

## **Mythological Exploration in *the Thousand Faces of Night, Where Shall We Go This Summer* and *A Matter of Time***

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The word Myth is derived from the Greek word *mythos* which means “Story” or “Word”. Myth is symbolic tales of the distant past. Mythology is the study of myths. Mythology in Indian context is perhaps the most utilized and most admired for every generation and genre. India is the cradle of civilization with great tradition and heritage. The ethnicity of this country is prolific with a lot of myths. It has produced great epics of the world, i.e. Ramayana and Mahabharata which invariably preach the principles of life to the people. Indian English writers are influenced by the myths carried on from ancient time thus trying to preserve the cultural heritage and religious beliefs.

Githa Hariharan *The Thousand Faces of Night* revolves around three women Characters—Devi, the central character; Sita, her mother and Mayamma, the care taker cum cook. Githa Hariharan, being brought up in a traditional Hindu family is well acquainted with all the myths and she perfectly blends the myth and reality in the modern Indian life. Githa Hariharan deftly explores the prescription of the gender relations by means of Indian mythology. The stories of Gandhari, Amba, Damayanthi and others reflect on the life of these characters in the novel.

The central theme of the novel is categorized as the quest for identity, penance, female bonding, marriage, chaos and dilemma by the rebellious protagonist Devi. Devi has failed to establish her identity in the framework of a male dominated Indian society as a wife in an arranged marriage, or as a rebellious lover. She ultimately comes back to her mother, Sita. The novel opens with Devi going to the USA for her higher studies. There she falls in love with Dann but leaves him for the sake of cultural difference and returns back to India on the request of her mother Sita. The novel established the relationships which originate out of the emotional needs of human beings coming in to contact with one another around them. As a young girl, Devi was inquisitive and learns the mystery of life through several stories told to her by her grandmother. Every one gains knowledge as Sigmund Freud says: “Widely different sources, from fairy tales and myths, jokes and witticisms, from folklore . . . sayings and songs of different people and from poetic and colloquial usage of language”.<sup>1</sup>

Indian mothers train, protect and guide their daughters in all their endeavors. With their mother's guidance and emotional support, they internalize their femininity. Having arrived in India, she realised that her mother was going to arrange her marriage through swayamvara. The mother "weaves a cocoon a secure womb" (13)<sup>2</sup>. At this point Devi recollects her grandmother's story of Damayanthi that was taken from the **Mahabharata**. Nala, the king of Nishad was brave, handsome and virtuous. Damyanthi's father decided to hold a swayamvara. Damayanthi was brave and determined to marry Nala. So she threw the garland around his neck and married him amidst all the intrigues made even by the gods. Her grandmother concludes the story with a moral, "A woman gets her heart's desire by great cunning" (20)<sup>3</sup>. The story of Nala- Damayanthi fascinated her. From this story Devi established the concept of Swayamvara.

The next story narrated by her grandma is about Gandhari who plays a significant part in the **Mahabharata**. Gandhari was married to a very rich prince, whose Palace was "twice as big twice as magnificent as her parents Palace" (28)<sup>4</sup>. On meeting her husband for the first time in such a rich palace, she was taken aback for "The White eyes the pupils glazed and useless" (29)<sup>5</sup>. Gandhari in anger vowed never to see the world again; so she bound her eyes with the help of a veil. Summing up the story Devi's grandmother says: "she embraced her destiny— a blind husband with a self sacrifice worthy of her royal blood" (29)<sup>6</sup>. Through this story Devi learnt life through her grandmother's choice of Gandhari and acclaims:

"The lesson brought me five steps close to adulthood. I saw for the first time that my parents too were afflicted by a kind of blindness. In their blinkered world they would always be, one leading the other, one hand always in the grasp of another" (29)<sup>7</sup>.

Gandhari's story reflects the life of Sita, Devi's mother. Before marriage her parents taught her to play the veena. She entered her husband's house with a veena as part of her dowry. After completing the household affairs, which was considered as the foremost duty of the house-wives, she used to play the veena. One day her father-in-law called her to do some work before puja in the morning. She could not hear, as she was playing the veena, so he scolded her. "Put the veena away. Are you a wife, a daughter-in-law" (30)<sup>8</sup>. In a momentary anger and frustration, she pulled out the strings of the veena and vowed not to play the veena again and replied in a whisper: "Yes, I am a wife and a daughter-in-law" (30)<sup>9</sup>.

Another significant story told her by her grandma deals with a beautiful girl who married a snake. Although Devi's immature mind cannot decode the real purpose

underlying the story, it left an indelible mark on her. A childless couple prays to God for a child and in return a snake is born to them. When the snake grew up, the parents planned a marriage. He walked to the distant lands in search of a bride. When the host learnt that he was in search of a girl for his venom-tongued son who was a snake, he readily offered his gorgeous daughter. The girl on seeing the snake as her husband, she whole-heartedly accepted her lot, saying “A girl is given only once in Marriage” (33)<sup>10</sup>. One night the serpent came into her room and spent a night with her. Next morning when she woke up, surprisingly she found a handsome young man on her bed. The story delineates the Hindu concept of rebirth. Devi co-relates the story with the lot of the servant maid, Gauri.

As the grandmother grew older, stories also took a new shape. “The grandmother’s stories became sharper with more precarious tone of dangerous possibilities” (35)<sup>11</sup>. This time the grandmother dwells upon Mahabharata for a story and she talks about Amba. Prince Bheesma goes to a swayamvara of three beautiful princesses. Amba, Ambika and Ambalika. Amba the eldest chose King Salwa and garlanded him. But suddenly Bheeshma kidnapped all the three princesses and took them to his step-mother. When they came to know that Amba had already married, they let her go to King Salwa. Unfortunately Salwa refused to accept her and insulted her. Do you think I feast on Left over’s? I am a king. I do not touch what another man won in battle. Go to Bheeshma. He won you when his arrow struck my Eager hard on your luckless garland. He is your husband. What have you to do with me? (37)<sup>12</sup>. Insulted Amba goes back to Bheeshma, who also refused to accept her thereby she changed her attitude towards life and vowed to avenge Bheeshma. She went to the forest and did penance towards Lord Shiva. Having been pleased with her penance, Lord Shiva gave her a garland and promised her: “Who so ever wears this garland will surely kill Bheeshma” (39)<sup>13</sup>. This story reared a brave attitude in Devi. “She day-dreamed more and more about female avengers” (40)<sup>14</sup>. These lessons indelibly imprint themselves in her mind. She confesses: “I lived a secret life of my own; I became a woman Warriors, a heroine, I was Devi. I rode a tiger and cut off the evil magical demons heads” (41)<sup>15</sup>.

The most interesting story which has a message of motherhood is about Ganga and Shantanu. She says “Motherhood is more than the pretty picture you see of a tender woman bent over the baby she is feeding at her breast” (88)<sup>16</sup>. On walking along the bank of Ganges, King Shantanu happened to meet a beautiful damsel. He fell in love with her and in turn she had promised to marry him, provided he did not intercept her in her actions. However difficult, he accepted it. No sooner did she give birth to a child than she killed it drowning in river Ganges. She killed seven children. Shantanu could not approve of such conduct, but he remained silent for holding up the vow. Upon the birth of the eighth child, he could not refrain protesting her from drowning

the child. The lady goes back to her normal form—river Ganges, saying: “Then take him be the father and mother to him” (88)<sup>17</sup>. She plunged into the river. There is a belief in the Hindu mythology that the water of Ganges purifies us of our sins for it flows from heaven. The lady plunged into the river to wash away her sins. After many years Devi could interpret the story and concludes: “To be a goodmother, to be a mother at all . . . you have to renew your wifely vows everyday” (88)<sup>18</sup>.

After marrying Mahesh, Devi meets her father-in-law, Baba and the caretaker-cum-cook in that home, Mayamma. The emotional and mental incompatibility with Mahesh brings her close to Baba. Her relationship with Baba becomes stronger. He was a Sanskrit professor, an intellectual man. Baba talks about Manu, who is the creator of Hindu code of conduct. He teaches Devi what Brahminhood is. He tells Devi quoting from Manu, “A Brahmin . . . shrinks from honors as from poison; humility he covets as if it is nectar” (52)<sup>19</sup>. Baba dwells deep on the Vedas and Sanskrit hymns. Devi feels glad to be a disciple of such an intellectual man. Baba used to hear the Carnatic music. He talks about the Ragas and Kriti with Devi. He narrates the life history of Muthswamy Dhikshidhar, one of the greatest composers of carnatic music. Baba also narrates about Jeyadeva who brought out **Gita Govinda** a composition on “Krishna’s all encompassing love” (65)<sup>20</sup>. He also talked about his resolution to lead a simple and austere life. Purandara Dasa was a memorable composer of Karnataka. Baba through his stories and incidents from the history of India reiterates: “Non-Violence, truthfulness, honesty, Purity, control of the senses—this in brief is the dharma of all the four castes” (66)<sup>21</sup>.

Githa Hariharan selected the less prominent figures from the Indian epics and Puranas. She talks about Gandhari, Amba who are less known to the contemporary learners instead of talking about Sita and Savithri. She talks about Indian myths which are forgotten by many of us in the era of globalization and liberalization.

Mayamma, the old caretaker of Mahesh’s house was married into a large family at the early age of twelve. On the contrary her husband was a useless gambler who never understood the meaning of the vows he had made before the ceremonial fire. But Mayamma belonged to the generation of women who quietly bore to death their liabilities and never rebelled even if they wanted to, because it was considered outrageous for a woman to shirk away her familial bindings even if she was crushed underneath it. Devi’s grandmother also belonged to the same generation as Mayamma. But her stories were full of women of valour who avenged their offenders with an iron hand.

Sita (Devi's mother) – the protagonist of the second generation, bridges the gap in the evolution of women from the generation of Mayamma to that of Devi. Sita is a cool, self-confident, poised, middle-aged mother. She is a woman who always knew what she wanted and got it; this achievement of Sita can be felt in everything around her – her home, her garden, her husband's fame and her daughter's education and wedding. Parvatiamma (Devi's mother-in-law) too is of the second generation. She is also a link that bridges the gap of generations. She was a loving, gentle and feminine lady whose generosity led her outward, away from herself. Parvatiamma's privation found a new diversion and it drew her firmly into devotion. The urge to implement the messages conveyed in the bhajans and kritis sung by her, grew stronger within her day by day. Parvatiamma was an ambitious woman; she had like a "man in a self-absorbed search for God" (64)<sup>22</sup> stripped herself of the life allotted to her as a householder and left her house in search of salvation.

Devi, the protagonist is a representative of the third generation of women. She leaves America with a heavy heart on account of her parting with Dan, her black boyfriend. Devi's marital life with Mahesh lacks the colours and excitement that she had expected. The stories, which Devi had grown up with, had developed within her a mechanism of self defense against any onslaught from the other side. Mahesh had everything a lady could hope for, but his cold and indifferent attitude was more than she could suffer. She feels cheated like Gandhari and slighted like Amba. Her penance takes multiple forms of response from self-pity to revenge and from self-infliction to a strong sense of injustice. Childlessness, she feels was the price she had to pay as a penance for her marriage with Mahesh. In such a situation of loneliness and deprivation, Gopal, the neighbour who is a classical singer, seems a place of comfort for her. His melodious music strikes an intimate chord in her. She hopes to "soar high on the crest of Gopal's wave of ragas" (95)<sup>23</sup>. Githa Hariharan's Devi, in spite of the continuous exposure to the mythical stories told by her grandmother from childhood, and then after marriage the stories she hears from the father-in-law and the real stories of Sita, Uma, Gauri and Mayamma does not help her to be a submissive wife to Mahesh. Like how her mother-in-law revolted by leaving the family in search of God, Devi's elopement with Gopal, is also a revolt against her husband Mahesh, who merely wants her to keep waiting for his arrival as a submissive wife.

*The Thousand Faces of Night* creates a new paradigm for the recreation of a woman's identity. Hariharan's idea behind making and naming the protagonist 'Devi' is to reinforce in a woman the realization about her inherent powers. The mythological meaning of the word 'Devi' is 'mother goddess' on whom all the gods and goddesses are dependent for their powers. Devi's grandmother interweaves the tales of ordinary women, Sita, Uma, Gauri and Devi – with mythological heroines, to form a familiar

pattern of heroism and suffering. These stories work as a bridge between the past and the present. Hence, Devi not only symbolizes fury, sublimity and power but also independence. Therefore, survival is of paramount importance for every woman. The three main characters of the novel manage to survive by walking a tight rope. They do not succumb to despair or sorrow, instead they prove their strength of womanhood in their struggle for survival. Thus *The Thousand Faces of Night* moves through a number of voices, predominantly that of women and evolves through a concentric framework of storytelling, containing stories embedded within stories, the real and the mythical colliding and colluding, reflecting, replicating and intersecting with each other<sup>24</sup>.

Anita Desai's "*Where Shall We Go This Summer?*" sounds like a 'symbolic query'. It clearly shows the doubt and the scheme the protagonist has about her future. It clearly shows the lack of precision of life. The central character Sita in this novel 'Where Shall We Go This Summer?' feels the frustration of the suffocative four walls of the city life. Sita is seen taking refuge from her marriage at the 'Utopian land' which was her home once. An island blend with magical showground as she believed. Pregnant with her fifth child, Sita desperately takes refuge from the mundane realities of her marriage towards the island, which happens to be the homestead of her deceased father. Sita feels lonely and dejected by all the busy members of the family. The fact, that she is pregnant for the fifth time, causes irritations and life becomes a burden to her. She makes an attempt to shut down emotionally and isolate herself from the daily chores. It is then, that she feels the dire need to fade far away and dissolve to the 'Utopian land', which is illustrated here as the island and the dwelling place of her dead father. Her father was considered to be a saint and villagers at Manori strongly believed in him. He was also capable of several miracles for the folk in need. That pathos that Sita feels that there was nobody to care for her and this became a continuous fret for Sita.

The name 'Sita' is itself a mythological name. It can be brought in comparison with Goddess Sita, wife of Lord Rama, in the epic 'Ramayana', who faces trials and tribulations. The protagonist Sita can also be given an emblematic stance, for patiently bearing and partaking all her suffering in life. Her long wait, symbolizes several things. First, she is waiting for something magical to happen in her life. The central characters 'Sita' and 'Rama', bearing archetypal names, are far from the reincarnation of mythical figures. Though their names are related to the mythical figures, Raman was a rough and tough guy. He found her unbearable in her distress, the drama of her distress. Sita's search for space from her irritated mind remains one of the primary concerns. One of the powerful devices by Anita Desai is the evocation of the sense of time.

Part One of the novel begins with the arrival of Sita and her two children Karan and Menaka to the island. She occupies the house in Manori. The reason for her coming to Manori is to achieve the miracle of keeping her baby unborn. The reasons which led her to her leaving the city are discussed. She is much agitated over even ordinary events of life. Her morbid fear of the people in the city and the emotional alienation from her husband led her to the island. She considers the world wicked and full of destructions and does not want to give birth to her baby in this cruel world.

Part two of the novel describes her life before marriage in the island. She spent her childhood with her father in a big house in Manori. As her father was a freedom fighter, he did not remain in one place and at last when freedom was achieved, they settled down in Manori. Everybody in the island had great respects for him. He set an ashram in his house and many followed his ideals and principles. He was considered to be a legend in Manori with his new ideas and magic cures. The people of Manori had immense faith on Sita's father and approached him for all their problems. As Sita's mother had deserted them, it is her father took care of Sita, her sister Rekha and brother Jeevan. The children lived in the midst of the crowd, as their house would be always crowded by men and women who come to their father for medicines.

Part Three of the novel is a continuation of the first one. Her initial enthusiasm that the island will work miracles on her is slowly waning. Her children, who lived in the city comfortably, could not adjust with the life in the island, accuse Sita and regard life on the island as madness. They want to escape from that island to their 'beloved' city. So, Menaka without the knowledge of Sita writes a letter to Raman to come and take them home. When Raman arrives, Sita is reluctant in leaving the island and after much conflict, Sita, goes back to Bombay to live with her children and husband. Her expectation of a miracle in the island did not happen and she joined her family in the city. Sita and Raman are the two different poles where there is no attraction but repulsion always. Raman is an ordinary man who has a practical commonsense approach to life but Sita is a woman who gets disturbed easily and fails to adjust with her family and society.

Sita is highly sensitive, emotional and touchy whereas Raman is sane, rational and passive. He ignores Sita. Desai's protagonists are "tormented souls who, in their death-in-life aspire towards life-in-death"<sup>25</sup>. Sita's state is representative of the alienation of a woman, a wife and a mother. She is also oppressed and depressed with loveless wedlock with Raman. So, she takes a holy pilgrimage to Manori, an island and it is a journey for spiritual purification, a search for identity. S.P. Swain and P.M. Nayak emphatically comment that "Sita is an uprooted woman who wants to regain her primitive self". Ironically her pilgrimage with its promise of renewal and regeneration

is the result of her social alienation”<sup>26</sup>. At last, she gets physical and mental courage in the island. The island forms the core of Sita’s conscious existence. There comes a change in Sita’s identity. She has four children and now reluctant to deliver or to abort the fifth one. In fact, she goes to Manori to retain the baby in her womb.

Sita is a symbol of nature and so she is unable to adjust the mechanical life. She feels difficult to survive in the destructive urban world. She has not been able to identify herself with the urban milieu and she feels alienation when she has seen the incidents of violence in the urban life. Her sons are fighting violently, the cook and the ayah quarrel with each other loudly, her daughter Menaka carelessly crushing a sheaf of new buds of a small plant. She is mentally affected by all those incidents. Now, she expects some miracle should be happen. N.R. Shastri says that Sita’s pilgrimage to Manori is both, “an escape and a return: an escape from the destructive forces of the urban milieu and a return to the magic island”<sup>27</sup>. Her sense of alienation is because of her emotional imbalances. She is neither a Sati Savitri nor a Mohini; she has never worshipped her Ram in the traditional sense, nor has she even been faithless. Desai rewrites the mythical Sita’s role by restructuring and giving a new dimension. In the epic Sita is cast as the stereotype mother role. But in the novel, for new Sita children are only the means of anxiety and creates pessimism in life. The myth of the all sacrificing, noble, sweet mother, and the myth of motherhood is dismantled by Desai by projecting diversity of women’s maternal feelings.

Sita’s escape to Manori seems to be a flight from the constraints of traditional womanhood. She becomes acutely aware of her Oedipal relations. She is convinced, more or less, that the traditional family infantilizes women and they never achieve adult ego. Finally at the end of the novel Sita neither dies nor kills her baby in the womb but she compromises with her destiny . Here she is projected like Sita in Ramayana following the footsteps of her husband Raman an icon for Lord Ram. She lowered her head and searched out his footprints so that she could place her feet in them (136)<sup>28</sup>.

Set in present day Karnataka, rich with south Indian culture, landscape, folk tales and history, Shashi Deshpande’s *A Matter Of Time* is a story encompassing three generations of women coming to terms with their life in an all female world. The relation women characters share with their men is hovered with either silence, absence or indifference. The family saga opens up when one evening Sumi’s world is torpedoed as her husband Gopal walks out on her and their three daughters, Aru, Charu and Seema without any explanation. Sumi too doesn’t ask for one. Her indifference unsettles her three daughters as much as it disturbs a reader. The pain of the disintegration of the family troubles Aru who considers herself responsible for her father’s action and sets out to undo it.



Sumi along with her daughters return to their ancestral house where her mother Kalyani had been living in an oppressive and strange silence, striving to make sense of her relation with her husband who hasn't spoken to her for 35 years. It is in this stifling atmosphere the characters evolve and come to a newer understanding of their lives. Kalyani gives vent to her long suppressed feelings as her relation with her daughter and grand daughters develop, opening up the gates of her memories through which the family legacy pours out. Sumi finds solace in taking up her dream career, Aru starts making sense of her mother's indifference and her father's desertion.

Very Indian in its foundation, the core of the book is built around the question of what a man does when he is disenchanted with the material world. One of the paths such people could take was paved ages ago - nobody knows when actually - when sage Yajnavalkya told his wife, "Maitreyi, verily I am about to go forth from this state (of householder)" - as told in the Brihadarnyaka Upanishad is the opening of the first section of the novel. Such going forth has nothing to do with the wife, her beauty, her youth, or any similar quality of her wifeliness. It also has nothing to do with Vishwas, trust (or the lack of it) a husband/wife has in the other. The need springs from the inside, from recognising the effervescence of the world around oneself. According to the Brihadarnyaka Upanishad, Maitriyi on hearing that declaration of her husband, discussed with him the reasons for his going away, and argued with him whether that path was also not hers to take. The Maitreyi of Brihadarnyaka Upanishad was free to renounce the world, and to go on a spiritual quest of her own. That special moment of Maitreyi's life forms the ground on which Shashi Deshpande builds her book.

The novel moves around the character Gopal, he walks out on his wife Sumi and three daughters. Sumi reacts very normally. She doesn't shout, scream or create scenes. She is proud and defiant. It is very clear that she doesn't need anybody's pity or sympathy. She, for that matter, understands, that life must go on, and for the sake of her three teenaged daughters, Aru, Charu and Seema. She must be strong and steady. Gopal's desertion makes her experience the trauma of a deserted wife and the anguish of an isolated partner. At the age of forty, she stands alone and helpless. A woman in such a condition seems to be totally shattered, but Sumi is not emotionally broken. Like any responsible mother, she helps her children to get on with their lives as earlier.

Gopal's abandonment creates a vacuum in Sumi's life. She tries to trace out eventually the clues in the past acts and utterances of Gopal. He had once said that, Sa-Hriday, is for those who accept the traditional Hindu view of marriage, where God unites both the hearts; and believe that the husband and wife are described as two halves of one total being. But some how he realizes that he was utterly failing the idealistic expectations of the institution of marriage. He could not feel himself a Sa-Hriday with Sumi and was getting out of step with her.

Premi, Sumi's sister is furious and is quite angry at the carelessness shown by Sumi and Gopal towards their lives- "...In throwing away what they had, uncaring, it seems to her, of the value of what they have discarded"(136)<sup>29</sup>. Poor Kalyani be moans the repetition of history – "My father died worrying about me, my mother couldn't die in peace, she held on to life though she was suffering, she suffered terribly-because of me, she didn't want to leave me and go" (47)<sup>30</sup>.

Sumi knows why Gopal left her and his daughters, because he had the fear of Commitment and family ties and responsibilities. She knew that Gopal believed that –" Marriage is not for every one. The demand it makes a life time of commitment— is not possible for all of us." (69)<sup>31</sup>. Sumi never questions Gopal, and he is grateful to Sumi for not asking questions and saved him from embarrassment and positively mortification of voicing half-truths. Sumi hates to discretion Gopal's dissection with any body. "... What do I say, ...that my husband has left me and I don't know why and may be he doesn't really know, either? And that I'm angry and humiliated and confused...Let that be, we won't go into it now"(107)<sup>32</sup>. Sumi looks at the desertion as 'Sanyasa', but the word 'Sanyasa' cannot be equated to the Vedic renunciation. Sumi casual makes a remark. When, one studies Gopal's childhood to know the reason for his desertion, we see that Gopal's childhood was not a normal one. He painfully remembers that this father had married his own brother's wisdom, and he was born out of that marriage.

His insecure childhood, lack of understanding the true concept of happiness and ignorance of true quality of joy, has led Gopal to renounce his Grihast-ashrama in search of eternal bliss. Gopal is still to search a solution to his loneliness and achieve peace. Gopal could not convince any one, the reason for his desertion, at least not to his daughter Aru. She, like the 'Yaksha', questions him and decides irresponsibility. To her - "...Not just a tragedy, it is both a shame and a disgrace"(13)<sup>33</sup>.

Sumi never likes to unlock her heart and lay bare her emotions to Gopal. Her pride prevents her, nor she requests him to come back to her. She controls all her feelings and has a composed expression to the outside world. She feels, that, it is important for women, like her, to retain her feelings as she says "...The picture she presents to the world is one of grace and courage, to be admired rather than pitied. Unchanged, except for a feeling-which only those who know her well are aware of-of something missing in her"(172)<sup>34</sup>.

Even today, the fate of a woman is measured only through their marital status. A woman in a society gets respect only if she has her husband, irrespective of the number of wives or mistress he has, there in compatibility, his cruel treatment of or his dead

silence with his wife. It is more than enough if they live together under one roof because, “What is a woman without a husband “ (167)?<sup>35</sup>

Sumi is a Karma Yogi, who believes in action. As a mother she performs her duties successfully. Her reaction is calm. There is a differences in attitude and reaction due to the generation gap and altered perceptions. Aru therefore discards the notion of marriage to be the ultimate aim in a woman’s life. Her compact, protected happy life is shattered by the sudden decision of her father. She wants, her mother to rebel against her father’s actions and to demand for an explanation. She, the eldest of the three sisters takes on the cultural role of a son. The role reversal underlines the new cultural possibility that suggests empowerment of the female child.

The second section of the novel begins with another quotation from the Brhadaranayaka Upanishad:

Whatever wrong has been done by him,  
his son frees him from it all;  
therefore he is called a son. By his  
son a father stands firm in this world

The lines focuses the importance of a son. But ironically, the section deals with daughters only: Kalyani, Sumi and Aru. Mother-daughter bonding, in Indian mythology, has never been seriously emphasized except the relation of Prithvi and Sita. The old tradition of blessing a married women *Putravati Bhava* emphasizes the concept of patriarchal society. In the novel, *A Matter Of Time*, Deshpande Deshpande insists that it is only a matter of time when Kalyani and Sumi, mothers of daughters only, would be accepted as begetters of sons.

The last section of the novel begins with the lines from *Katha Upanishad*: “...Of Nachiketa (pray) ask not about death”. The section also bears subtitle “The River”. The river of time flows spontaneously without any interruption. The literal death of Sumi and her father Shripati and Gopal’s metaphorical death remains a mystery. The motif, of the quest, of the journey for Nachiketa, Gopal, Sumi, Aru, Kalyani and the readers becomes a transformative experience.

Thus the above novels reveals the use of myth by the writers to transfer their aesthetic and emotional experiences to the reader. They further try to reconstruct the old myth and beliefs and transform it to suit the current context and age. Any myth placed in new context gives birth to a new myth. In the present context as life is changing with a rapid tableau, the decoding of the myth implies a deconstruction, reconstruction and extension of old myth in to a new one.

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- 32) Ibid, p-107
- 33) Ibid, p-13
- 34) Ibid, p-172
- 35) Ibid, p-167