

**Stereotype Indian Women In Githa Hariharan's *The Ghosts Of Vasu Master***

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**Abstract :**

GithaHariharan has a vast creative output to her credit. She is a severe and sensitive writer. Being a conscious person, she has observed human life, social structures, and grown along with the changing paradigms. *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* focuses on how patriarchy attributing stereotype images of women. Vasu Master's mother Lakshmi and his wife Mangala, exhibit the stereotype of traditional Indian women. Mangala is a perfect example of this stereotype of Indian women. As a wife and mother, she has delicate feminine sensibility and modesty. Patriarchal society considers the superstitious nature of Mangala as one of the significant features of the Indian stereotype. Mangala represents thousands of other Indian homemakers who are the source of production, but not the owner of the product.

**Keywords:** Patriarchy, Traditional, Social Structures, Paradigms.

The success of any literary work depends on how the author selects the theme and crafts it in his or her work. GithaHariharan has been successful in this process because she has all the qualities of a creative writer. GithaHariharan's admirers specifically those in the west who are engrossed by the 'luminous resonance' of her images and her preoccupation with Indian culture, folklore and tradition, will not be disappointed in her second novel, *The Ghosts of Vasu Master*. The story is more substantial and thought-provoking. *The Ghosts of VasuMaster* begins by analyzing the psychological fallout retirement -the suffocating

emptiness, the feeling of displacement and the loss of the individuals' sense of purpose and his identity and then goes on to address many other issues. In her novels' she explores the power politics in some way or the other. *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* gains excellent critical attention. In this novel, Vasu Master' smother Lakshmi and his wife Mangala exhibit the stereotype of Indian women. They are based on social, cultural, and religious generalization.

The stereotype is something conforming to a fixed or general pattern and is always complicated and multi-layered. These standardize patterns mark mental picture held in common by society. It is defined as something repeated without variation. The characters exemplify the traditional Indian women, who care for her family duties, as a mother and follows all other norms of the society.

Patriarchy is a unique character of traditional Indian society, appearing continuously from the ancient to the modern period. Male domination not only makes women's life miserable but also disturbs their peace and harmony. In the novel, the main character, Vasu Master, is a product of patriarchy prevailing in traditional Indian society. The submissive position of all women characters in the story bears the recognized mark of the feminist movement.

Githa Hariharan's imagination and creative force can be observed in this novel. She has evolved a typical Indian English teacher, Vasu Master, and woven the entire study around the character of Vasu Master. The success of Githa Hariharan must be recorded both in the selection and development of plots.

Vasu Master, from P.G Boys' School, Elipettai, has recently retired from his job. According to him, retirement meant 'beginning something or ending something else.' But Vasu Master being no longer the schoolmaster, believes that he is 'already well into the middle of a situation.' The first half of his teaching career had come to an end, but he intends to begin the second half 'on a quieter but for a more ambitious scale than the first' (13). He decides to teach Mani, a slow learner, but he could not proceed with his old school tricks and his usual props. He has to devise new techniques, and in the process, he 'learns' as he 'teaches.'

After his exile from the classroom, he plans to expand the scribbles in his notebook into an essay called 'Four Decades in a classroom,' as a guide to younger teachers. In his 'chamber of retirement,' Vasu Master is beset by 'the ghostly twins'- dreams and memories. While dreams 'take a perverse kind of pleasure in distorting facts' (158), memories refer to

‘to exercise of memorization of facts’ (26). His recollections about past life indulge in his writings. It seems that GithaHariharan is also interested in the depiction of complex layers of his psyche. She used fantasy, fables and several imaginary characters. They are tales, anecdotes, and incidents related to Vasu Master’s life, which explores the stereotype of many women characters.

Traditional Indian women always give full devotions to their husbands and sacrifice for their husbands’ welfare. Mangala is Vasu Master’s devotional wife, who works for his family and husband. Mangala represents thousands of other Indian wives. It is a tragedy on the part of Mangala, although she gave Vasu Master two sons, Vishnu and Venu. Vasu Master reminds her more as a hazy memory than as a person. He remembers: “I always saw her in my mind against seashore in the background, the monotonous slosh, and the thud of waves against rock and sand drowning out all possibility of words” (41).

Even in his dreams, she ‘dressed in silence’ and offering him just a partial view. Her character maintains the traditional ‘aura of silence’ as a significant feature of the image of an Indian woman. Another essential fact about the man-woman relationship as husband and wife is depicted in the novel, as it is found in the traditional scene of Indian society. Mangala always remembers her childhood. These memories made her happy. She still shares her joys and worries with her childhood friend Jameela.

This incident connotes that after marriage, there is nothing in her life enjoyable and exciting; her life is filled with routine duties as a mother and wife. There is a sense of respect towards her husband, Vasu Master. So she cannot share with him. In the Indian tradition, the relationship between wife and husband is not like friends, but they maintain the male person as God and Worshipper.

The relationship depicted in *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* follows the traditional mode of thinking. To the memories of Vasu Master, it is reflected that though he is the well-educated teacher cannot accept his wife ‘other than himself’. Though Vasu Master is educated, yet he is highly influenced by the age-old traditions and customs in society. Vasu’s family structure seems to be patriarchal as the males rule the house. Thus the behavior of Vasu Master has been depicted effectively by, his relationship with his wife, Mangala and other female characters shows his secondary attitude too look at women. The male domination is an age-old structure that is reshaped by GithaHariharan through the nature of

Vasu Master and the story is webbed around him with patriarchy, man-domain in married life, and traditions.

*The Ghosts of Vasu Masters* a narration that reflects the patriarchal system and the rebellion of women in this system. The pain of feminist aspiration is also pointed out slowly in this novel by the author in an indirect manner. Since time immemorial woman has been the victim of the rule, domination and oppression, but they are treated like beasts of burden and objects of pleasure.

In the male-dominated society, a female child is brought up under the strict control of her parents after that she is given to a new master, her husband, who will regulate and shape her for the rest of her life. Therefore she is an object of sale right from her childhood. She rarely gets any comfort and encouragement to develop her independent, individual self. Patriarchy is the character of a social system wherein it shows men's domination, by oppressing and exploiting women. Githa Hariharan has delineated this type of situation in most of her novels. '*The Ghosts of Vasu Master*' is not an exception to this. Githa Hariharan focuses on the gender bias of society through the depiction of Vasu's mother. She strengthens the claim of the feminist movement that women are social constructs.

Vasu Master's father hails from a patriarchal society. He is firm and uncompromising, and he possesses the book called 'Panchagam,' a kind of religious book which would guide him in all possible matters. It is a Hindu calendar, which follows traditional units of Hindu timekeeping and presents important dates and their calculations in a tabulated form. Vasu himself describes the significance of this scripture. This emphasizes the gender-biased rationale of society. Vasu further observes that a panchagam is fundamental to life as oxygen. This means that religion and astronomy aid the subordination of women by injecting male-centric doctrines.

Vasu Master, his father, and his grandfather are 'self-contained' persons. They wish their wives should follow their footprints. Mangala and Vasu Master's mother, Lakshmi is too weak to rebel against their husbands, but Vasu Master's grandmother was a rebellious woman. Vasu Master says about his mother: "She would have been timid, worrying little thing nagging pestering like a high-pitched mosquito. She did not learn how to bite though" (32).

Vasu Master's mother died when he was a little boy. He remembered her as he says, 'irretrievably mixed' with what he had heard. Vasu Master was surprised that his mother did not have a name for almost a year. His mother's parents did not want to spend money on a naming ceremony for begetting another daughter, because they also feared that people would laugh at them for not producing a son. In Indian society, the girl child is called Lakshmi, and that is how she got the name Lakshmi.

But to the end of her life, Lakshmi could never get over her inferiority complex. This occurrence represents the pitiful condition of Indian women and reveals her feature of tolerance. Due to all these factors, Vasu Master's mother becomes feeble and anxious by nature. Vasu Master recalls: 'Her ambitious was on a lower scale- escaping her husband's unpredictable explosions of temper, surviving her mother-in-law's jealous rule of the household, and above all keeping the house and everyone in it, clean, pure, and unpolluted.'

Vasu Master's mother, Lakshmi, had literally melted away into the shadows of a loud, tyrannical household. She accepted everything in a submissive and humble manner. In the *ghosts of Vasu Master*, these characters are necessary to recognize the confined space of Indian women in the socio-cultural hierarchy. They try to identify themselves as valuable and social individuals. To live life under the dominance of man's order is the general feature of women stereotype. This formulation of stereotype is helpful in that and also enables us to examine and identify Mangala and Lakshmi as stereotypes of traditional Indian women.

In eastern societies, this male domination continues as a legacy of the rigid social system. *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* truly exemplifies this stance. It is clear that 'when women champion their cause, men blame it on patriarchy.' Githa Hariharan's work mirrors such elements interestingly. The big trouble for women is the preservation and expression of their identity. Githa Hariharan has also incorporated this identity crisis in her novels. In *The Ghosts of Vasu Master*, she has tried to reveal this process conclusively. In Indian society, patriarchy prevailed right from the Homeric age and is rooted in a cultural system. Women's progress is hindered by the patriarchal attitude of men.

The relationship between the characters is excellently explained in the novel and how the man-woman link is treated is revealed in the story. The woman is considered as a secondary person and is exploited in the system. These feelings and sufferings are described

on a balanced ground. Githa Hariharan style and technique of narration are gentle, touchy, and equally realistic.

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