

Title: *The Shape of Family* by Shilpi Somaya Gowda

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Why this Book?

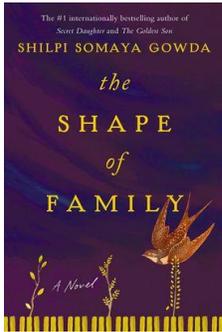
Inevitably, every family will experience tragedy at some point. *The Shape of Family* tells the story of a family that experiences a traumatic event, grows apart as a result of that event and tracks their journey as they re-shape their lives in an attempt to move forward. This thought provoking novel told from each family member's perspective is an emotional journey that will spark discussions about life, loss, marriage, culture, the American Dream and personal resilience. If you enjoyed Shilpi Somaya Gowda's *The Secret Daughter* or *The Golden Son*, you will surely enjoy this book too!

About the Author

Shilpi Somaya Gowda was born and raised in Toronto, Canada. In college, she spent a summer as a volunteer in an Indian orphanage, which seeded the idea for her first novel, *Secret Daughter*, published in 2010. It was a New York Times and #1 international bestseller, and was translated into over 30 languages. Her second novel, *The Golden Son*, was published in 2015-16 around the world, was a #1 international bestseller, a Target Book Club Pick, a Costco Buyer's Pick, and was awarded the French literary prize, Prix des Lyceens Folio. Her third novel, *The Shape of Family*, was recently published in 2019-20. It was on the Canadian national bestseller list for several months, the debuted at #2 on the LA Times bestseller list.

Shilpi holds an MBA from Stanford University and a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has served on the Advisory Board of the Children's Defense Fund, and is a Patron of Childhaven International, the organization for which she volunteered in India. She lives in California with her husband and children.

About the Book



The Olander family embodies the modern American Dream in a globalized world. Jaya, the cultured daughter of an Indian diplomat and Keith, an ambitious banker from middle-class Philadelphia, meet in a London pub in 1988 and make a life together in suburban California. Their strong marriage is built on shared beliefs and love for their two children: headstrong teenager Karina and young son Prem, the light of their home.

But love and prosperity cannot protect them from sudden, unspeakable tragedy, and the family's foundation cracks as each member struggles to seek a way forward. Jaya finds solace in spirituality, Keith wagers on his high-powered career and Karina focuses on her future and independence while Prem watches helplessly as his once close-knit family drifts apart.

When Karina heads off to college for a fresh start, her search for identity and belonging leads her down a dark path, forcing her and her family to reckon with the past, the secrets they've held and the weight of their choices. *The Shape of Family* is an intimate portrayal of four individuals as they grapple with what it means to be a family and how to move from a painful past into a hopeful future. It is a profoundly moving exploration of the ways we all seek belonging—in our families, our communities and within ourselves. (Excerpted from the publisher)

Author Interview

Shilpi Somaya Gowda is interviewed about *The Shape of Family* on The Morning Show. [Watch interview \(5:06\)](#)

Book Reviews

"A deeply involving story of a family falling apart, *The Shape of Family* rings so true." – Emma Donoghue, author of *Room*

“A moving exploration of how loss can change the contours of life. Gowda deftly examines the forces that can make and remake a family in this engrossing page turner of a novel.” – Thrity Umrigar, author of *The Secrets Between Us*

“Shilpi Somaya Gowda has painted an unforgettable portrait of a family’s loss, longing, and reconstruction. Haunting and beautiful, *The Shape of Family* takes hold of you from the first page and does not let go as it explores – in the distinct and rich voices of each family member – the forces that separate and the ties that unite a mother, father, daughter and son.” – Lawrence Hill, author of *The Book of Negroes*

“Rendered with compassion, this is a compelling testament to a family’s struggle to find solace.” – *Booklist*

“Gowda traces the fallout lines with compassion and a keen eye for the lies we tell ourselves to avoid facing our own demons...A deft, patient portrait of grief.” – *Kirkus Reviews*

Get the Book

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Discussion Questions

For discussion tips & tech support: [How to Start Your Own Online Book Club](#)

1. What feelings did this book evoke for you?
2. What did you think about the author’s decision to include Prem’s point of view directly following his death and periodically throughout the rest of the story? Did you like her use of each family member’s perspective?
3. What did you think of the unique ways in which each family member tries to move forward – Jaya through spirituality, Keith through work and Karina through school

and finding her independence? Do you think their unique ways of moving forward help to eventually bring them back together?

4. What was your initial reaction to Karina moving to the compound? Were you immediately concerned that it would go south or was there a point in which you did?
5. Did the characters seem believable to you? Did they remind you of anyone?
6. What scene has stuck with you the most?
7. How did you feel about the ending? What did you like, what did you not like, and what do you wish had been different?
8. Are there lingering questions from the book you're still thinking about?

Read-alikes

- [*Secret Lives of Mothers & Daughters*](#) by Anita Kushwaha
- [*Everything I Never Told You*](#) by Celeste Ng
- [*Imagine Me Gone*](#) by Adam Haslett
- [*Songs Without Words*](#) by Ann Packer
- [*The Golden Son*](#) by Shilpi Somaya Gowda