

MATERNAL AUTHORITY AND PATRIARCHY: INSIGHTS FROM SHASHI DESHPANDE'S THE DARK HOLDS NO TERRORS AND GITHA HARIHARAN'S THE THOUSAND FACES OF NIGHT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the transmission of patriarchal values across generations, with a focus on the role of maternal authority in Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*. The study shows how a mother can take on the role of a father, mixing caring duties with upholding traditional societal expectations. These maternal figures, influenced by their own experiences with patriarchy, play a crucial role in maintaining gendered expectations, which affects their daughters' identities and independence. The analysis highlights the two sides of motherhood, showing how mothers can be both nurturing and controlling, which can lead to emotional distance as they focus on societal expectations and obedience. This paper looks into these dynamics and highlights how important it is to rethink maternal roles outside of patriarchal frameworks, creating opportunities for emotional connection and empowerment. This study adds to discussions about feminism by highlighting the complex aspects of motherhood in a patriarchal society.

Keywords: Patriarchy, Maternal Authority, Gendered Expectations, Surrogate Father, Motherhood, Autonomy

1. INTRODUCTION

For women in patriarchal cultures, motherhood has been depicted as heroic character, caring for own family and being moral. Yet, beneath this glorification lies a deeper and more complex function: how motherhood functions as a tool to regulate women's sexuality and to maintain masculine power relations. It is a common finding that mothers are often pressured into having both the caretaking and disciplinary roles which are typically the preserve of fathers. That is why in many performances the role of a mother is constructed as a surrogate father, who is supposed to reproduce the cultural norms and values. Primary, this paper aims to explore the meaning of a woman as a surrogate father in the patriarchal society: how it forms a daughter's identity and sustains the cycle of patriarchal values. This study explores the relationship between mothers and daughters through an analysis of Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*, examining how these dynamics contribute to the pressures and agency

in the construction of female subjectivity (Singh et al., 2000, Abraham). In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Shashi Deshpande effectively portrays Sarita's oppressive struggle with her mother, where the maternal figure symbolizes male dominance, despite being a woman herself. Sarita's mother enforces prudery femininity and patriarchy by submitting to society's expectation of a mother to junior over her daughter leaving a deep imprint of Self on the culinary student. Despite being a product of internalised patriarchy, this maternal behaviour puts a lot of pressure on Sarita to tow the systemic norm and be a suppression of self. The mother is also acting like a patriarch and asserting authoritative control over Sarita or else she directs her to act in ways that present the image of patriarchal expectations (Vijayasanthi, T., and Syed Shaw.2023).

Similarly, in Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night*, the sexuality of the protagonist, Devi, is deeply intertwined with her conflict with her mother. Devi's mother who is illiterate herself being a victim of patriarchal traditions becomes a subjugator of her own daughter cooks up stories regarding acceptable feminine behavior And, at the same time, teaches Devi how to swallow all the pain and injustices inflicted on her. Their conflicts always highlight the conflict of power and expectations her traditional take on the female characters goes against Devi's desire for liberation. It thus depicts how maternal authority is used to either subvert or uphold patriarchy, as seen by how Devi's selectivity, and the way she perceives things, is shaped by her mother's representation of intervening social values (Kelaiya et al., 2023).In both novels mothers are agents of authority and care-givers who either maintain or challenge traditional values. In all these narratives, mothers act as both nurturers and patriarchal substitutes and as such are strong shapers of their daughters' identities. These works analyze a cyclical process of the reestablishment of patriarchal discourses and reveal how maternal presence, be it direct or indirect, influences the daughters' attempts at gaining individuality and claiming a personal voice. Finally, the novels give the readers the key to regard the phenomenon of motherhood as the complex agent of stability and the potential contributor to the maintenance or overthrow of the principles of the patriarchal world order.

Introducing the phenomena of patriarchy as handed down from one generation to another becomes one of the important themes highlighted in the works of both Shashi Deshpande and Githa Hariharan as they explore family systems and their function in the reproduction of the social order. The two authors elaborate the roles of mothers; as caregivers and also as agents enforcing patriarchy on their daughters , shape their daughters' subjectivity and conceptions of agency..

In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Shashi Deshpande narrates the story of a woman grappling with social domination and the expectations of the male members of her family, ultimately striving to achieve her own independence. Key among them is mother figure who has different facets of the Saru: maternal nurture and domineering patriarchy. This duality puts the mother in the father figure roles of maintaining order and enforcing proper societal order within the home (Rich et al., 2021).

- **Mother as a Surrogate Father:** Saru's mother is a stern women who is oppressive to her daughter, sees Saru as inferior to the boy, and expects her to act lady like. Such portrayal is further revealing the role of maternal authority as an apparatus of patriarchy to configure Saru's subjectivity and interactions..
- **Impact on Daughters' Identities:** The strains of love and resentment that Saru feels towards her mother plainly illustrate the main themes of the work: personal liberty and cultural values of the family. Saru never even gets to create her own persona and this can largely be blamed on her mother; it is therefore evidence that even the female youths have not escaped the culture of internalized patriarchy (pp. 43 – 44).

In her book, *The Thousand Faces of Night*, Githa Hariharan presents the reader with three generations of women, each of whose characters portray patriarchal ideologies as received, negotiated and disobeyed. The social norms surrounding Devi, the protagonist are portrayed by her mother and grandmother with societal expected ascribed to them at times challenging and subverting.

- **Mother as a Surrogate Father:** When there are no strong male characters present in the women of Devi's family become strong caregiver figures who also impose patriarchy. Their actions, which many perform consequent on the ingestion of male and female gender roles and expectations, prove how integrated into the nuclear family these norms are.
- **Impact on Daughters' Identities:** Thus, the choice explores the struggle for independence with the inherited role of a woman customary for Indian society as well as the relationship between Devi and her mother. This is a kind

of study which captures that part of womanly personality shaped under generations of patriarchal training in the attempt to establish the fiction of the feminine 'I' (Hariharan,1992).

The women authors Deshpande and Hariharan also explore the complex ways in which mothers either perpetuate or resist patriarchal systems. From what the narrators say and do, they are able to present how misogynistic power dynamics is maintained within homes. These stories force the reader into asking rather complex questions about maternal agency and the imprint on identity in societies that revolve around patriarchy.

2. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* portrays the complex interfamily dynamics and the social pressures of Indian culture, particularly those periods often overlooked in history, through the character of Saru and her relationship with her mother. The mother stands for internalized patriarchy becoming an authoritarian and emotionally unavailable figure and owning much power within the realms of household. Her passive husband turns a blind eye to their problems while Saru's mother takes the domineering role characteristic to fathers. This double-edged responsibility suggesting the figure is at once a caregiver and punitive entity, gives the odd combination of both care and authority. Her choice of social status and conformity to emotions not only deepens Saru's loneliness but also makes him rebel. Saru said that they all realized that 'My mother had been the arbiter of our lives.' He had left everything to her, my father was an old man and they had this mutual understanding.

On the subject of gender roles, while Saru is a female character herself, her mother tries to dominate and force her to fit the role defined by gendered male norms, remove the subject's agency. In this way she maintains the traditions that actually keep women becoming oppressive to themselves within the family by policing other women's sexuality. This enforcement militates to the fact that women have a contradictory position as the receivers of oppression by other women and the enforcers of oppression against other women. Lack of emotional attachment and feelings of neglect Saru encounters contribute to the basis of a lifetime of seeking personal independence and value. It also affects not only personal relationships, but also further shows the psychological effects of maternal emotional abuse on the formation of a girl's self-identity. The story of Saru is representative of woman's fight for freedom from the patriarchal society and from the internalised mother figures.

Table of Themes and Implications

Theme	Description	Key Implication	Example/Quote
Mother as Surrogate Father	The mother takes on a commanding role, enforcing standards usually maintained by a father figure.	Shows how women adopt patriarchal values, which makes family hierarchy stronger.	"My mother had been the arbiter of all our lives. My father had left everything to her."
Patriarchal Norm Enforcement	The mother imposes gender roles and societal expectations, restricting Saru's freedom.	It shows how women can play a role in supporting patriarchy, continuing the cycle of oppression at home.	Saru's mother disapproves of her choice to become a doctor, calling it unsuitable for a girl.
Emotional Neglect and Conflict	The mom's lack of emotional connection makes things tough between her and Saru.	Shows how a mother's criticism and rejection can really affect a daughter's self-esteem.	Saru feels ignored and unloved, especially after her brother Dhruva's death, furthering her isolation.

Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* emphasizes the significant influence of family relationships, especially the role of mothers, in shaping personal identities. The character of Saru's mother in the novel highlights how women can internalize and continue to uphold patriarchal norms. Saru's journey shows the challenges women face when trying to balance their own desires with what society expects of them, as they seek freedom from both outside pressures and their own internalized struggles (Deshpande, 2000).

Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* delves into the intricate interplay of cultural traditions, family relationships, and the transmission of patriarchal values across generations. Sita's character shows how women uphold societal norms, emphasizing the conflict between tradition and personal identity. Sita's strong personality and dedication to traditional values push her daughter, Devi, to meet the expectations of a patriarchal society. Sita believes that following cultural norms is really important; she sees them as crucial for a woman's identity and how society accepts her. She states, "A girl is born to leave her father's house for her husband's." A married girl has to put in the effort to make her

marriage successful. This highlights the pressure that society puts on women to focus on marriage and family responsibilities instead of their own goals.

Devi's journey is really about her fight to gain independence while dealing with all these expectations. Sita's strict adherence to traditional gender roles leads to internal struggles for Devi, who is trying to balance her wish for independence with the pressure of cultural expectations. The focus on reputation and following rules instead of building emotional bonds creates tension between the mother and daughter, resulting in a lack of emotional closeness as they prioritize societal expectations. In this mother-daughter relationship, Hariharan shows the bigger issues women deal with when trying to balance their own dreams with the strong cultural values that define their roles.

Themes and Implications

Theme	Description	Key Implication	Example/Quote
Mother as Enforcer of Patriarchal Norms	Sita follows traditional gender roles, putting societal expectations before her own desires.	Shows how patriarchal values are passed down through generations and how women play a part in continuing these norms.	"A girl is born to leave her father's house for her husband's. And a married girl must make her marriage work."
Impact on Devi's Autonomy	Devi's struggle shows the conflict between what people want for themselves and what society expects from them.	Emphasizes the mental strain of adhering to strict cultural expectations and the impact on emotional closeness in mother-daughter dynamics.	Devi's internal conflict arises from her desire for independence versus her mother's insistence on traditional roles.
Sacrifice of Emotional Connection	The relationship focuses more on following rules and maintaining a good image rather than building real emotional connections.	Shows how societal pressures can cause tension in family relationships and feelings of emotional isolation.	The distance between Devi and Sita grows as Devi seeks her own identity while feeling alienated by her mother's expectations.

In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, Hariharan examines the transmission of patriarchal ideologies through the relationship between mother and daughter. Sita's role as a keeper of cultural norms shows how societal expectations often overshadow emotional connections, leading to a cycle of conformity and sacrifice. Devi's journey highlights the challenge of seeking independence within deeply rooted traditions, providing a thoughtful critique of the lasting impact of patriarchy on women's lives (Hariharan.1992, Brahma.2023)

Comparative Insights on Maternal Roles in Deshpande and Hariharan's Works

Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and Githa Hariharan's *The Thousand Faces of Night* offer compelling perspectives on how mothers play a role in perpetuating patriarchal values, especially through their relationships with their daughters. Even though both mothers act as enforcers of societal norms, the way they influence their daughters and how those daughters respond to this authority varies a lot. The way maternal roles are shown in both novels really emphasizes the emotional and psychological toll of being in a patriarchal society, especially when it comes to mother-daughter relationships. The mothers in both novels show emotional distance, which comes from their acceptance of patriarchal norms that they've internalised. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru's mother takes a strict and emotionally distant approach, focusing more on societal reputation and obedience than on nurturing her child. Saru's feelings of isolation are clearly shown when she states, "My mother had been the arbiter of all our lives." "My father had left everything to her" (Deshpande 24). In *The Thousand Faces of Night*, Sita also reinforces traditional gender roles by telling her daughter Devi to focus on marriage and family instead of her own personal happiness. Sita's belief that "A girl is born to leave her father's house for her husband's" (Hariharan 56) shows how much she follows societal expectations, leading Devi to hide her own wishes for independence. Even though there are these similarities, Saru and Devi react to their mothers' strictness in different ways. Saru's rebellion comes from feeling emotionally neglected and being controlled too much by her mom. Saru wants to be independent because her mom isn't very emotionally supportive. Devi's resistance comes from the clash between what her mom expects culturally and what she really wants for herself. Devi's internal conflict shows how tough it can be to find a balance between tradition and being true to oneself, as she tries to express her identity while dealing with her mother's cultural expectations.

Deshpande and Hariharan's novels look into the complicated dynamics of mother-daughter relationships. They highlight how maternal figures, even when they are affected by patriarchal expectations, often end up passing those same norms onto their families. The emotional gap in both relationships highlights the mental strain of sticking to traditional gender roles. Nayak points out that Deshpande's portrayal of Saru illustrates a wider fight for women's independence

and self-identity (Nayak, 2011), whereas Pandey emphasizes Sita's character as a symbol of the perfect wife and mother, whose behavior is influenced by societal expectations (Bala et al., 2016).

Comparative Table: Maternal Roles and Daughter Responses

Aspect	Shashi Deshpande: <i>The Dark Holds No Terrors</i>	Githa Hariharan: <i>The Thousand Faces of Night</i>
Mother's Role	The mother takes on a strict role, enforcing societal rules without much emotional warmth or support.	Sita, the mother, upholds traditional gender roles, highlighting that a woman's main responsibility is marriage and family.
Emotional Distance	Saru's mom keeps her feelings at a distance, focusing more on how things look and making sure Saru follows the rules, which makes Saru feel really alone emotionally.	Sita's emotional detachment comes from her strict following of cultural norms, which puts Devi in a position where she has to deal with the conflict between her own desires and what society expects of her..
Enforcement of Patriarchal Norms	Saru's mom really emphasizes traditional values, stressing the importance of being obedient and maintaining the family's reputation.	Sita upholds the traditional expectations placed on women, emphasizing the belief that a woman's value is linked to her marriage and her position within the family.
Daughter's Response	Saru pushes back against her mom's control by trying to gain her own freedom and showing that she can stand on her own.	Devi faces challenges with cultural expectations as she tries to find a balance between tradition and her own independence..
Key Conflict	Saru's rebellion comes from feeling emotionally neglected and wanting to escape the limits set by a patriarchal society.	Devi struggles internally because she feels torn between fitting in with her culture and wanting to make her own choices..
Psychological Impact	Saru's feelings of being emotionally distant and his acts of rebellion show the mental toll that comes from a mother being emotionally unavailable.	Devi's challenge with her mom's expectations highlights the mental pressure of trying to fit into cultural standards while wanting to grow as an individual.

Both *The Dark Holds No Terrors* and *The Thousand Faces of Night* look at how mothers play a part in passing down and upholding patriarchal norms, but they approach this topic through the unique experiences of Saru and Devi. Both mothers have societal expectations for their daughters, but their emotional distance and strict methods impact their daughters in different ways. Saru's rebellion comes from feeling emotionally neglected by her mom, while Devi's pushback is fueled by the clash between tradition and her own dreams. These novels really highlight how patriarchal ideas get passed down through generations and how that affects women's independence and sense of self.

3. CONCLUSION

The way patriarchy is passed down through mothers is a key idea in the writings of Shashi Deshpande and Githa Hariharan. In these works, mothers take on the role of father figures, upholding traditional values and influencing their daughters' identities within strict gender roles. These maternal figures, while often affected by patriarchal norms, continue to support these ideas by emphasizing obedience and conformity instead of emotional connection and personal independence. This situation highlights the challenges of being a mother in a patriarchal society, where a mother's authority can sometimes limit her daughter's personal development and ability to express herself. To tackle these limitations, it's important to rethink maternal roles, shifting away from patriarchal systems to foster more supportive and empowering relationships that promote emotional closeness and personal freedom.

Future research might look into how mothers are adapting their roles in today's non-patriarchal settings, where old gender norms aren't as strong. In these societies, maternal figures can play important roles, helping to support, encourage independence, and promote personal growth for their daughters, instead of just upholding old patriarchal values. This change in how mothers interact gives us a chance to look at how they can be catalysts for change, supporting gender equality and emotional health. Moreover, more research could explore the intersectionality of motherhood, looking at how maternal roles and the passing down of patriarchal values are affected by aspects like race, class, and ethnicity. This research looks at the different experiences of mothers from various cultural and social backgrounds, which helps us understand how motherhood works in relation to society. This approach would help us understand the different challenges and strategies that mothers use to manage their personal and societal roles, leading to a better understanding of the complexities of motherhood and how it affects daughters from various backgrounds.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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