samarkand) are happy with their respective kingdoms. Zaman is invited by Shahryar and he is delighted at this proposal. Therefore, he starts preparation and sets for Shahabad along with his men. While he was relaxing all of a sudden it came to his mind that he forgot an important gift from his palace, so he goes back to the palace. But here he is shattered after watching his wife in the embrace of a dark slave. He is shaken and this scene blurs his vision. He murders his unfaithful wife along with the slave and then orders his fellow army men to march forward. He is received in Shahabad with great zeal by his brother. There is also a hunting expedition ready for him but he refuses since he is hurt and in a state of shock, therefore, he withdrew the idea of going for a hunt. Apart from this, at the time of Shahryar's departure, Zaman also saw his sister-in-law naked and involved with adulterous act with black slaves. This is another horrible sight that shook Zaman to a great extent. The only solace to him was now that he is not the only one to be betrayed and cheated; his brother is also a victim of this cheating adultery. However, he also senses within himself that his misfortune is not greater than his brother Shahryar. These thoughts revitalized him of the serious mental state; when Shahryar comes back and Zaman spills the beans. This turns Shahryar restless and he starts to spy his wife to get confirmation. When he finally discovers the truth, he murders his wife and states; he will renounce the world until he finds a person who has met the same fate. To check it out both brothers decide to travel far and wide, they reach to the seashore in the course of their travel. They find a Jinni with a chest, Jinni unfolds the chest and takes out a box, within box comes a beautiful girl. Jinni, her master lays on her knees and quickly falls asleep. The girl manages to lure both brothers and provokes them for sexual pleasure, they enjoy, once they are done. The beautiful girls take one ring from each of them, adds them to her collection of rings in a string. She discloses her own story to them, how she was taken away during her bridal night. Therefore, to revenge, she has deceived her master a hundred times in his presence without being caught. This gives a sense of comfort to two brothers that someone shares a large portion of shame than them. They return to Shahabad and announce a unique law in the Harem i.e finding a virgin everyday marry her at night and then strangulate her in the morning if she fails to entertain him with stories. The orders are implemented, brides enter the harm for a night and in the morning they meet their unfortunate fate. Sultan Shahryar gratifies his sexual urge this way only. This continues for three years and resulting in the dearth of virgins. Only at this point does Wazir of Shahabad send his daughter (Shahrzad) to Harem. She is sent to save the city from this barbarity along with her younger sister Duniyazad, to cope with the situation through her knowledgeable resources. Her sole aim is to save the girls from being murdered, to get them rid of from the cruel hands of Sultan, she initiates the process of narrating stories for one thousand and one nights and

connecting each story to yet another one. The king is highly impressed by the powerful mode of storytelling of Shahzad, so he decides to marry her and make her as his queen. Afterwards, Zaman also marries to Dunyazad and lives happily.

Hariharan defies the conservative belief of patriarchy as was discussed by the first-wave feminists. She stated it is very difficult to live happily for a woman when you have people like Shahryar around you. Hariharan exhibits the physical suffering of women, it is shown as deeply rooted in the psyche of women. Patriarchy wants women to be passive, docile and subordinate. The conduct of women is believed to follow the code of conduct as per *Manusmriti*, "A virtuous wife should constantly serve her husband as a god, even if he behaves badly, freely indulges his lust, and is devoid of any good qualities- it is because a wife obeys her husband that she is exalted in heaven" (Qtd in Omvedt, 2002: 88). It is like patriarchy uses and abuses her:

Patriarchy' literally means the 'rule of the father'. It has been adopted by the majority of feminist theorists to refer to the way, in which societies are structured through male-domination over, and oppression of, women. Patriarchy, therefore, refers to the ways in which material and symbolic resources (including income, wealth and power) are unequally distributed between men and women, [to institute institutions of] family, sexuality, the state, the economy, culture and language (Edgar and Sedgwick, 1991:269-70). The 'silence' of woman in the postcolonial world is broadly explained by Gyatri Spivak in her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak? She documents how, Daniel Defoe's heroine, Moll Flanders uses her physical appetite to maintain grip over patriarchal society. In order to escape from the recompense, a female is seen rising like Lazarus, albeit some fall and perish. Samuel Richardson's Clarissa is such a victim who is mercilessly cajoled to die because she tries to guard her body from the lustful Richard Lovelace. (Gori, 2017: 213)

In this story, misuse of power is evident by the brothers and only this power defines their male identity. Patriarchy intensively trusts in their aptitude to rule womenfolk. Without their power show, they presume that their lives have no meaning. Shahryar is projected as a person who takes pleasure in the suffering of women, while his brother Zaman equally shares the magnitude of this guilt. Shahzaman means "shah of time, ruler of the age", Shahryar means "friend of the city, master of the city" (Hariharan, 2008: 9). However, they are contrary to what their names mean, they violate everything, and they are not proponents of justice but perpetrators of barbarity. Sultan Shahryar builds a dungeon in the palace to secure himself from the wrath of Avengers. Hariharan's work *When Dreams Travel* is based on an ethical debate that is the battle between sexuality and power. The same argument is found in the Helen Cixous theory of gender where man is at the center and woman is marginalized. This link between the sexuality of men and violence is frequently repeated in *When Dreams Travel*. We see in the very beginning of the novel both brothers Shahryar and Zaman are shown holding a sword. Shahryar holding "mere the ornament...a grand showy thing of gem-encrusted gold" while the latter holds another "plaything in his hand, an ancient, blood-dripping

sword" (Hariharan, 2008: 5). It seems that masculinity and violence go hand in hand in this male-dominated society. This is very obvious in the first part when the two brothers underscore the plan of violence. It is worth to note that "It is she [Shahrazad] who holds the scene together. 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, 2008: 7). Shahrazad does not feel scary by the violence she is surrounded by. She delves in danger and emerges as a model of the feminist heroine. We as readers notice that "She throws back her neck, holds her goblet high and drinks deeply, eyes shut. What she does not swallow she holds for a moment or two, rolling the liquid in her mouth as if she is tasting it for the last time. Then she wets her lips with her tongue and begins again" (Hariharan, 2008: 6).

Shahrazad emerges as a glorifying fighter; she not only saves herself but the lives of many other women of the Harem. She can achieve her identity; moreover, her identity is concerned with the issues related to people around her. She is very rightly re-named as "born of the city, clever, ambitious and quick-tongued" (Hariharan, 2008: 16). Shahrazad makes Sultan to understand that all women need not be killed. She confronts the king and displays her great concern for the welfare of the people and the city. She has borne witness to the cruel patterns of patriarchy that used and suppressed women, however, she wins over all obstacles and difficulties. Rama Kandu states about the writing of Gita Hariharan:

With remarkable skill she evokes the grim "faces" of the thousand (plus one) nights; at the same time she uses it deconstructively to bring out the terror, the terrible oppression and injustice, the inherent chauvinism of the comfortable patriarchal assumptions often blunt-insensitive-irrational that she reads between the lines of the world famous legend. (Kundu, 2002: 180).

Shahryar is delighted by the tales and enquires from his better half, who managed to skip his sword by dint of sharp wit and intellect. "Where did all these stories come from?" Shahrazad replies in the most unromantic manner, "From my dreams. . . only those whose necks are naked and at risk can understand them" (Hariharan, 2008:20). Shahrazad does not reply straightly to Sultan "only those at risk should be entitled to understand the dreams that make up for the absence of a sword." (Hariharan, 2008: 20).

In his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1913), Sigmund Freud elaborates that dreams are a cognizant expression of unconscious desire or wish; these dreams are not reachable to individuals in the waking life. He presents a direct connection between dreams and unconscious gumptions by virtue of his "Theory of Mind." Shahrazad emerges as an example of a moratorium woman who daydreams and expresses a desire to be right. She is keenly interested to display her victory through dreams. Her own story makes it clear that dreams and imagination can make women survive.

It is worth to note that tales of Shahrazad are actually tales of survivors, like the myths they transport across culture, space and are able to access women of today: "the powerless [who] must have a dream or two, dreams that break walls, dreams that go through walls as if they are powerless). In this way,

Hariharan reclaims, explicitly, a tradition of women's wisdom in storytelling," (Hariharan, 2008:24-5) is connecting the corruption in the original text to its Western colonization, as "women, dreams and stories are transported from India to Persia to Arabia to France to England and then back to India." (Hariharan, 2008:25) Now no one is at risk and the process of narrating stories is over, Shahryar can rule city while Shahrzad can disappear into Harem.

Hariharan contemplates what happened to Shahrzad after such grandeur. She is surprised to see Shahrzad being such an extreme lover of risk game satisfied with the role of mother and wife of domestic life. How is she able to survive in such a caged atmosphere and locked room? This question is crucial for the comprehension of feministic standpoint and in recasting this tale by Hariharan. Dunyazad is very conscious of Shahrzad's power to defy the process of killing, she is obsessed with playing with danger games. What will happen, if she loses the battle of manipulating the Sultan even for a night, her game will be over? Hariharan sees gender as an important aspect, how women perceive themselves is important. Her role as a feminist or a traditional woman affects her image from a large perspective.

The story starts Dunyazad being informed about the death of her sister Shahrzad, this marks the beginning of a new journey and departure to trace out the mystery behind the entire episode of her sister's death Hariharan reproduces the views, perception and lives of the women who were misplaced in the original story. She emphasizes the ignored character of Dunyazad, who travels to Shahabad to trace the mystery behind the disappearance of her sister. She is apprehensive that murderous Sultan might have done something to her. She wants to take revenge on the fellow who is responsible, this new approach suggests that women are machinists of their fate and cannot be pressurized. Dunyazad finally reaches to Shahabad, here she confronts with Sabiha (maid of Shahrzad). Dunyazad tries to investigate from her the cause of sudden death of Shahrzad. Much to her dislike, she does not get a convincing answer despite hard persuasion. Now Dunyazad contemplates and anticipates some mystery behind the entire episode of Shahrzad's death. Just before a night of her meeting with Shahryar, she imagines of travelling through tunnels and palaces, presuming looking for something. She dreams visiting her sister's tomb; here she finds that the grave is wrapped with a "sheet of living gems from one end of the room to the other, a sheet that lilt with a subtle, rhythmic movement, like a carpet of flowing water." (Hariharan, 2008) She further reads on the epitaph, "Here lies Shahrzad, beloved consort of Sultan Shahryar, daughter of the chief Wazir to the Sultan of Shahabad, mother of Prince Umar and the departed prince Jaffar" (Hariharan, 2008: 49).

The intentional omission of her name on the tomb creates unrest in Dunyazad because her claim that she is the sister of Shahrzad will be looked with suspicion. This omission of her name is directly connected to the invisibility and effacement of women from old ages. Hariharan reinstates some silent characters, provide them with the voice. She in addition to this creates some new characters too; this is also a major deviation from the original text. Hariharan mentions characters like Dilshad, Raziya, mother of Shahrzad and

Sabiha, (nursemaid of Shahrzad) they were behind the scenes in the source text. Raziya's role in the original legend is limited to suppressed wife and mother. She is denied the right to take a decision about her daughters which enrages her after being denied the same. Her death in silence is in itself a way of protest against injustice that her daughters were subjected to. Hence the suppressed mother and her voice are conferred visibility and identity. Again through the character of Satyasama, Hariharan directly attempts to question the phallogocentric society. It is hard for a male-oriented society to admit or acknowledge that women can do better than them in talent or presentation of their perspectives. Satyasama is a creation of Hariharan, her character is not present in the original *Arabian Nights*. Satyasama is presented uniquely; she is shown as a slave girl with sleek fur all over the body. She is wanderer poetess of her country. Her poetic treatise disgraced the King of her country; therefore, he ordered that she should be put to death. However, the executioner did not kill her out of mercy, but her neck was ringed and her voice changed altogether forever. She was put into a merchant's boat to throw her away. She immediately won favours in the court of Shahryar, she was able to impress by dint of her poetic amusements; she also developed a relationship with one of the eunuchs of the Harem. It was a serious fault, so she was put into a dark windowless room. Satyasama died in the lap of Dilshad who nursed her. But before her departure, she gives a kiss to Dilshad who carried out the imprints on her face all through her life. She wanted to keep Satyasama alive by carrying her mark. Dunyazad involves herself in risk playing and does not care about her safety. After taking help from Dilshad, she can meet Prince Umar, son of Shahryar and Shahrzad. Dunyazad does not find much of the resemblance of his father in him. Dunyazad gets motivated with his ardent will and wellbeing of his kingdom. Prince is supported like a pillar by Dunyazad. Prince Umar is helped by Dunyazad in disposing of Shahryar. Prince Umar is not liberator of the city just like his father but wants to compensate for his father's misdoing by doing something fruitful. Similarly, we see Prince Umar locking Shahryar and takes charge of the city. Shahryar is locked in the same Mausoleum that he intended to build in memory of his wife Shahrzad. Omar is fed up with the unwanted waste of money that his father has done, in all this Dunyazad collaborates with Omar to takeover Shahryar. There are two possibilities of Shahrzad disappearance, one is that she is growing old in Harem and as a result, she may have expired. The other version is interesting; this is hinted through the discovery of 'ivory mirror'. Dilshad intentionally takes out the things of Shahrzad hinted its connection with the story of Shahrzad. On being asked, where Shahrzad got this mirror, Dilshad replies that it was given by a young merchant to Shahrzad. She further aired a sense of love affair between the two. This makes Dunyazad believe that her sister might have enjoyed the company of this young merchant. This is the second reason possibly responsible for the disappearance of Shahrzad. She thinks Sultan Shahryar might have come to know about the love affair, therefore, announced her death publically. Since nobody finds her body, this increases the apprehension of Dunyazad about the sudden disappearance of Shahrzad.

Marriage has been shown as a source of patriarchy to assert power over women by kings. It is clear and evident to readers that marriage is only a means of entertainment for the brothers. As mentioned in the novel this game is called 'The Martyr's Walk'. It is called The 'Martyr's Walk' and each player describes herself as she makes her way to the blade-holding hand that waits for her...But it is always a man who waits for them. For he has something sharp in his hand, something that draws blood." (Hariharan, 2008: 53)

Dunyazad's dream of construction of the tomb, 'The Martyr's Walk' enhances the possibility of Shahrzad's death. However, what is surprising is her body is not traced, in addition to this, there are no clear clues about her death. What is even more interesting is Shahryar does not mention the time spent in her company but wails about the rare love. It is apprehended that Shahryar is responsible for her death. As we find in the novel, he has been compared with, "fat serpent coiled in its bed, waiting with its hood raised ready to strike" (Hariharan, 2008: 257).

People like Shahryar use the body of women as per their will treating them as rubber dolls, as Hariharan puts it, "They colonized her body, she skillfully planned design, to paint in their sticky colours and words, their moral themes" (Hariharan, 2008: 274). We see immediately after the opening of the second part of the novel, Dunyazad puts an end to the story of *Thousand and One Night* logically by making Sultan Shahryar realize the pain of imprisonment. She deconstructs the norm of a heterosexual relationship, as she gets involved in a relationship with the slave girl Dilshad. She is satisfied in the company of Dilshad, hence she refutes the company of men and shelters herself in the embrace of other women, thereby gets involved in a sisterhood relationship. Since they are suppressed within the domain of patriarchy so they chose their way, where male hegemony has no space and scope. Hariharan's version of *Arabian Nights* is more women-centered. We notice a paradigm shift in the second part of the novel. In source text (*Arabian Nights*) Scheherazade narrates a story to save herself from getting killed as well as other women too. She engages Sultan in entertainment and defies the process of killing. However, in Hariharan's version in part II of the novel four people are mentioned: Dunyazad and Dilshad and are surrounded by goading jinns-Shahrzad and Satyasama. Dilshad and Dunyazad can be seen narrating stories to each other alternatively as an answer to another for seven days and nights. They propose their version of *Arabian Nights* through women's language or 'écriture feminisme.' It is fit to mention that there is no linear connection in these unrealistic tales; they appear to be more like a series of illogical dreams. Hariharan has beautifully interwoven the source text in the novel. There is a farrago of history, fantasy, legends and no doubt religion. It is through these stories we are able to know the views and perspectives of Dunyazad and Dilshad. This is how Hariharan questions the colonial and post-colonial literature, where women are assumed and presumed as stereotypes. Let us analyze some of the stories of both Dunyazad and Dilshad.

The 'Slave girl's Palace' is again about her journey to the palace to receive accolade from prince Umar in assisting him to dethrone his father. She

recounts her past when she was a part of Harem, during the tenure of Shahryar and his brutality was watched live by her. She visits all those parts of Harem where Sultan would sit and roam, it is hard for her to accept that such barbarity has been stopped.

The tale “The Chameleon on the Walls” projects the battle of the woman in this male-dominated world. It is after her realization she states that men and women are equal. Dilshad narrates the tale of a girl called Lonely Voice; she is spied by her brother, who had locked her in a silhouette. Lonely Voice seeks help from Dilshad and plots against her brother who was spying on them. She narrates the story of four men making love to one woman. While she presents she is pretending that no other person is present in the room. She is gifted by four of them, but the last man, who is a hermit, blessed her with chastity; he thought this is the best reward for a woman. When enquired about the best gift by Lonely Voice, her brother immediately responds, the hermit was the best gift giver. “She became what a man desires” (Hariharan, 2008: 250).

The tale “The Dreams of a Good Women” is told by Dunyazad, it is expressive of her emotional state and feeling. It is a story or journey of Dunyazad from bondage to liberty. She is assertive and confident; she even plans to get into the bedchamber of Sultan. She requests her father that she is equally capable of becoming the bride of Shahryar, why did Wazir (her father) neglect her? When her father tries to comprehend her by saying that you are quite young and tender, Dunyazad replies in a state of a furore, “I do love my sister but I do not want to be her shadow” (Hariharan, 2008: 256). It is expressive of her urge to be a martyr and earn the place of Shahrzad. She was apprehensive that Shahrzad is going to do everything and later she (Dunyazad) will have nothing to do. Acting on the direction of her father, she also joins Shahrzad in the plan and assists her until one thousand and one nights. She recalls her sister going to the chamber with Sultan and now its Dilshad acting as Dunyazad and Dunyazad acting as Shahrzad. She also brings to her mind the lovemaking of Sultan and Shahrzad and Dilshad would witness all that. This is evident in her inner desire to replace her sister and be in her position.

The last tale entitled “The Morning After” presents Shahrzad as a symbol of positive reformation of feministic sensibilities and feministic consciousness. This reverses the system of woman as traditional victim and emancipates them. We see Shahrzad is left to the care of slave girl; she being widowed and abandoned is waiting for her death in the Harem. So for this news was not disclosed officially, he thinks Shahrzad is dead, but she appears as the personification of feministic consciousness. However, she is grown old woman now; she shares a mixed feeling of joy and sorrow and wails for the concern of slave girls. She is happy that she could save the lives of many women by virtue of her storytelling. However, there is no end to the women degradation; she being queen enjoyed the royalty of many things but what about other women. She realizes that she can teach them the art of storytelling but is afraid she can no longer fight for them.

Finally, all three of them Shahrzad, Dunyazad and Dilshad, secure their identities and are free to take any decision of their choice. They ensure that they won't be subdued by the male domination again. Shahrzad is able to defer her death and succeeds in changing the misogynist attitude of Shahryar. Dunyazad's ignored presence in the original tale of *Arabian Nights* has been presented as an emancipated woman by Hariharan in this version. It is Dunyazad who breaks free with the help of slave girl Dilshad. Dilshad too earns her own identity towards the end of the novel. She deconstructs the older norms and rules and emerges as a free woman. Dilshad is representative of sidelined femininity taking over the power of patriarchy. When given a chance she attempts to come up with a story of a liberated woman. Through the respective tales, Hariharan challenges the norms and standards that have been set up by society for women. She airs out the voice of women by giving voice to the voiceless.

Hence the three of them Shahrzad, Dunyazad and Dilshad exhibit three different routes by virtue of which modern women can recuperate their due identity. These are, overpowering the system of patriarchy through the process of revenge, by duping patriarchy as a survival tactic and above all by writing her story as a revolutionary tales instead of being docile and passive.

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