

suffering. Reshma, Zulekha, Razia, Nasreen, Najma, Mariam, Farida, Zahida, Salma, Abeda, Sabiya, Mumtaz are some of the representatives of the powerless community who face the brunt of the powerful Hindu state. Githa Hariharan uses this technique of thick descriptions which forms a significant element in the recreating of history, deftly weaving political events into private lives. India Today describes the text so aptly, "the daily lives of individuals and those of history appear to blur and seep through time and memory till they... become all of a piece. It's a measure of Hariharan's tenacity as a writer that even while moving from the very same cut-rate story of communal hate and horror that has been played so many times in the media by social activists and documentary filmmakers, she is able to colour it with her own brand of fierce integrity that we are able to look at it again..." This integrity of literary representation makes it so evident that history is fugitive, that it is shifting and that there are other perspectives to it. History cannot be a 'single truth' as constructed or manipulated by those in power.

In reconstructing past lives through the medium of memory and documentary, Githa Hariharan brings alive the hoary situation of the terror torn Gujarat. Sara could imagine the worst when she listens to the women pouring out their experience with such frenzied emotions:

Now they are in the deep smoky pit of the story. It's not a pit with imaginary terrorists or imaginary Pakistans... It's a pit with closed windows and locked doors, then broken windows and doors. It's a pit where it only rains stones. It's a pit where everyone is running-women, children, men, everyone... It's a pit full of corpses, the maimed dead. It's a pit full of the maimed living. (157)

In narrating her own story each woman gains a kind of identity that creates a sense of 'self' in her. Here Sara and Nina almost play the role of ethnographers who would later interpret/retell/reproduce these narratives or incidents. Noor points out rightly in her article, that "women ... the only survivors of the carnage... recreate the horrors that people have gone through, horrors that have bruised their bodies and souls" ("Fugitive Histories as fiction" 2). Yasmin soon realizes that these women like her are only bodies whose souls are missing because they have experienced only rape, murder and death. Ironically, Hariharan conjures up the ghost of Gandhi who has to fight the mob that has just gangraped, murdered, burnt people and houses, but seems to remain staunch in his battle for freedom.

The third part is titled 'Funeral Rites', where Sara's own identity is created and affirmed:

Sara could acknowledge her great grandfather's choice, his faith in home, and say she is Muslim Indian. Or Indian Muslim, since great- grandfather Mulla chose Nehru's republic while merely inheriting the republic of God. Sara could acknowledge a choice made closer to her time and say she's her parents' daughter, she's secular. But given her last

name, this may now only mean she's a Muslim who knows how to live with other people, she won't take to jihad if she's angry or unhappy. (180)

The funeral rites of Asad is performed by Mala as she comes to terms with his death on the one hand and on the other we have Yasmin trying to bury the hoary past, her missing brother, and decides to move forward, out of the confined territory to greener pastures to pursue education, to taste freedom. She foresees an optimistic end to her troubles from her political and historical past which she symbolically decides to bury. It is ironical however that the whole event has happened in Gujarat, Ahmedabad, and the place where Gandhi's ashram is founded. People like Asad are in the mainstream while Akbar still a minority, unaccepted. Asad's own son Samar (Sara's brother) chooses Islamic fundamentalism for he strongly believes that there's no room for him as a Muslim, "whatever I am, whatever I believe and however I live, I am an M. Samar too is just another Muslim, a potential terrorist" (206). While women like Sara and Yasmin are positive and work towards rebuilding their lives, men like Samar lose faith in the idea of nationhood and democracy. Therefore, the nation/ state is being rejected and questioned for all that it stands, though it professes to be a secular state, which speaks for its failure as a system in the postcolonial canvas.

The text thus speaks at different levels of representation of the personal lives of Mala, Asad, Yasmin and Sara, on the one hand, and the political, historical, social and the cultural on the other. Hariharan represents a highly polarized world in spite of its proclaimed multicultural, multilingual and multi-religious space. She concedes that 2002 was the culmination of this polarization. In her re-reading/ reconstructing of the past Githa Hariharan has certainly conceived of a literary text that is "situated within the institutions, social practices, and discourses that constitute the overall culture of a particular time and place, and with which the literary text interacts as both a product and a producer of cultural energies and codes" (Abrams 183). In reading *Fugitive Histories* in the light of the new historicist perspective not only serves to grapple with the reality of the subcontinent but at the same time it also brings to the fore the literary astuteness of the writer to handle such a subject matter that has been deeply thought out and subtly represented.

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Mamta Kalia's *Tribute To Papa*: An Exposition of Contemporary Man's Anguished Consciousness

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Abstract

In *Tribute to Papa* Mamta Kalia explores the war between tradition and modernity, and depravity of human relationships where the spiritual theme persists, resurfacing every now and then. The 'spiritual theme' is the most important for it is the universal currency of literature when things are falling apart, when wealth and technological gadgetry have made the lives of a few comfortable, even luxurious, but not happy, while mankind in general wallows in misery and the world as a whole seems to be threatened by some sort of disorder or the other. Through the poem Mamta Kalia states that moral and spiritual progress is even more important than materialistic progress. The poem is an exposition of contemporary man's psyche, it provides a useful dialogue on spiritualism and materialism; modernism verses tradition. The poem delves deep into human psyche, particularly into a disturbed and materially possessed psyche.

Keywords: spiritual predicament of modern man, dialogue on materialistic consumption, modernism verses tradition, contemporary man's psyche.

Mamta Kalia, a bilingual poet, writes both in Hindi and English and has won six awards for her writing. Her own attitude about man can be seen in her *Tribute to Papa* and other poems (1970), where the poet sarcastically craves for the upliftment of the human lot in the modern world. In *Tribute to Papa* she explores the war between tradition and modernity, and depravity of human relationships where the spiritual theme persists, resurfacing every now and then. The 'spiritual theme' is the most important for it is the universal currency of literature when things are falling apart, when wealth and technological gadgetry have made the lives of a few comfortable, even luxurious, but not happy, while mankind in general wallows in misery and the world as a whole seems to be threatened by some sort of disorder or the other. Through the poem Mamta Kalia states that moral and spiritual progress is even more important than materialistic progress. Her experiences and observations as a modern woman surface in her poem. The subjects, situations and aspirations which she talks about in the poem seem ordinary, commonplace and familiar, however, the simple and familiar lead to serious reflections and suggestions. Modern poetry pre-occupies itself with the search for human values since people are fast losing their identity. T.S. Eliot's cry in *The Waste Land* is a cry for the restoration of