



# Mythical Women and Journey towards destined Roles - Comparison between the Contemporary Characters in the Novels: The thousand Faces of Night and the Vine of Desire

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**Abstract**— India is a land of culture and tradition. Indian mythology has carved its niche on the world of Mythology. Indian Mythology is rich in scriptures and Vedas. The Hindu mythology has its roots in the religion. The rituals and tradition are part of the Hindu Mythology. The present paper focuses on the Hindu Mythology with special reference to the Panchakanyas from the Vedic Scriptures. These Panchakanyas were revered in the scriptures and their names were chanted during the sermons and rituals as they are believed to be the Pativratas. This paper focuses on the mythical figures from the fiction of Sudha Murthy “The Daughter from a wishing tree” these women carved their own destiny. This paper gives a comparative study of the characters ‘Devi’, from “Thousand Faces Of Night” and ‘Sudha’ from “The vine Of Desire” with that of the mythical characters. These people from the novels carved their own destinies. Along with these mythical women the writer talks about many women and their tales were of importance to mention.

**Keywords**— Women, Mythology, stories, scriptures, Pativratas.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Mythology is believed to be a traditional story with the elements of history, people and religious beliefs, cultures. Most of the writers are adopting myth to contrast the character in their works and they are trying to interpret the myth to explain the importance of the myth and its tradition, culture, custom. The mythology has relevance with the contemporary society as it gives a guidance to motivate the youth towards the correct path.

The word myth is taken from the Greek which has been derived from the word “mythos”. Myths are the stories or even called as narratives which talk about beliefs, facts human and Super human or divine figures. Myth can be otherwise described as a tale told to fulfill a specific purpose. These are the traditional stories imparted from one generation to another. Myths are the blend of folktales and legends. They are the sacred beliefs but are irrational.

Various scholars have given certain statements and theories of myth.

Sigmund Freud gave the psychological approach of myth by stating that dreams are the result of collective unconscious whereas Freudian analysis shows dreams as wish fulfilment. He calls the recurrent images as the archetypes.

The myth when retold from a new perspective it gives a hope and scope to either infuse some new elements in it or to defuse some elements from it, further it gives a new dimension or idea for the original work.

M.H Abrams writes about the myth in this way:

"In classical Greek 'mythos' signify any story or plot, whether true or invented. In its central modern significance however, a myth is one story. In mythology - a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group and which served to explain (in terms of intentions and actions

of deities and other supernatural beings )why the world is as it is and the things happen as they do to provide the rationale for social customs and observance and to establish the solution for the rules by which people conduct their lives."(170).

The stories contained in the Hindu Mythology teach us the virtues and ethical values .These stories are used to give a foundation to interpret myth.The deconstruction of these myths challenges and questions the concepts and restructures it without altering the original meaning.

## II. WOMEN IN MYTH

The Hindu mythology is mainly connected and associated with the female stereotypes and the roles they have taken up to stand as a role model .The mythology talks about their fidelity ,endurance and also obedience towards their duties as wife ,daughter-in-law .There is a mention of five pativratas in Hindu mythology .They were treated as Panchakanyas whose names were chanted in the holy sermons and hymns as it is believed that chanting names would free oneself from all the earthly sins.

The present paper focuses on the women protagonists ,'Devi' from 'Thousand Faces of the Night' and by Geetha Hariharan and 'Sudha ' from' The Vine of Desire ' by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni who created their own destiny by breaking the shackles of the conventional setup involved in the turmoil of identity .Furthermore these protagonists are contrasted with the mythical characters like Mandodari from Ramayana and Damayanthi from mythology who also carved their own destinies .Their instances have been collected from the fiction of short stories written by Sudha Murthy named "The Daughter From a Wishing Tree ".

Sudha Murthy is one of the renowned Indian writer who tries to focus on the things which inculcate a new perspective from the readers side with respect to the contemporary society. This present work "The Daughter from a Wishing Tree "tries to focus on the stories of the mythical women from Hindu Mythology .The main purpose of the book is to throw light on the unsung heroines of the mythology and their existence and the strength involved in making them as role models .She talks about unknown mythical women whose introduction is worth mentioning to the younger generation.

Sudha Murthy focuses on different mythical women in this book. She talks about Draupadi, Mandadari, Damayanthi ,Arundathi and other women who were given reverence in the mythical stories .She talks about Mandodari who chooses her destiny by asking a boon from the sages to bless her with her choicest husband , in the same way the

protagonist Devi in the Novel The thousand Faces of night also chooses her destiny.

Sudha Murthy shares the story of Mandodari who carved her own destiny .In the story ,Mandodari was a frog earlier and it lived in a well where the pious sages used to drink water from the well.One day it happened so that a snake entered the well and filled the water with its venom .The frog warned the sages by jumping into the well and as a result, it died by turning into bluish color due to the poison in the water.The sages with their yogic power realized the sacrifice of the frog in order to save their lives .They asked the frog to ask a boon for its sacrifice.

They said :

"A simple creature like you saved us from certain death .O dear Frog ,we will revive you so that you can ask us for any boon".(69).

The frog replied that she wanted to be beautiful like goddess Parvati and she would want a learned emperor as her husband .

She replied :

"I want to be beautiful like Parvati and marry someone who is extremely learned and is an emperor ".(54).

The sages blessed her to take the next birth as a beautiful and virtuous woman who is devoted to her husband and besides that they blessed her to marry a knowledgeable warrior .Mandodari asked for this boon but she forgot to ask for the bliss in the marital life which she lacked in the marriage with Ravan.But in spite of his vices ,she continued to be a good wife though she was experiencing the gloom as his wife .So,she was revered as the great mythical figure who is one among the Pativratas .

In the novel Thousand Faces Of Night ,the protagonist Devi also carves her own destiny by leaving behind the painful conventional setup of the society when she was vexed up with her husband Mahesh .In contrary,the protagonist emerges as a New woman who breaks the shackles of the monotony in her marriage when she couldn't resist the restrictions imposed upon her and she felt irresistible when her husband ignored her as a wife.

In the novel The Thousand faces of Night the protagonist Devi used to hear the mythical stories from her grandmother. She says : "In my grandmother's mind the link between her stories and our own lives was a very vital one" (30).Her grandmother used to give directions to Devi with the help of those stories and the characters .She would answer her every query with an instance from the stories of the mythology.Her grandmother would state that marriage is the significant moment in the life of a woman .She says that: "When you marry, Devi, your heart moves up to your shoulder and slips down your arm and the palm

of your hand. The hand that holds you tightly as you walk around the fire receives it like a gift. You cannot do anything about it: when you marry, it goes to him and you never get it back" (37). She feels carried away by the way her grandmother narrated the stories of marriage of kings and queens and princes.

When Devi marries Mahesh, she finds no point in living with Mahesh as he ignores her with his routine business of office and other works. She feels marriage very painful as she couldn't feel that bliss in the marriage due to the indifferent behavior of Mahesh. She feels :

"This then is marriage, the end of ends, two or three brief encounters a month when bodies stutter together in lazy, inarticulate lust. Two weeks a month when the shadowy stranger who casually strips me of my name, snaps his fingers and demands a smiling handmaiden. And the rest? It is waiting, all over again, for life to begin, or to end and begin again. My education has left me unprepared for the vast, yawning middle chapters of my womanhood." (54).

She then consoles herself in the mythical stories of Baba, her father-in-law. He used to share the stories of mythical women who are dutiful and devoted to their husbands. She starts to search herself in the bond of marriage. But it turns to be futile. Baba's death brings more grief to her and so she couldn't resist the monotony and she decides to leave Mahesh and go to the musician Gopal where she could find serenity to her aching heart.

She feels:

"I will gather together the fragments which pass for my life, however laughably empty and insignificant, and embark on my first real journey. I would do better than sneak out, a common little adulteress...so that I can learn to be a woman at last. I will soar high on the crest of Gopal's ragas, and what if I fall with a thud, alone, the morning after? I will walk on, seeking a goddess who is not yet made." (95).

Finally she leaves even Gopal as she finds it futile to search for her lost identity. She at last tries to regain her lost identity by looking at her reflection in the mirror. She throws a sari on the mirror and leaves the place of Gopal and reaches her mother's nest.

"She stood in front of the ornate, teak bordered, full length mirror that she and Gopal shared, (...) she looked into the mirror, but it was as if she was still looking at Gopal's sleeping face. It threw back at her myriad reflections of herself. Devi undraped the sari and folded it carefully, lovingly, till it was one long, multi layered curtain. She covered the mirror with the silk so that the room suddenly became darker, and everything, the bed, the table, the

sleeping body of Gopal, were themselves again, no longer reflections." (138)

### III. WOMAN'S BEAUTY CAN BE A CATASTROPHE FOR HER LIFE

In the famous mythical story of Nal and Damayanthi, Damayanthi faces a lot of hardships due to enchanting beauty. Everyone along with Devas and Asuras envied her beauty and wanted to marry her because of her charm. Indra and other gods wished to marry her. Indra stops Nal and conveys their wish about marrying her as they fell for her beauty.

Indra says :

"I'm Indra, the king of the gods. These are my friends - Agni, the god of fire; Vayu, the god of wind and Varuna, the god of water. Though there are gorgeous maidens in the heaven, we heard of Damayanthi's celestial beauty and couldn't resist it. So, we thought that at least one of us must marry her." (68).

Then Damayanthi explains Nal about her meeting with the golden swan and his princely reputation from it. She conveys her wish to marry him.

She says:

"I'm happy to see you, Nala. You have been on my mind since a golden swan told about you. You are the man of my dream, and I have given my heart to you. Then how can I marry one of the gods?" (69).

Later arrangements were made for the Swayamvara and Indra tries to deceive Damayanthi during the Swayamvara. Finally Nal and Damayanthi gets married after Damayanthi realizes Nal in the contest. Later as the story progresses they get separated and finally unite after the series of events which are unfortunate.

The same instance can be applied in the case of 'Sudha' the protagonist in the novel "The Vine Of desire". Even Sudha also faces the same hardships as Sunil casts an evil eye on her due to her irresistible beauty. He even tries to cross his limitations by trying to fulfill his desire to have her. Soon after the havoc with Sunil, when he pollutes her body, Sudha leaves the place of Anju to find her living in San Francisco. Sudha tries to cross the barrier of the conventional setup and she also emerges as the new woman who stands in stance to her problems in her path.

### IV. CONCLUSION

The present paper gives a focus on the mythical women who strived to become role models for many generations, whereas the contemporary novelists and writers are trying

to define the conventional pattern and infuse new perspective to compare and contrast to the lives of modern women who can overcome the unfair means which suppress their identity, by transforming themselves as 'New Women'.

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