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Sincerely,
The editors,
M'other'hood: Challenges and Transcending Dimensions.

M 'OTHER' HOOD:

CHALLENGES AND TRANSCENDING DIMENSIONS



EDITED BY:

Dr. Sajmina Akhtar
Daisy Priya Gogoi



Women Cell
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A collection of research papers/articles on “M’other’hood: Challenges and Transcending Dimensions”, edited by Dr. Sajmina Akhtar and Daisy Priya Gogoi, and published by the Women Cell of Khowang College.

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ISBN: 978-81-973466-3-7

Month and Year of Publication: **May, 2024**

Published by : **Women Cell, Khowang College in collaboration with Publication Cell, Khowang College**

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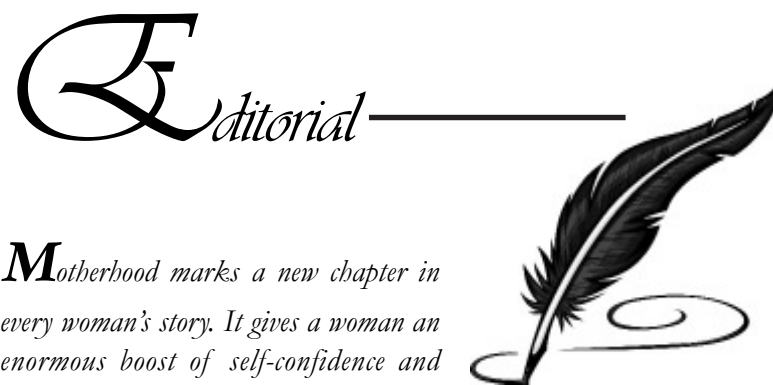
Librarian, Khowang College

Price : Rs. 500/-

Layout and Cover Design: Daisy Priya Gogoi

Printed at: Kareng Offset Press, Moranhat

Email: karengoffset@gmail.com



Motherhood marks a new chapter in every woman's story. It gives a woman an enormous boost of self-confidence and strength in herself. There is a new sense of purpose and meaning in her life. She discovers a love and passion that she has never experienced before! However, society doesn't make it easy for a woman to maintain her own identity and that of a mother. Instead, it often reduces her to just as a birth giver. She becomes an 'other' that is meant to produce babies and remain confined to care giving to the child. While it is true that the essence of being a complete woman is being a mother, it does not imply that she has to lose her individuality, her freedom. She becomes a mother at the expense of her individual identity as a woman. She is more than just the social tag that society attaches to her. They are powerful, they are magicians and have the power to change perceptions. Yet, although they have the power to inspire and empower, they have to give up their individuality because of the society. With the changing times, however, women have become bolder and more empowered. Women and especially mothers earlier confined to the domestic walls have challenged the barriers laid by the patriarchal society on them and transgressed those boundaries. The psychology of women and the perception of motherhood has undergone tremendous changes throughout various timelines. Furthermore, motherhood also contributes to nation-building as she is equally responsible for raising a responsible citizen of a country. This ISBN Book, thus, aims to highlight the plights, responsibilities, transgressions and trends in the concept of motherhood by analysing it from different fields of study.

barrenness, mother daughter relationship. Simone De Beauvoir in a chapter *The Mother* writes, “pregnancy and motherhood are experienced in very different ways depending on whether they take place in revolt, resignation, satisfaction or enthusiasm” (546). Since the childhood women are told about the greatness of motherhood but according to her the child is no longer “a priceless treasure” and giving birth is no longer “a sacred function.” This proliferation becomes “contingent and inopportune and once again it is again one of the femininity’s defects.” (Beauvoir 545). Motherhood is an important stage of a woman’s life. It is undoubtedly a joyous experience for most of the women. It gives women a respectable place in the family as well as in the society. According to Jasbir Jain, motherhood is “egocentric; it gives a sense of power, power that women may not necessarily wield in the wider, social world. The wish to control the child is camouflaged as concern and manifested as caring, but it is also a fulfillment for the ego.” (Jain 60) Shashi Deshpande has treated the theme of motherhood in many of her novels. In an interview with Joel Kuortti, she said:

“I write about motherhood and I don’t write about it in a sentimental way because motherhood is very difficult. There are all shades. There could be very good bonding, there could be hostility. There are different variations. So I write about motherhood with all these different shades.” (Kuortti 34)

Different women characters experience motherhood differently. In Shashi Deshpande’s *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru feels outraged at the indignity of motherhood. Her posture, her grunts, her cries and the pain that makes an animal out of her makes her question “was this the prelude to motherhood?” (Deshpande 162) In *That Long Silence* when Jaya hears the cry of his new born baby, she experiences a sense of foreboding. When

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DIFFERENT SHADES OF MOTHERHOOD IN SHASHI DESHPANDE'S NOVELS

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ABSTRACT

*The novels of Shashi Deshpande cover a variety of themes such as female bonding, marital discord, man-woman relationship, search for identity, male hegemony etc. The present research looks into the complexities, mental and emotional struggles, discomfort and pain that women characters face during their journey towards motherhood. Deshpande has portrayed various shades of motherhood in her novels. Different women characters perceive motherhood differently. Mother-daughter relationship is one of the focal points in her novels. For some mothers, their daughters become a medium of fulfilling their unfulfilled desires and dreams. Some traditional mothers try to fit their daughters into the conventional system because of their insecurities but daughters like Mira and Kalpana in *The Binding Vine* and Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* constantly rebel against the patriarchal belief system and their mothers and try to make their voices heard. Deshpande's novels also deal with the problem of infertility and address the stigma of barren women who fail to embrace motherhood. An attempt has been made to hereexamine all these issues related with motherhood in detail.*

Keywords: Motherhood, patriarchy, conventional, traditional, infertility.

ARTICLE

This research paper deals with many mother figures portrayed in some selected novels of Shashi Deshpande and looks into the various aspects of motherhood like pregnancy, childbirth,

for everyone around her. Therefore her daughter tries to escape from her mother and returns to India. In the same novel, Vanna is a working woman and therefore sometimes she finds it hard to manage her home and her work. Her daughter Mandira has grudges against her mother. She doesn't like as her mother leaves them to the care of maidservant Hirabai. Therefore, she once tells Urmi that she will never leave her children alone. She feels envious of her younger sister Pallavi when her mother cuddles her. Mandira's behavior sometimes hurts Vanna. Once she asks Urmi "Am I such a terrible mother?" (Deshpande 74)

In Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru has to face this bitter reality when her brother Dhruva dies. Her mother asks her, "Why didn't you die? Why are you alive and he dead?" (Deshpande 34) In *The Binding Vine* when Kalpana is raped, Sakutai asks Urmi, "Why does God give us daughters?" (Deshpande 60). Sakutai knows that life is not easy for a girl child. On the other hand, if a son is born, it is a moment of pride and celebration. Shashi Deshpande has highlighted this point in her novels *That Long Silence* and *A Matter of Time*. Nayana who works as a sweeper in Jaya's house longs so much for a male child. Her two sons died after birth and in spite of having two daughters alive, she feels the need to have a male child. Manorama constantly suffers from the guilt of not being able to give birth to a son. But when her daughter Kalyani gives birth to a son, there is a great rejoicing. The house throbs with guests "fragrant with flowers and gleaming with silverware" (Deshpande 151). When Premi gives birth to Nikhil, Goda sings a song full of joy. Women face this kind of discrimination at all the stages of their life. When Mira in Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine* gives her poems to a well-known poet Venu, he replies:

"Why do you need to write poetry? It is enough for a young woman like you to give birth to children. That is

Saru in *The Dark Holds No Terrors* goes through the all the pain before delivery, she asks herself- "was this the prelude to motherhood?" (Deshpande 76) But when she finds her baby crying, she asks the sister to get a baby. She puts "the inexperienced, greedy, seeking mouth to her nipple" and feels enormous satisfaction. Mira in *The Binding Vine* dies while giving birth to Kishore but during her pregnancy she writes the following lines in her diary: "Tiny fish swimming in the ocean of my womb my body thrills to you..." (Deshpande 136)

For some mothers, a daughter becomes the source of fulfilling their unfulfilled desires and ambitions. These mothers measure daughter's success as their own success and daughter's failure as their own failure. They want their daughter to lead a successful happy life that they couldn't live. But a daughter has her own plans and dreams. She wants to love her life according to her rules. In Shashi Deshpande's *The Binding Vine*, Sakutai once tells Urmi,

"We dream so much more for our daughters than we do for our sons. We want to give them the world we dreamt for ourselves. I wanted Kalpana to have all that I didn't." (Deshpande 124)

Sakutai is an anxious mother who constantly worries about her daughter. She advises her daughter not to overdress as she is afraid of male gaze. But Kalpana dwells in her own fanciful world and doesn't pay heed to what her mother says. Kalpana is portrayed as a carefree, bold and self-willed young girl who never cares for the society and lives according to her own wishes. She forgets that she lives in a society which imposes so many restrictions on women. She boldly defies those patriarchal attitudes by moving out with full confidence. One day her lustful uncle rapes her because she denies marrying him and her beauty becomes a curse for her. She is taken to a hospital where she

battles between life and death. Urmi is moved to see “deathly stillness” of her body. Her rape affects her ageing mother who gets completely shattered by this horrific incident. Kalpana’s aunt Salu commits suicide after she comes to know that her husband has raped Kalpana. Sakutai becomes hysterical when she comes to know about the rape of Kalpana.

Mira in *The Binding Vine* is also like Kalpana who fails to fit into her mother’s image and writes, “To make myself in your image was never the goal I sought.” (Deshpande 124) Mira’s mother, a traditional woman, advised Mira to submit herself to her husband and never to say ‘no’. But Mira cannot live her life as per the advice given by her mother. Similarly, Urmi’s mother Inni dreamt that her daughter would marry a rich man and she would lead an aristocratic life – “a pearls and chiffons sort of existence” but Urmi marries Kishore -a boy next door whose father eats paan, and whose mother is a school teacher.

Some mothers fail to give their daughters love and affection. In Shashi Deshpande’s *A Matter of Time*, the relationship of Manorama and Kalyani is full of bitterness. Kalyani always reminds Manorama of her failure to give birth to a son. Manorama dreams that her daughter will be beautiful and accomplished and will make a brilliant marriage. Manorama will show the world that she as a mother has triumphed. But Kalyani returns home and fails to do what her mother has aspired and dreamt for her. Kalyani is held responsible for the death of her father. The rift between Manorama and Kalyani never heals and Manorama dies unforgiving. Similarly in *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, the relationship of Saru and her mother Kamala is a strained one. Saru is blamed constantly for the death of her brother Dhruva. Her mother tries to interfere in her life but Saru takes her own decisions. Her profession as a doctor and her marriage with Mahesh are her own choices. Saru once refers to her mother and tells Madhav, “I don’t have any good memories of my mother. I want nothing of

her.” (Deshpande 59) Once when she attends the ceremony of her pregnant friend, she sees that her friend’s mother has done all the preparations. Her friend is given the gifts of sari and blouse along with coconut, paan supari and grains of rice. After seeing all these things and the love between her friend and her mother, Saru’s eyes are full of tears. She feels, “I never had this.” One of the readers shared her personal experience with Shashi Deshpande and wrote to her commenting on this bitter mother –daughter relationship:

“I’m glad you didn’t make it come good in the end.’ It doesn’t happen like that, you carry that bad relationship most of your life. You can’t get rid of bitterness, the bitterness remains.” (Kuortti 57)

Jaya in *That Long Silence* also feels that she didn’t get her mother’s love when she really needed it. She expresses her discontentment in the following words,

“When I had passionately wanted her love, she had ignored me and concentrated on her sons...When I got married, she had been unperturbed, there had been not even a pretence of tears when I had left home.” (Deshpande 106)

Even Kusum becomes the victim of gender discrimination at her parental home. Her brother Dilip is given attention and love while Kusum fails to get that from her parents. Her mother instead of giving her babies “the softness of her lap” gives them “the hardness of shins.” Priti’s mother in Shashi Deshpande’s *The Binding Vine* makes life at home almost impossible for her adolescent daughter. She becomes alcoholic and manic depressive. Once when she is on her visit to India, she runs over a number of people sleeping on the pavement. This incident affects her a lot and since then she makes life miserable

MOTHER AND 'MOTHER' EARTH: THE PROBLEMATIC OF ENGENDERING THE EARTH

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ABSTRACT

The matriarch "mother" is conferred upon the land for the many similar reasons in which the land resembles a mother; in terms of their nature and in terms of the way both are dominated by a man. Many feminists and ecofeminists identify the association between woman and nature a bane. The conventional idea behind the analogy rests on nurturing qualities a mother extends and at the same time the passiveness of nature making both subject to exploit thus stripping the woman of her own autonomous self. This paper will look into how in the patriarchal culture, the notion of mother and nature comes to be situated as since the spectrum of this association can never be equally shared by all women alike. The question of extending caregiving qualities is also not restricted to women and mother alone. Men and fathers can and also possess the caregiver trait. Therefore, when the connection between woman and nature is encouraged further, it will only widen the already wide gap between man and nature, leaving the entire responsibility to women. The paper will thus look into the problematic space resulting out of engendering of earth. Supplementing the alternatives provided by ecofeminists, this paper would seek to find how redefining the language in terms of addressing both women and nature can also provide a preferable alternative.

Keywords: *woman-nature connection, mother, mother earth, ecofeminism, patriarchy*

your poetry. Leave your poetry to us men." (Deshpande 127)

Women have to face interference of their family members in the choice of their career or a marriage. In Shashi Deshpande's *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Saru has to face opposition of her mother when she decides to study medicine. Her mother strictly tells her that her father can either spend money on her education or her marriage. She even suggests her to join B.Sc. course so that they can get her married early and their responsibility will be over. At that time Saru gets shocked, ponders over her mother's words and feels, "Is that all I am, a responsibility? (Deshpande 144) The indifferent treatment given to her by her mother and the physical and psychological torment given to her by her husband leave deep scars on her mind. In the silence, she contemplates about her past. Unlike a normal child, Saru's childhood and adolescent years are full of bitterness. Since childhood her mother plants the seeds of negativity in her mind. Saru is told by her mother, "It rained heavily the day you were born. It was terrible." (Deshpande 169) This statement makes Saru feel that it was her birth that was terrible and not the rains. Her mother keeps commenting on Saru's looks and tells her that she looks ugly and makes her feel that she can never be a good-looking girl. When Saru gets first class and decides to study medicine, her mother objects and reminds her that she will have to get married one day and her father cannot afford to spend money on her education. But it is with her father's support that Saru takes admission in medicine and is able to complete her studies. On her fifteenth birthday Saru goes out with her friends Smita and Nalu. When she comes back at her home, her mother scolds her and reminds her of her duty-"Didn't you think you could have helped me at home? There are vegetables to be cut,

the buttermilk to be churned” (Deshpande 170) Thus, the constant interference of her mother in almost all the matters makes her unhappy. She has to struggle against her mother and therefore she becomes rebellious since her childhood. Saru never gives in to her mother. She makes her own choices and lives her own life.

As far as motherhood is concerned, women cannot decide how many children they want to have. Even though Vanna in *The Binding Vine* craves for a son, she has to accept her husband's decision of not having more children. In an Indian society if a woman is infertile, she becomes an object of ridicule. The women who learn that they are infertile experience distressing emotions and sometimes these emotions can adversely affect their physical health. In Shashi Deshpande's *That Long Silence*, Vanitamami does tulsi pooja and observes fasts to overcome the problem of infertility. Her habit of observing fasts ultimately brings disastrous results. Her uterus shrivels and her ovaries atrophy. In Shashi Deshpande's novel *That Long Silence*, Jeeja's husband marries another woman as she is unable to bear children. Jeeja never complains anything about it. Vimala Jaya's sister-in-law performs Mangala Gauri Puja to get rid of the problem of infertility. Salu in *The Binding Vine* suffers from the fear that her husband would marry another woman as she is not able to bear children. In the same novel, Priti, while trying to give sympathy to Urmi over the death of Anu, reveals to her that she had an ectopic pregnancy and she can never have a child. When Urmi remains upset after the death of Anu, Priti understands Urmi's pain. The bonding between a mother and a daughter has also been explored in the novel. We can see the different shades of mother & daughter relationship in the pairs like Inni and Urmi, Sakutai and Kalpana, Priti and her mother, Akka and Vanna, Vanna and Mandira.

CONCLUSION

This paper encompasses mother figures portrayed in only four novels of Shashi Deshpande i.e. *That Long Silence*, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, *The Binding Vine* and *A Matter of Time*. This study can be extended further by including more mother figures depicted in other novels of Shashi Deshpande. In her novels, Deshpande beautifully brings out the complexities of mother daughter relationship, insecurities of traditional mothers, stigma and challenges of barren women, the problems of working mothers.

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mother and the 'mother earth'. It is without a doubt, that the earth provides humankind with life's necessity but this alone does not attest to the analogy. Dorothy Dinnerstein provides a two-dimension reality of motherhood: the mother as a caring parent and also as someone who is erratic and a despicable parent. This places mothers on a scaffold of unpredictability. The image of an "all embracing-presence" thus, fails to acknowledge mothers as autonomous beings ("The Mermaid and The Minotaur" 93). The analogy further burdens the struggle of breaking the cages of the many repressive ideologies and institutions when nature is already seen as "mechanical and semi-human" (Roach 52).

The connection also poses complication when considered from an environmental scenario. No individual is farther away from nature and none is from culture. However, such a dichotomy will only create further moral and ethical problems in terms of stewardship and responsibility. Women will be excluded from the realm of 'cultural' decision making and men will fail to accept responsibilities for any exploitative activities committed against earth.

'Mother' in Patriarchy:

Women have been made accustomed to settling for the private domain as a result of conditioning by societal norms and laws making her believe it was her natural habitat. To defy that 'natural' habitat would be unnatural and unwomanly of her. Such thoughts take its shape through institutional mediums such as family, schools and religious establishments. The mind of a female having considered being inferior to that of men has always been deemed unfit to make decisions. The 'paternal' voice Susan Griffins adopts as she declares "it is observed . . . That women are feeble of body and mind than men . . ." (8) imposes upon women with the conviction that 'she' is always seen from this inferior light.

INTRODUCTION

The end of the Second World War set forth introspection within the world community regarding the United Nations Charter which they believed did not sufficiently define the rights it advocated for. Therefore, after post-war, saw a new light of day through the formulation of a new set of human rights which extended beyond the rights of the 1689 Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen of 1789. The Human Rights following the wars was birthed on the grounds of the real sense of universal rights. It included within its fold every individual regardless of gender, class, and ethnicity expanding its horizons to the people of the world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 asserts that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." The Declaration was a torchbearer to set the cornerstone toward realizing the fact that in terms of equality women were still marginalized. It was with the 1979 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' that advocated exclusively for women's rights, fought for gender equality and to fight against any form of discrimination against women. However, issues of equality still persist and it permeates through the layers of the social, political and economic realm in various forms. More specifically, even at the dawn of a more progressive and advanced society, gender disparity still exists; in the professional and domestic domain, the right to represent in the public sphere to land entitlements and not to forget acts of violence.

The problem of gender equality has long been debated arising out of the sex/gender dichotomy. Issues of sex and gender enveloped spheres of education, workplace, and family and gradually, contestations were mounting. However, the thin line between sex and gender was yet to be comprehended in many societies. Surprisingly so, the debate is still ongoing and

interestingly enough to identify how sex/gender concept is an ever-changing process. Elaine Storkey provides accounts of the transitioning nature of the idea of sex/gender across pre-modern, modern and postmodern (*Men & Women* 19). Recognizing significant characteristics of the periods in history, Storkey identifies the pre-modern period to be classified by a pre-existing 'fixed order' based on the idea of 'essentialism' which was provided by biology, the modern period lay emphasis on the manner in which society was structured, assigning gender roles. The postmodern understanding saw a transition from the structured culture of the society to identifying a multiplicity of meanings constantly shaped and reshaped by "language, image and experience" (*Men & Women* 44). The contestation does not stop there but it is ever-evolving in the forms of women's movement on the political and social front and women's studies in academic discourses that narrow down the issue to various sub-genres: from feminist studies to eco-feminism.

ANALYSIS

The Discourse on Woman and Land:

The analogy between woman and land is apparent in a number of academic works and discourses that parallels woman and land under various alibis which permeate throughout culture, language, and history. The land, also interpreted as the earth is a life-generating entity. The matriarch "mother" is conferred upon the land for the many similar reasons in which the land resembles a mother; in terms of their nature and in terms of the way both are dominated by a man as "the land is brought under his control . . . He has made her conceive. His land is a mother". (Griffin 52-53)

The similar 'control' he imposes upon the land, he also imposes upon the woman whose destiny and map is charted out by the

patriarchal norms of the society. Her role is passive as the passive earth where men penetrate, sow and till and made to conceive. The language incorporated for addressing women and land is equally passive. The pronouns "she" and "her" find their way through the colloquial of men in ways that thereby personify the land and 'her' bounties. In terms of the link between women's sexuality and land, it is connected through child-bearing which bear semblance to the 'mothering' roles embodied in the act of bearing, nurturing, and caring.

Catherine Roach also asserts how assigning the idea of a 'mother' to the earth only exacerbates the already exploitative attitude rendered towards mother and also to the earth ("Loving Your Mother" 46-47). Meanwhile, Sherry B. Ortner sheds light on how society views women as more affiliated to nature, and man toward culture ("Is Female to Nature" 73) owing to the 'procreative' functions of women. The stereotyping of characteristics as 'feminine' and 'masculine' have seeped into the norms of society and has reached a point of saturation that it has rather become a universal label given to women and man. If by virtue of being gentle, caring and sensitivity are deemed as being feminine and restricting to womenfolk, it is as though the premise to be gentle and sensitive is closed to men since they ought to be rather masculine. Thus, when the association is made between women and land, they have rather become a benefit by means of the role they play as a caregiver and other 'feminine' attributes.

The problem with the analogy:

The conventional care-giving role of the mother sheds light into various contestations of the comparison between a

marriage as a total unity” (quoted in *The Death of Nature* 19). It is an indication that woman and man, although accorded specific biological roles in terms of their sex being ‘male’ and being ‘female’, each can be acknowledged of their respective characteristics recognizing the need to enter into a common ground in order to co-exist. Since while speaking of equality, sometimes, the problem does arise concerning the failure to accommodate equitable outcome of men and women on biological grounds, advocates of women’s rights are said to be concerned with the question of equity than equality. Equity can thus be considered a separate and a new language that acknowledges both the gender be entered into the colloquial, man and woman will find its full expression and will have important places in the new history. Such a site will thus allow history to redefine and acknowledge differences based on biological grounds according to each a place on the equity scale rather than as two opposing ideals.

CONCLUSION

The association of woman and nature which appears almost like a synonym, places women outside the realm of culture. It further widens the already wide gap that exists between men and nature and also between men and women. The engendering of earth creates a problematic space of interaction. Women when not seen as “closer to nature”, inevitably create a space for men to equally bear the responsibility of being a care-giver. And at a crucial time of ecological emergency, the idea of such an association will only do more harm than good. Applying an alternative understanding on how language can redefine our understanding on woman-nature connection may perhaps map out a new conversational language that would no longer see women as the weaker sex and deny her rights that men have the privilege of access to. Through the lens of ecologically minded

Elizabeth Dodson Gray states: “Mother in patriarchal culture is she who provides all of our sustenance and who makes disappear all of our waste products” (*Patriarchy* 102). The assumption humankind give ourselves is the idea that the mother will never cease to look after everyone. This same understanding when applied to the ‘mother earth’ renders problematic.

The patriarchal thought is of the idea that women are more subjective as opposed to the rational and objective man in a manner that “nature is over-personified and woman are underpersonified” (Roach 51). The thoughts of a woman are “more coloured by feelings,” states Susan Griffin (38). The question, therefore concerns what is the difference between the male and the female mind?

The American novelist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman establishes that “the brain is not an organ of sex” (*Women and Economics* 149) and thus, there cannot be a distinction between the male and the female mind. The idea of a superior mind and an inferior mind between the sexes is a social construct. It is when the language of patriarchal thought is used toward addressing such notions allowing it to manifest within the ideologies of the society that such ideas take shape and form in the colloquial conventions of the people. Language, in this aspect becomes a determining factor in shaping the ideologies of a culture. In fact, language is one of the many components that comprise a culture. The term ‘culture’ being a massive phenomenon is complex and broad whose nature varies from different fields of study. If in archaeology it is related to material significance, in art and literature it encompasses language, belief, arts and morals.

Raymond Williams identified culture as “the signifying system through which social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored” (*The Sociology* 13). Language as a form

of culture thus plays a crucial role in shaping the thoughts and the way in which differences between male and female instead of being acknowledged, is underscored and compartmentalised to gender roles and rights. In a similar vein, in relation to the language of patriarchy it should be considered apt to ask “how the language of culture is used and for what purposes” (Jamir 5). The notion that women are supposedly inferior and weak in terms of the male does not restrict to just one demographic culture but across cultures. Patriarchal in nature, these laws conform in favour of men, those who make them. Moreover, the society is patriarchal, and the laws and practices are interpreted and dictated by men. Women are made to see themselves as passive. They are taught to be passive as men continually make and remake history. The greater need thus arises to ask how such patriarchal thoughts have taken a position and have been dictating and governing the lives of the people.

Re-defining language

Patriarchy can be considered a social condition where men predominate in terms of power. Gerda Lerner, the historian sees patriarchy as “an institutionalized pattern of male dominance in society” (Collins 4). Man/woman dichotomy interpreted on patriarchal lines has to be replaced with a neutral conversational vocabulary, given the fact that the idea is socially constructed. A woman alone does not contest the idea of patriarchy as “patriarchy has no gender” (Hooks 170) and thus, this should be one of the first steps toward understanding that eradicating patriarchal thoughts is not to be interpreted as against men, but rather against a system violating human rights. A contestation as this should move beyond the lines of established notions of gender, race and categories and seek for a re-evaluation of the current cultural tradition. Language, as a culture in itself, constitutes the power to form and shape ideologies and worldview. Therefore, the

current nature of language which is patriarchal needs to be redefined as well.

At such a juncture, when the question of land and woman is concerned, it heralds a beacon for women to take the first step toward discarding and rejecting their close association with the earth or the land from an essentialist outlook. The earth does not correspond to one single race or gender. As long as women are complacent in their position, she is providing her chart to be re-mapped again because a man knows he can “develop different institutions, another ethic, a new legal code” (Beauvoir 570). She ought to call out for a change in the nature of language as it would thereby change the cultural interpretation of society. It should begin by disentangling the thread of analogy between land and woman. That land should be treated as a completely different entity in its own right.

As Roach, reiterates Elizabeth Dodson Gray’s thoughts: “we must withdraw our weighty projections and try to see clearly the Earth as Earth and not as the mother or female we have imagined the Earth to be,” (quoted in “Loving Your Mother” 49) the disassociation of land from a woman would not only render both a separate critical inquiry but allow them to find full expressions independently. Language, with the power to construct reality, when its nature takes a common stand in the man/woman dichotomy allows for both the gender to redefine what it is to be one. A man, by all means, can exhibit traits of gentleness and caring which would not necessitate for him to lose his decision-making rights. When women reject their connotation with land, it rejects the idea that women are subjects to men but rather equal participants to have access and care for it which is in every term a human quality. Thomas Vaughan, an alchemist and a mystic, considered “the sun and the moon as two equal peers,” remarks Carolyn Merchant and the “consummation of their

as she maintains a life for nine months within her and after giving birth, she carries out the responsibility with all affection. She plays significant role in rearing her child and a lsoraising them throughout her life. She gives moral, psychological and physical care and support which helps the child to grow into a healthy adult. In return, they also deserve much care during their old age from their children as they have many requirements to meet their psychological and physical health. But in many cases the elderly parents do not get much care and love from their children which affect their well-being due to various reasons. The old Age Homes in our society are established for these elderly parents which become a matter of concern of our society as more or often people consider the existence of the Old Age Homes are the moral degradation of the society.

OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

In this article an attempt has been made to find out the socio economic condition of the women or the mothers in Kalyan Ashram and causes behind their presence in the Ashram. To shape this article, primary data has been collected through observation, face to face interviews and telephonic interview. Kalyan Ashram. Women occupants of the Home are taken as sample to prepare the article. Limitation of data collection was found there as psychological and physical condition of the inmates are not sound enough to answer the questions. Hence, the data has been collected from the management. The article is prepared on the basis of primary data only.

KALYAN ASHRAM

Kalyan Ashram is situated in Tiloinagar, Moranhat. Chiranjilal Todi is the founder of the home. He established the Ashram with the help of some social worker of Moran. This is now managed by Lata Agarwala, daughter-in law of Chiranjilal

individuals when men and women are viewed, the dichotomy is stripped away.

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MOTHERS IN KALYAN ASHRAM: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Mothers as well as the women are the soul of a family or a society. They sacrifice more or less everything for the well being of her family and hence the society. But as soon as they become elderly, they need love and care which they once offered to their children and family. But in some cases, they have to move to the Old Age Homes as there are no one to take care of their physical and mental health. The aim and objective of this article was to know about the inmates and their socio economic condition for which they have been living their life in Old Age Home. The women as well the mothers have been selected purposively for the study. More than 50% of respondents are selected to find out the results through Interview, observation and telephonic conversation. The study is based on primary data only.

Keywords: *Old Age Home, Kalyan Ashram, Mother, Women, Socio-economic*

INTRODUCTION

Mother is the backbone of a family as she plays important roles in the lives of family members. Besides being a mother, a wife, a daughter in law, a grand-mother, she plays the role of a teacher to her children, a nurse and a chef to her family, a caretaker of the home and what not! A woman achieved the status of a mother as soon as she gets pregnant which continues till her last breath. Her responsibility begins with the moment she conceives

SOCIO ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE WOMEN RESIDENTS:

Almost 50% of the women residents of the Old Age Home of Moran were interviewed to know about the causes behind their existence in the home. It was found that poor economic condition, health condition, illiteracy, solitary life etc. were the prime factor behind their living in the home. It was found that the early life of the residents had gone through financial hardship as they were working in informal sector, where they merely earn enough to meet the basic needs of life. There is no question of savings which caused financial insecurity in the old age. As the mothers are more vulnerable, they were often thrown into the Old Age Home. The case study in Kalyan Ashram reveals that due to poor economic condition, the elderly women were bound to work as maid or domestic helper to survive and meet the basic needs of life. Solitary life of the respondents is one of the prime factors of their coming to the Home. They somehow manage to live their life by working as house maids or domestic helpers. But after a time, when she becomes aged and is not able to do her chores, the Old Age Home is their only shelter. In most of the cases NGOs, Police and other people bring them to the home. On the other hand, most of them are illiterate which could be considered as another factor of their stay in the Old Age Home. Illiteracy of these women is because of poor economic conditions of their family, gender discrimination in the contemporary society which resulted in low literacy rate of female compared to the men. Besides, physical and mental health of the elderly women are another cause for which they are thrown into the home by the family members or sometime the NGO's, Police and other concerned people. Sometime the management fetch these types of ladies to the home. It was found in Kalyan Ashram that due to the economic insecurity or sometimes the family set-up of the married daughters

Todi with the financial support of Bajaj Health Care Foundation of Mumbai. 22 women and 15 men are residing there in Kalyan Ashram as per current data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION :

A brief introduction of the women respondents:

There are 22 women living in Kalyan Ashram in present date. The number residents are varied from time to time due to death mostly and in some other cases they left the Home for their own reason. Though women of the Home are mostly married, a few unmarried women are also living there.

1. Bimala Tanti: The age of this lady is 63years old and married, who is not in a stable mental condition as her husband died and after some period i.e. almost five years back she lost her two sons as well. She came to the Ashram in 2019. This illiterate lady was appointed as a maid in a household. As her mental condition started deteriorating, the lady where she was working as a maid in Moran Town brought her to Kalyan Ashram.
2. Jamuna Bailung: This illiterate lady from Moran is 75 years of her age. She with her husband and daughter were living their life depending on their agricultural land. Eventually her husband and daughter had left her for the heavenly abode. She tried to live her life depending on a little shop of miscellaneous items but wasn't be able to do the same for long time. She has her grand-children still she opted to live in Kalyan Ashram She has been living there from 2023.
3. Renu Bawri: This 64-year-old lady has no children and was working as a maid in a household of Moran. The house owner brought her to the old age home in 2022.

4. Sewali Hazarika: She was brought to the Ashram along with her husband from Talap of Tinsukia district. Her age is above 60 years. She has a married daughter, who was not in a condition to look after both her parents. Hence, she has brought her parent to Kalyan Ashram in 2023. She used to come to the Ashram at times.
5. Kunja Dutta: She has a daughter but she is unable to inform about her daughter's whereabouts. She was rendering her service as a maid for long before coming to the Ashram and the house owner brought her to the old age home.
6. Kalpana Keot: This lady is residing in the Ashram as she has no one to take care of her. This lady lost her mental health after losing her husband. She had two little son at that time and she was not in a state to take care of them. No one was there in the family who would take the responsibility of Kalpana. In this situation, she entered Kalyan Asram by the management.
7. Malati Saikia: As both her husband and child expired, she reached the Moran PS as she had no places to live in. Almost 60-65 aged Malati Saikia was brought to Kalyan Ashram by the Moran Police.
8. Bala Mahila (Helen): This differently able lady who is 60 years of age was brought to the Home by Bharali Bikash Parisad, an NGO from Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh, in 2017. This dumb and deaf lady is unable to walk. No data is available there with the management about her family members.
9. Anju Roy: This 69 years lady was brought to the home in 2019 by her son and daughter-in-law. They informed

the management that they have been transferred to another place where it is not possible to take her along with them.

10. Muslima Khatoon: She is from Moradabad and somehow she reached Lahowal and the Police brought her to the home. Approx. 65 year old lady couldn't speak more than the name of her place i.e. Moradabad.
11. Monumoti Gogoi: This unmarried and around 65-year-old lady herself came to the home after her parents departed. She has her sister-in-law and her family with whom she doesn't have cordial relation.
12. Puspomoni Boraik: This 54 years unmarried old lady has her own family and other relatives but she opted to stay at Kalyan Ashram from 2010.

Table: 1

Married and unmarried mothers of Kalyan Ashram

Married		Unmarried	Not Known
Mother	Barren Mother		
07	01	02	02

Table 1 shows that 07 nos of respondents are married and one is barren. Among them, 05 married women have sons/daughters who are alive, but still they are living in the Home. Two other women had children, but they are no longer alive. Likewise, two women are unmarried. The details of the marital status of the remaining two women is unavailable as they were not able to answer it.

Kapoor (2023) conducted a survey and declared that 30 out of 50 mothers responded that motherhood is a natural state of womanhood. Little attention is given to the mothers in the rural areas. Problems were mostly assessed in terms of the productive or paid work of the mother. As many as 80 percent of the mothers also agreed that women were socialized to be mothers. Whatever maybe the changes in this evolving world, the present study aims to look at mother from the perspective of the changing world.

Brien(2024) quoted Sarah, “Children still have to be born, women still have to figure out how to fit into their working life”.

Motherhood is a distinct phase in a women’s life. The experience may not be same for all those who are mothers. It is quite complex than what we see from outside. The ageold tradition of women being the traditional caregiver of the family sometimes puts the whole responsibility on the mother. And as a consequence has to sacrifice her dreams, aspirations and her choices. Motherhood may not be a fulfilling experience for them.

The new discourse of motherhood studies which transverse the interdisciplinary domains of humanities and social sciences – has the potential to dislodge old, gendered oppressive meanings of motherhood to create and circulate new, freely chosen meanings and experiences of feminist or empowered mothering.

Statement of the Problem: The researcher makes an effort to study the perspectives of the mothers as regards their health, social, environmental factors and also the attitude of the mothers towards the role of motherhood. Case studies on Indian mothers have depicted more on the problems of health and job. To bridge the gap the present study was undertaken to find out the opinion of the mothers who were working as well as non-working.

of the inmate, mothers have been forced to live in the Home. These type of socio-economic condition of the women as well as the mothers in the society caused their stay in the Old Age Home.

CONCLUSION:

Though it is considered that family is the most secured place for everyone, sometimes, it becomes horrible to live in, especially for the elderly people in some families. So that, a few of the inmates are willingly entered the Home as they preferred to live in the place than their own home. The women are more vulnerable comparing to their male counterpart. Hence the nos. of women is more than that of the men of Kalyan Ashram. Some are forced to live there as they have lost their importance in the family and no one in their own home wants to take care of them. This could be considered as the most common cause behind the existence of the Old Age Homes in our society. It can be said that existence of Old Age homes reveals the dark side i.e. moral degradation of a society. But at the same time, we can say that the Old Age Homes are serving those elderly people who are all alone in this world and no one is there to take care of them.

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MOTHERHOOD: AN ATTEMPT TO REDEFINE MOTHERHOOD THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVES OF MOTHERS IN GUWAHATI CITY

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ABSTRACT

Mothering is a complex journey. The researcher seeks to find out the perspective of mothering in the present-day world by analysing 49 case studies in Guwahati City based on their narratives. Adopting a qualitative approach the transcripts were coded and certain themes were arrived at such as health, social, environmental, technological, domestic, recreation, hobbies, religion and spirituality and celebration. Information gathered from the case studies arrived at certain categories where a mother can be fitted into, breaking the traditional category of the 'sacrificing mother'. The study revealed that irrespective of the age, career or status of the mother, it is psychological resources such as emotional regulation, resilience, coping skills and also a spiritual practice that makes a strong mother to face the challenging role of mothering children. The researcher calls for more insights from diverse groups such as the rural mothers, the migrated mothers and the transgender mothers.

Keywords: mother, motherhood, working mother, non-working mother, successful mother

ARTICLE

The mother in this present-day world is confronted with myriad of issues in balancing tradition and modernity. Nurturing, caregiving and sacrificing were the traditional roles of the mother.

Today the mothers are embracing the technological advancements and seeing themselves in a different role. The dictionary definition of mother is, "The female parent of a human being who has given birth to a child after carrying in the womb for 9 months. But today motherhood means a female who may not actually give birth to a child but is the caregiver of the child and looks after the child. And lately motherhood means much more. There are lot of ways to describe a mother- the good mother, the sacrificing mother, the working mother, the single mother and so on. The word motherhood is no doubt a socially constructed concept. The modern world sees further classification such as the unmarried mother, the transgender mother, and also we have yet another category of mothers the mothers who have abandoned their children in pursuit of a better life. Lately, 'mother' has been defined as a person who engages in the act of mothering. 'Mothering' is a term constructed in late modernity that denotes a woman providing the physical and psychological care needed for a child. (Bond, 2010)

Motherhood as a lived experience is not measured in the same way as in the past – both mothers and society have undergone changes. Now we have a different familial structure in India, with working mothers, nuclear families, and changing models of parenting. There are homosexual marriages, IVF conceptions (cytoplasmic and nuclear transfers, cloning), and surrogacy to be considered. The concept of motherhood in India thus needs to be revisited. (Mitra 2020)

Motherhood once bound by traditional roles has now evolved into a multifaceted journey (Shree, 2023). Kapoor (2023) quoted Rich – Motherhood is an institution that women choose it, because they believed that they will not be valued if they are not mothers.

young boy in pursuit of a more fulfilling life. But soon she discovered that her new husband was not able to meet her material needs; she returned again to her former husband .However the house was empty without children. And Smita spends lot of time with her friends, partying , merry making, cooking and farming She seemed to enjoy her youth in the present times and in her fifties after she had dedicated her youth in mothering 2 children.

The narratives of the participants arrived at the following themes which is presented in table 1

TABLE 1:

Sl. No.	Issues	Working and non-working mothers	
		Working mothers	Non-working mothers
1	Health	Working mothers	Non-working mothers
	Physical	Pro-active about health issues. Physical ailments such as headache, body ache, gastritis, flu One case reported of conducting self abortion.	Headache,anaemia, gastritis due to skipping meals, bodyache
	Psychological	Post Partum Depression, Anxiety, Stress due to manging work and home .23 % reported of taking family planning responsibility.	Worry, Financial Issues more intense,Feeling of not working makes them less confident.Due to engaging in daily chores at home they suffered from mental

Methodology:A Qualitative approach was undertaken for data collection and interpretation. The researcher interviews 48 women in Guwahati city and has divided the participants into two categories, working and non-working. Narratives of the mothers were translated into transcripts and thematic analysis was done as explained in table 1.

A few case studies find a place in the body of the work. Depending on the uniqueness of their stories the researcher has mentioned the case studies.

Objectives –

1. To find out the perspectives of mothers towards their health, social, environmental and family relationship.
2. To find out the factors that lead to successful motherhood.

Some of the operational definitions considered in this study were

Mother- Women between 25 to 75 years of age who had biological children.

Work- All kinds of engagement outside the home, both organized and unorganized.

Participant- Mothers in the study

Case study 1

Smita is a 32 year old with one child who is in standard II. They do not want anymore children. “ *We cannot think of anymore children. Since raising children is so difficult*” she says. Husband comes home late from work. She completes the household chores after returning from work so that she can sit down tutoring her child. She suffers from a lot of physical ailments like headache, gastritis and anaemia.

Case study 2

Preety, 64 is a widow with two sons. She dedicates most of the time to a spiritual organization. One of her sons is working while the younger one is still studying. Being a retired employee, she spends a considerable time in her spiritual activities and takes time to plan out her vacations.

Case study 3

Chandana, 62 is a daily wage earner. She is a migrated women who works for her family. She visits her family who stays far away in the village. Chandana spends very little for herself and saves the money for her son's family. She suffers from physical ailments such as headache, bodyache, frequent fevers, toothache but she spends very less for her health issues.

Case study 4

Basanti, 42 is not in talking terms with her husband. She has an extramarital affair. There is an age difference of 20 years between the husband and wife. They have two sons. The elder one is a drug addict. There were constant fights in the family. Basanti is a distressed mother.

Case study 5

Labanya, 75 was a retired school teacher, a mother as well as a grandmother. She lives alone in the heart of the city. She proudly narrates her experience of bringing up her 2 sons. Her younger son was not good in studies. But through her immense spiritual practice she could see her son well established in life with a career. She looks hale and hearty. She radiates lot of positivity and contentment.

Case study 6

Anju, 35 a mother of two struggled a lot to meet her expenses after the failure of her husband's business. Immediately

she took a diploma in Beauty Culture, learnt driving, worked in their sweet shop in the evening. With courage and self-confidence, she could revive the economic condition of her family.

Case study 7

The 'unsuccessful mother' or the 'unhappy mother' could be a well fitted term for a mother like Kukila whose son left home never to be traced again. Her son withdrew 6000 rupees from her account and fled with the money. For days she was not eating and sleeping. She separated from her husband who had subjected endless trauma in the past.

Case study 8

Purnima, 32 leaves for work when her child was still in bed. As a consequence, attachment was not established with her child. After coming back from work she longed to cuddle her son. But to her utter dismay finds that her son prefers to stay in the company of his baby sitter. Purnima is an example of the 'guilty mother' who misses her child.

Case study 9

Lima, 30 leaves her 2 minor children in pursuit of higher studies in a distant land. The father also works in a distant place. The 2 children looked after all by themselves. The mother comes back when the children had completed their studies only to discover that the marital relationship had suffered a setback after her husband found another woman. She becomes the single parent of the 2 children. Due to the availability of plenty of time in her hands she finds her solace in some productive work.

Case study 10

Smita got married when she was 17 years old. After her children grew up she found her passion in a new hobby of singing that eventually ended up in leaving her family and staying with a

- Health of the mother
- Presence of older siblings to look after the younger ones

Difficulties were faced due to reasons such as

- Poor health of the mother
- Career mother- if the mother is still launching her career
- Ill habits of the spouse like drinking and drug abuse
- Single mother-separated, divorced, abandoned both by men and women.
- Uneducated and lack of awareness on health and upbringing of the child
- Bringing up a special child
- Frequent illness of the children

Summary:

Motherhood is a very complex role. It has undergone lot of changes as the world . Today's mothers have lot of expectations. She has to be the career mother, expert in all work, the role model of the child. Indian mothers were seen to sacrifice a lot which gives a lot of psychological stress. Those who are working outside seems to be guilty because of not being able to give time. Psychological wellbeing of the mother is seldom discussed. If society does not address these issues the mothers will tend to suffer psychologically. Looking at motherhood through a patriarchy tainted lens should be avoided. Mothers are required to be more conscious of their wellbeing and the society needs to be aware of safeguarding their health. If mothers are healthy both socially and psychologically, we can have a better society.

Social expectations regarding the outcome of the pregnancy gave undue stress to the mother. Joya said how her neighbour commented that the first born should be a boy. The

		Anxiety due to missed periods reported by 34 % of the mothers who were in the reproductive age group. Job related demands leads to mental stress (85 percent) Student's studies, career and health took a heavy toll on their mental wellbeing.	stress, anxiety and depression was also reported by 7 Percent of the mothers. Academic pressures of their children and sometimes academic failures caused distress. (44 percent)
3	Food	Regular meals revealed by 45 percent Children and head are of prime importance	Irregular meals as revealed by 64 percent ;late breakfast Male members are given more importance (54 Percent)
4	Child rearing	Difficulties faced by 87 percent of the mothers. Quitting work due to pregnancy was stated by 65 percent of the mothers. Mothers in the unorganized sector did not work until they put their	Not much difficulty faced by those who had more than one child. (45 percent) 94 percent of the mothers belonged to nuclear families and faced difficulties in caring for their children.

		children in school.100 percent of the mothers	
5	Social	Individualistic outlook by those who had better engagements and were well paid Enjoys flexibility due to working outsidebelonged to nuclear families and faced problems in looking after their children.	Social norms make them more pressurised (74 per cent)
6	Environmental	Noise and air pollution.Commuting to work during rainy season was difficult (33 percent)	Lack of material resources, scarcity of water was faced by those who lived in rented houses (56 percent)
7	Technological	More used to technological gadgets	Use of gadgets depends on economic status
8	Domestic work	Dependent on househelps (64 percent)	Burdened by household work as they did not have helpers (74 per cent)

9	Recreation	Individualistic and more time	Less time for recreation
10	Hobbies	Less time for hobbies	More time for hobbies
11	Religion/ Spirituality	Regular engagement	Regular engagement – Frequent fasting for the wellbeing of the family
12	Celebration	Birthdays and Mother's Day, Festivals	Have not heard of Mother's Day (34 percent). Avail longer vacations to ancestral houses during holidays of their children and also during festivals.

Carrying out the role of a mother had subtle differences between a working and non-working mother. The fact that they contribute towards family income keeps the working mothers in a better position.

While the stress associated with childrearing is same for all mothers .There were myriad of factors that makes the mechanism more supportive , engaging and fruitful . Some of the factors are listed below

- More co-operative spouse
- Presence of elderly parents
- Better financial position
- Personality traits such as more tolerant attitude, presence of emotional regulation skills
- Planned parenthood
- Age of the mother- not too young and inexperienced or not too old

MOTHERHOOD AND ART: A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF SALVADOR DALI'S *THE ENIGMA OF MY DESIRE OR MY MOTHER, MY MOTHER, MY MOTHER* (1929)

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, writers and artists have explored and portrayed motherhood in unique and fascinating ways. From the age-old depictions of maternal goddesses to modern-day portrayals of the maternal experience, artists have unraveled the complex nature of motherhood in their artworks. Through their provocative works, they have unveiled the sublimity and complexities within the mother-child bonds. From the idealized portrayals of motherhood by Raphael, Mary Cassatt and Gustav Klimt to grotesque and unsettling representations of the maternal figure by Salvador Dali and Paula Rego, artworks have offered us poignant insights on motherhood by illuminating the themes of love, sacrifice, time, absence, resilience, anguish, separation and identity.

Salvador Dali is a Spanish Surrealist artist known for his unique, distorted, and bizarre paintings. He often juxtaposed familiar objects in the most deformed, uncanny and irrational ways. They are characterized by suggestive, unsightly and hideous images that centers around the themes of death, decay, eroticism, subconscious urges and sexual desires. His works closely resonate with the psychoanalytic theory proposed by Sigmund Freud that analyses the complex nature of human unconscious mind. Freud argues that the unconscious desires, memories, and conflicts in a man, influences his behavior and experiences. In art, psychoanalytic theory focusses on the motifs, symbols,

rituals associated with pregnancy, the birth of the baby, the rice ceremony, the celebration of the first menarche of the girl child, celebrating birthdays put a heavy toll on the economic wellbeing of the mother.

Almost all mothers (98 percent) saved for their children in Bandhan Bank, Self Help Group Funds. Mothers in the unorganized sector had the privilege of borrowing money to spend on special occasions like celebrating birthdays and festivals. However, they did not avail maternity leave. Pregnancy meant losing the work and no money.

23 percent of the mothers were not happy due to illness of their children, sons showing delinquent behaviours, academic failure of children and also social expectations regarding the choice of career of their children.

Whatever be the situations or challenges that the mothers encounter, by analyzing the case studies and the narratives of mothers the researcher arrives at the theories underlined below. Motherhood is successful when –

The mother has psychological resources such as-

- Emotional Regulation- To be aware of their emotions as well as others. To feel motivated right throughout the journey of motherhood; to be able to manage their emotions; to be able to develop good relations with others
- Resilience- To be able to bounce back from a crisis in the family which may be financial loss, illnesses, failures
- Hope and Optimism- The positive mindset
- Coping Skills- Decision making and problem solving skills
- Creativity
- Critical Thinking

Mothering is indeed very complex. Mothers in the modern-day world are trying to break away from the age old family traditions of the sacrificing mother as depicted in the old movies. As the world witnesses change, so also mothering is undergoing changes. Women has embraced technology. The tech savvy mother is seen working on her laptop in the kitchen, handling her mobile cells and trying out new recipes, or maintaining her social contacts. Technology has its pros and cons. The 'run away' mother who has abandoned her children is a new discovery in the social media stories. Mothers nowadays are seen to devote lot of time to social media, watching soap operas, making blogs and net surfing. It has resulted in less and less mothers engaging in traditional crafts like needlework, crochet, knitting. Nowadays technology is delivering goods to our door step. It has made life easy to a certain extent while certain behaviours are increasing like hoarding things, joining the rat race and developing the habit of missing out.

A mother is a human being just like any other person who may encounter lot of problems in life. This study brings to light that agesolely is not a factor of good mothering. There were exceptional stories of the career mother, the carefree mother and so on but it is the psychological resources of the mother that provides the mother the immense energy required to withstand the journey. Those who were successful were so by dint of hard work and dedication to the family. The society should not give undue expectations to the mother. Hospitals need to have counselling services for the mother to be including the spouses and moreover agencies are required to address the needs of any person who is raising a child. Society needs to abolish the stigma associated with seeking mental health services when required. The study was focused on participants who resided in a city. More efforts are required to carry out the research in separate groups such as the rural mothers, the mothers belonging to the

migrated population and also by adopting different methodology for data collection.

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to make invisible the unavoidable blemishes of my soul” (Dali 152-153). This paper mainly aims to read the painting in the light of psychoanalytic theory by emphasizing the unconscious urges, symbols, dream imagery, and Oedipal themes disguised in it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychoanalytic theory aims to study “the language of the unconscious, of the repressed and the hidden as embodied in literary or cultural texts...with particular attention to the repression of sexuality and its desires”(Nayar 64). *The Enigma of My Desire or My Mother, My Mother, My Mother* is one of Dali’s famous surrealist paintings set in a Catalonian backdrop with disjointed objects and enigmatic imagery. The painting can be seen as a visual depiction of his unconscious thoughts. The unconscious or the *Id* is the “area of instincts, dreams [and] desires” (Nayar 65). Dali is known for his technique of tapping into his unconscious for creative expression. The painting can be seen as Dali’s inquiry into Freudian psychoanalysis, his childhood experiences, and unconscious urges. This makes us realize how “art draws upon the unconscious for its themes and images” (Nayar 65). Dali yearned for his mother’s presence throughout his life which is evident in the title and repetition of “ma mèlre” (the French word for ‘my mother’) on the yellowrock-like figure in the painting. The grotesque and gigantic yellow rock symbolically suggests how despite the physical absence, the maternal absence loomed large such that it overshadowed his entire unconscious.

In his seminal work “The Interpretation of Dreams” (1900), Freud talks of the Oedipus complex as a central concept in psychoanalysis. Oedipal complex springs from the male child’s dependence on his mother. It explains how the male child tends to harbor hidden desires for their mothers and yearn to return to their wombs. The child begins to develop sexual feelings towards

themes and imagery and attempts to unearth the painter’s hidden subconscious desires, fetishes and urges. This paper aims to read Dali’s surrealist painting titled The Enigma of My Desire or My Mother, My Mother, My Mother (1929) from a psychoanalytic point of view, contemplating on Dali’s complex portrayal of motherhood. It mainly seeks to address the artist’s masked unconscious urges, the dream imagery and the Oedipal complex.

Keywords: *Motherhood, Art, Psychoanalytic theory, Sigmund Freud, Salvador Dali, Surrealism, symbolism, dream imagery and Oedipal complex.*

ARTICLE

INTRODUCTION

Motherhood is one of the most compelling themes explored in art, throughout history, by artists across the world. The depictions of motherhood ranged from sublime portrayals of maternal love to more complex portrayals of realistic maternal experiences. In most conventional artforms, women as mothers are idealized and associated with holiness, sacredness, nurturance, gentleness, sacrifice, and love as evident in Raphael’s *Madonna and Child* (1503) and Mary Cassatt’s *Mother and Child* (1898). However, artists have also expressed their own maternal experiences by portraying the themes of maternal loss, absence, and anxiety which results in art that is fragmented, disjointed, and bizarre and it qualifies into what Betterton calls “the maternal grotesque” (115). Some examples include Salvador Dali’s *The Enigma of My Desire or My Mother, My Mother, My Mother* (1929) and Paula Rego’s *Mother Loves You* (2009) which are characterized by distorted, fragmented, provocative, and disturbing representations of maternal figures. Artists tend to redefine and reimagine motherhood by solidifying the mother as a metaphor and trope and creating a “maternal language of representation” (O’Brien et al. 151). Artists often employ diverse techniques and themes to convey their subjective maternal experiences such as

nurturing, the transience of time, anguish, and death. Be it the portrayal of sublimity or the maternal grotesque, in most artworks we find the “objectification of the maternal body” (Young 46). The theme of motherhood can be analysed from diverse theoretical perspectives, which could enhance understanding of the maternal experience and its subjective implications. By applying the psychoanalytic theory, one can gain deeper insights into the artist’s psyche and hidden motivations. It provides a nuanced framework for comprehending the depiction of motherhood in art and the implicit symbolism and imagery embedded within the artwork.

Psychoanalysis is defined as a set of theories and therapeutic techniques used to investigate the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind. It was established by Sigmund Freud in the early 1890s. Psychoanalysis mainly deals with “the assumption that there are unconscious mental processes, the recognition of the theory of repression and resistance, the appreciation of the importance of sexuality and of the Oedipus complex” (Mitchell 343). Freud redefined sexuality by addressing its infantile semblances which resulted in the formulation of the Oedipal complex. He also proposed a model of the psyche as composed of the *Id*, *Ego*, and *Super-ego* which correspond to the unconscious, consciousness and the conscience respectively. He further analysed dreams as an expression of man’s repressed desires, fears, and guilt. For him, “dreams, just like literature do not usually make explicit statements. Both tend to communicate obliquely or indirectly, avoiding direct or open statements, and representing meanings through concrete embodiments of time, place, or person” (Barry 94). Freud later coined the term dream work to refer to “the process by which real events or desires are transformed into dream images” (Barry 94). Through a psychoanalytic lens, we can interpret the depiction of motherhood in art and unravel the

implicit motivations, fantasies, conflicts, desires, and anxieties associated with the maternal figure and the subjective maternal experiences of the artists. Freud’s concept of the Oedipal complex stresses how sons harbor unconscious desires towards their mothers which in art gets manifested in representations of the maternal grotesque, revealing the unresolved conflicts and desires of the artists towards their maternal figures. Dali’s portrayal of his maternal experience makes viewers explore and critique the dominant cultural notion of motherhood and the depiction of the maternal in contemporary art.

The Enigma of My Desire or My Mother, My Mother, My Mother (1929) is one of Salvador Dali’s famous surrealist works in which he attempted a fragmented and bizarre portrayal of the maternal figure. Through its suggestive and provocative representation, it has defied the conventional depictions of maternal figures and provoked the viewers to delve deep into the artist’s psyche. From the beginning of his artistic journey, Dali has shown an interest in the subconscious mind and the influence it has on one’s creativity and outlook. He was greatly influenced by the Freudian theories on the unconscious mind and dream imagery, which made him portray unconscious urges through his surrealist artworks. He is known for tapping into his unconscious mind for untethered creative expressions and portraying his dreams and hallucinations. The artwork on first look, appears as a juxtaposition of disjointed and fragmented images embodying a bizarre and irrational dreamlike world.

On analyzing the piece from a psychoanalytic perspective, one realizes that these unsettling images shed light upon the artist’s unconscious fears, desires and anguish which can be traced back to the absence of a maternal figure in his later life. Dali lost his mother at the age of 16 and he spoke about his loss as “the greatest blow I had experienced in my life. I worshipped her... I could not resign myself to the loss of a being on whom I counted

the inconspicuous symbolism and imagery planted within the painting. Some of the key findings are the disjointed and fragmented depiction of motherhood, the symbolic dream imagery, and the Freudian Oedipal theme.

Dali has expressed the complexities of motherhood by exhibiting distortion which reveals the artist's unconscious conflicts and anxieties associated with maternal absence. This also highlights his psychological pain, identity crisis, and ambivalent feelings. Dali's work also challenges the traditional depictions of motherhood through the subversion of societal expectations and norms. In turn, his portrayal makes the viewers confront the complex nature of the maternal experience and interrogate the societal depictions; and ideals of motherhood. The painting also helped identify the Freudian themes of the Oedipal complex, repression, and unconscious urges. The painting gave considerable insights into Dali's relationship with his mother, his repressed sexual feelings, and his unconscious urges. Thus, it redefined motherhood in terms of Freudian theories by revealing the psychological aspects of the mother-son relationship.

Additionally, the psychoanalytic reading unearthed the hidden symbols and imagery embedded within the painting. These include the fish, the lion's head, a boy embracing a man, the grasshopper, the giant yellow rock-like figure, the group of ants, and the dagger. The barren and less dramatic backdrop suggest the looming void caused by maternal absence in the artist's life. Additionally, the symbols and imagery shed light upon Dali's subconscious sexual desires towards his mother, his sexual anxieties, unresolved conflicts, and his complicated relationship with his father. The surrealist nature of the painting prompts the viewers to reflect on their own sexual anxieties and repressed sexual desires. On the whole, Dali's work offers a suggestive and provocative inquiry into the complex mother-son bonds and the

the mother and develops "fantasies about killing his father so that he will have no rivals for his mother's love" (Nayar 66). Very soon, the child represses those desires in the unconscious. Thus, the Oedipal complex becomes the source of all repressed desires. In the painting, the large yellow rock-like form symbolizes his mother. There is a rock attached to the rock-like structure on the left and it stands for Dali's unflagging affinity towards his mother and his desire to forge an identity in her. The maternal figure dominates the entire painting which addresses the looming presence of his dead mother in his unconscious. It is also symbolic of his disintegrated relationship with his mother and his inability to visualize her properly reveals the gravity of his repressed desires. The barren landscape and the lone structure add a surrealist touch to the atmosphere, the lack of clarity in his unconscious mind, and his inability to accept his mother's death and absence. According to Nayar, "Guilt-inducing desire and traumatic events such as death of a loved one or abuse are quickly shunted out of the conscious and relegated into the unconscious, to emerge only in particular moments (usually of dreams or stress)" (65). The imagery of Dali is often referred to as disjointed and grotesque by the advocates of conventional art. According to Bakhtin, "the grotesque [gets] attached...an 'id', in the psychoanalytic sense" (46). Dali's depiction of the maternal figure as a huge and ugly rock is what Bakhtin refers conflicts, unadmitted desires, or traumatic past events so that they are forced out of the conscious awareness and into the realm of the unconscious" (Barry 92). So here the dream imagery becomes "an escape-hatch or safety-valve through which repressed desires, fears, or memories seek an outlet into the conscious mind" (Barry 94).

The unconscious symbolism, dream imagery, and the Oedipal theme unravel Dali's inability to process his unconscious desires, accept his mother's death, and his ambivalent feelings

towards the looming maternal presence in his unconscious. Dali's *The Enigma of My Desire or My Mother, My Mother, My Mother* (1929) can be seen as a visual depiction of his inquiry into the unconscious mind, indirectly prompting the viewers to confront their own repressed feelings and desires through the grotesque and fragmented portrayal of the maternal figure. Additionally, Dali's portrayal of motherhood challenges the traditional notions of motherhood and the idealization of the mother as Madonna in conventional art through its surrealist reinterpretation of motherhood.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aims and objectives of the following study are as follows:

- To explore Salvador Dali's surrealist painting titled *The Enigma of My Desire or My Mother, My Mother, My Mother* from a psychoanalytic perspective, focusing on the artist's portrayal of motherhood.
- To examine the hidden subconscious desires and motives behind Dali's portrayal of motherhood, to highlight the underlying theme of the Oedipal complex.
- To study the dream imagery and symbolism in *The Enigma of My Desire or My Mother, My Mother, My Mother* to convey the psychological implications in Dali's relationship with his mother.
- To investigate how Dali's surrealist art has challenged the traditional portrayals of motherhood in art by offering insights into the complex nature of his craft and the unconscious motives behind the portrayal.
- To contribute to the field of art and psychoanalysis by applying Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory to read Dali's surrealist art.

- To attempt a visual analysis of Dali's *The Enigma of My Desire or My Mother, My Mother, My Mother*, by exploring its visual imagery, composition and symbolism.
- To apply the psychoanalytic concepts of Oedipus complex, dream symbolism, and unconscious desires study Dali's unconventional portrayal of motherhood and maternal figures in *The Enigma of My Desire or My Mother, My Mother, My Mother*.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a theoretical framework based on psychoanalytic theory to analyse Salvador Dali's portrayal of motherhood in his *The Enigma of My Desire or My Mother, My Mother, My Mother*. The study began with an initial exploration of the painting focusing primarily on the explicit details and trying to understand it in terms of Freudian psychoanalysis. The main goal was to unravel the unconscious symbolism, dream imagery and oedipal complex implicit in Dali's portrayal of motherhood. Additionally, the research involved a thorough reading of relevant literature on psychoanalytic theory, surrealism, and motherhood in art. As a result, more insights regarding Dali's portrayal, the hidden complexities, and the unconscious urges were obtained. Moreover, a personal interest in the fields of motherhood and art served as an impetus for the research. The study, on the whole, aimed to uncover the subconscious interpretations and the Freudian thematic nuances inherent in Salvador Dali's depiction of motherhood thereby highlighting the complex nature of maternal experience.

RESULTS

The psychoanalytic reading of Salvador Dali's *The Enigma of My Desire or My Mother, My Mother, My Mother* (1929) unraveled remarkable insights into the artist's subconscious motivations,

INTRODUCTION

‘Motherhood’ – the very name suggests – responsibility, strength, emotion, feeling and love. This marks one of the most crucial phases in women’s life. Mother plays a significant role in child’s development. Motherhood is not just a feeling or emotion, rather it’s something beyond that. Patriarchal society has forcefully confined the term to gender roles. Motherhood is an emotion that cannot be restricted categorically to women. The main objective of the paper is to study the term ‘motherhood’ in respect to transgender woman. The paper highlights the issue of gender construction in society. The chapter inculcates a detailed study of the life of transgender mothers in India taken for study and to find out how they have set an example and added a new dimension to the term ‘motherhood’. My aim is to study the condition of transgender mothers in India – how they face couple of challenges while enduring the phase. Another objective of the chapter is to present how the trans mothers of India have added a new dimension to the term ‘motherhood’. My research methodology includes close reading, interpretation and to find out the relation of the terms ‘motherhood’ and transgender woman.

DISCUSSION

Motherhood is beyond gender – but society abrupts the notion. Society constructs motherhood as gender-role. A controversial and emerging term ‘transgender woman’ or more specifically ‘trans mother’ constitutes a group of people who face entrenched stigmatization in society. Transgender women are too important in our society – they too possess love, motherly feelings and emotion. Transgender woman goes through multiple challenges. They are deprived of basic rights, receive abuses and intolerable disrespects. Study shows that transgender women also show interest in child adoption – they feel to be a mother. They

human psyche thus redefining the complex nature of motherhood and the maternal experience.

Conclusion

Salvador Dali’s surrealist painting *The Enigma of My Desire* or *My Mother, My Mother, My Mother* symbolically illustrates the unconscious desires and fears of the artist. It is an outstanding inquiry into the depths of the subconscious mind and the fragmented portrayal of motherhood resulting from the absence of a maternal figure. It indirectly makes viewers reflect on the complex nature of motherhood, mother-son bonds, identity, and the unconscious urges in the human mind. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the fragmented depiction of the maternal figure in the artwork serves as a visual expression of the artist’s repressed anguish, desires, and unresolved conflicts which indirectly prompts viewers to confront and reflect on their own psyches.

In short, Salvador Dali’s artwork goes beyond the traditional representations of motherhood and becomes an inquiry into the depths of the unconscious mind. By attempting a psychoanalytic reading, this paper has been able to unearth the inconspicuous symbolism, dream imagery, and Oedipal themes in Dali’s surrealist artwork. It also addresses the themes of motherhood, identity, desire, and fear through the unique interplay of art and psychology, thus making the viewers probe into their unconscious psyches.

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MOTHERHOOD BEYOND GENDER: TRANSGENDER MOTHER IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Motherhood is a unique sense of feeling in life. It marks the most valuable stage in "women's" life in general. Attaining motherhood boosts self-confidence, love and responsibility. In general, the word "motherhood" is confined to women. Moreover, our patriarchal society confines the role of women as mothers. The question arises do we have only biological mothers in our society. The answer makes no affirmation – recent trends in society show up a rising and controversial issue- trans motherhood. Transgender women' eagerness to adopt a child and shower their motherly feeling and affection upon them is significant. Motherhood can neither be restricted to gender nor to a woman who biologically gives birth to her progeny. In India, we have a number of extraordinary transgender mothers who face a lot of challenges while enduring the phase. My chapter proposes to highlight the issue of how the term "motherhood" has been confined to a restricted meaning in terms of gender. My paper will focus on the challenges faced by transgender women in the phase of motherhood and seen as an irrelevant topic in our Indian society. The chapter will also include the struggles and challenges faced by the trans mothers of India notably as a topic of discussion- Gauri Sawant, Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Manabi Bandyopadhyay. My chapter will exclusively deal with the three terms – motherhood, transgender mother and gender. The research methodology will include close reading of the topic chosen for study in support of Gender theory.

Keywords: Motherhood, transgender mother, gender, India.

ARTICLE

but her strong determination led onto her way. Not only she was busy in her academic achievements, but also showed courage to attain motherhood. She adopted a boy child named Debasish. She fought against the patriarchal society and convoluted notions of third gender and attained motherhood. She again proves the fact that motherhood can be attained by all and a true mother's feeling cannot be confined within gender.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion on the life of three transgender mother illuminates the fact that motherhood is not gender specific. The patriarchal society's long-term definition of motherhood has been brought a change by these trans women. There are couple of more names who has attained the title of trans mother. Gauri Sawant, Laxminarayan Tripathi, Manabi Bandhapadhy's journey of being a mother set an example in our society. They came out of the cobwebs of gender notion, proved themselves to be successful mother and added a new dimension to the term 'motherhood'. They are indirectly helping orphan children to get a mother. Society needs to change the perspective as they are equally respectful. Trans mothers are also a part of our social culture and their motherly feelings makes us proud every moment. Hence, 'motherhood' redefined through trans mother of India seeks to change the perspective of all and gain considerable respect.

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show their capabilities of being a mother. Their eagerness to attain motherhood is appreciable. The disappointing fact is societal unacceptance. Motherhood is a unique feeling and it cannot be confined within the walls of gender. A transgender woman showing her desire to adopt a child and give proper care has to pass through different challenges – social as well as psychological. A trans woman might not be giving birth to a child biologically but she might possess the feelings, emotions and the abilities to take responsibility as a mother. Motherhood is not restricted to biological child bearing. We have come across many heart touching stories where babies are seen either dumped in dustbin or left alone roadside by their biological parents. Not every biological mother is capable of taking responsibility of a child. In contrast a trans woman who wants to be a mother is praiseworthy. Our motherland India has many trans mothers who has shown their courage and love as a responsible mother.

A trans mother has to face double challenges – of being a transgender woman and additionally of being a transgender mother. Society constructs gender roles . The term 'gender' is postmodern – its meaning is not fixed, is subjected to change. It is sex which is biological but not the Gender. Gender roles are predetermined and society plays a crucial role in determining these roles. It is society which gives forth the notion that a woman is only capable of playing the role of mother. But a change has been brought in this notion by the transgender mothers who prove to be equally dexterous in carrying out the responsibility of motherhood. They face several challenges while adopting a child irrespective of laws enforced upon . Society needs to change the perspective – their acceptance is highly crucial for trans woman . Despite public campaigns and discussions people fail to provide minimum respect to transwoman. Trans woman's desire to attain motherhood – to become trans mother has gained criticism as well as to some extent appreciation. In a country like

India where people delves into the discourse of religion and superstition, we find stories of extraordinary transgender woman who has gained motherhood through adoption. Praiseworthy and notable names include Gauri Sawant, Laxminarayan Tripathi and Manabi Bandhapadhy. They have expressed their strong desire to be a mother putting aside all the difficulties of life. They have added a new dimension to the term ‘motherhood’.

In India, there are a lot of campaigns and awareness for and of transgender woman to bring a change in the perspective of general public. Conversely, trans woman are entitled as ‘hizra’ begging for money. This is absolutely a discriminating fact – they are normal like others begging for respect and not money. A transgender woman goes through a lot of opposition and when it comes to the question of motherhood, they are restricted. But societal pressure and evil thoughts against trans mothers cannot restrain them from being a mother. Rather the obstacles placed before them as a part of criticism re-illuminates their will power to enjoy motherhood. Such a case is found in the story of India’s first transgender woman to adopt a girl child- first trans mother Gauri Sawant. Gauri Sawant is a transgender activist. She lost her mother at an early age and no one gave attention to her feminine interest. As a child, she had more interest in female gender. She gradually recognised the woman in herself. In the meantime, she had left her home, her family but not her identity. The transition phase – from Ganesh to Gauri – was not as easy as pie. She had to go through all the ups and downs as a transgender woman. As she herself faced a lot of challenges as a transgender woman, an innovation to counsel transgender woman and ‘hijra’ community was undertaken by her lending the aid of Humsafar trust. She didn’t cease to fight against all the odds – she adopted Gayatri, a girl left orphaned after the death of her mother. Gayatri’s grandmother decided to sell Gayatri but Gauri adopted Gayatri and raised her like every mother does. Gayatri’s

strength and immense will power to raise Gayatri is remarkable. Gauri wishes her daughter to achieve her goals in life. She is looked down upon when she walks into the roads with her daughter, faced criticism, critical abuses but she stood unbreakable. The love and affection she provides to her daughter marks her an extraordinary trans mother. She proves that Motherhood is beyond gender – it is about responsibility, love, affection to nurture a child. Her daring attitude towards life marks her an extraordinary beautiful mother. She introduces people with a new concept – trans mother. The hardships of trans mother are never unfolded but Vicks had taken the initiative to feature Gauri Sawant and her daughter in an advertisement content. Tali(2023) a web series based on the life of Gauri Sawant and her journey towards motherhood featuring Susmita Sen gained popularity. So, motherhood cannot be restricted to particular gender, it can be attained by anyone – of any age – of any gender. Another trans mother of India – Laxminarayan Tripathi – a transgender and ‘hijra’ community activist. She was born into an orthodox Brahmin family and afterwards recognised herself as female. Her life was full of controversy but she had shown the courage and love to become a mother. As a transgender mother she has adopted two children and has provided them with utmost motherly care and love. Her struggle as a trans mother is remarkable.

Another name associated with the struggling story of trans mother is Manabi Bandhapadhy. She is the first transgender woman from West Bengal to have completed her PhD in Bengali and served as a lecturer and college principal. She is the first transgender woman to have achieved this peak. Born as Somnath Bannerjee, she had to face ridicule in society as well as family while enduring feminist attitudes. She knew the importance of education and focused on her profession. She is first to become college lecturer as a transgender woman. She received abuses

elaborated critically in order to detect the root of deprivation. Literature in India is a prominent way of expressing the socio-political parameters including gender as gender is a notable factor in determining the identity, activity, role of a person. On the point of short story, Rabindranath Tagore is one of the most celebrated personalities in Indian literature. His short stories are the vivid reflection of the personal and social life of Bengal in colonized era. He deployed his subject matters tremendously capturing the people belonging to different level of the society. Similarly, Mahasweta Devi provided the authentic picture of Indian life in postcolonial India. A tone of resistance as well as challenge is apparent in her writings against the socio-political institutions and authorities in postcolonial period. The position of women is a notable issue for both of the authors that deals with several parameters of the lives of Indian women and no doubt motherhood is a significant issue on the focal point.

The title of the short story ‘The Son of Rashmani’ indicated the identity of the son through maternal link. This link is given prominence in the story whereas the responsibility of not only rearing-bearing but also creating the identity of the child named Kalipada was vested upon Rasmani. The conception of motherhood was reconstructed by Tagore offering Rashmani both the responsibilities of father and mother. It overruled the gender discrimination-based role of father and mother whereas notionally mothers performed the domestic responsibility and fathers are instructed to guide the child for the progress in the manner of father or patriarchy. Through the presentation of motherhood in Rashmani Tagore resisted against the patriarchal dominance upon mother and child. A notable factor is that motherhood was not a burden for Rashmani but it was a way of expressing herself and more specifically leaving an impact upon her son. She made it clear that in spite of taking the conventional maternal care motherhood could offer a space to women to show their

Meet Manabi Bandhapadhy, India 'First Transgender College Principal from West Bengal(2018, March21) <https://yourstory.com>

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MOTHERHOOD FROM COLONIAL TO POSTCOLONIAL INDIA: A DISCUSSION ON THE SELECTED STORIES OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND MAHASWETA DEVI

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ABSTRACT

This chapter primarily focuses on the delineation of motherhood in the selected stories of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahasweta Devi. It tries to deploy the conception of motherhood with reference to the orientation of gender identities, its construction, suggested performances and related conventions on Indian perspectives. Along with gender it delineates with the perceptions of caste, class, social hierarchy that are associated with the focal point. This chapter through textual and theoretical analysis attempts to reconstruct the conventional identities in order to create several new viewpoints. It offers the grounds where motherhood may be considered as the tool of authenticity of women's identity as well as the source of oppression that surpasses the western as well as an indigenous view on women and motherhood. The paper through qualitative method offers the position of Indian mothers from colonial to postcolonial period on socio-political and economic background. It also shows the gaps of postcolonial agendas in India whereas gender and motherhood are not sufficiently elaborated in postcolonial discussion. The chapter overall provokes to think the identities of gender or motherhood as dynamic not stable that suggests to continue critical analysis and discussion on a topic being compatible and sufficient for the academic needs of contemporary time.

Keywords: Child, Family, Mother, Motherhood, Women

ARTICLE

The Oxford English Dictionary defined the term "Subaltern" as "Any officer in British army who is lower in rank than a captain (Hornby 1559)." On Indian perspective the application of the term may be enhanced. From the perspective of gender this term has socio-political and economic significance. In India from colonial to contemporary period the position of women may be considered as subaltern specially women who are economically and socially marginalized. However, from the period of anticolonial resistance in India a tendency is apparent to celebrate motherhood whereas the identity of women had been confined within becoming a mother. This motherhood is not restricted within becoming the biological mother of a child but sometimes the mother of the entire nation that was included in the political agenda of anticolonial and postcolonial activities. Being the mother of uncountable sons of the nation was considered as an essential part of celebration of womanhood. But the personal position, condition or voice of women celebrated as mother was not treated as a significant issue. It was not taken into consideration whether women were personally intended to be the biological mother or the mother of nation or not. Motherhood is generally an identity that was vested upon women by the socio-political institutions. However, the subjugation of women through vested responsibilities of motherhood is not a homogenous conception but heterogeneous in nature. It varies from the background of social, political position and the identities of caste, class, skin complexion. The nature of subjugation of a financially and socially privileged woman is different from the suffering of a financially marginalized woman. Though caste is a notable determinant in this regard but financial position is a significant point to be discussed briefly. Along with highlighting the position of marginalized mother by caste, the subjugation of financially backward mothers of other castes and class is to be

Mahasweta Devi from another point deconstructed the conventional pattern of motherhood. She did so through the interaction between Jashoda and her husband Kangalicharan. Jashoda through her motherhood took autonomy in her household whereas she was on the position to consider herself as the mother of her husband. It is mentioned in the text that “Her mother-love wells up for Kanlgali as much as for the children. She wants to become the earth and feed her crippled husband and helpless children with a fulsome harvest. Sages did not write of this motherly feeling of Jashoda’s for her husband. They explained female and male as Nature and the Human Principle (Simon 1073-74).” This is the resistance against the patriarchal social system that distinguishes men and women on gender and gender performances. It had widened the conception of motherhood from the confinement of biological mother. The male-female conventional relationship is deconstructed in this pattern. The irony of the author is narrated in the text as “Such is the power of the Indian soil that all women turn into mothers here and all men remain immersed in the spirit of holy childhood. Each man the Holy Child and each woman the Divine Mother (Simon 1074).” It has resistance against the conventional division of “Purusha-Prakriti” between men and women in India signifying the fertility of women as the indicator of gender identity. Whereas men stood for human principle they became the decision maker depriving women. The line “all women turn into mothers here” (Simon 1074) is basically an irony as women are forcefully vested the role of mother, the role of breeding children, feeding, rearing and bearing them. The divinity of women is based upon it acting as a criteria of the consideration of becoming Divine Mother. However, the fallacy of this divine motherhood is presented through the predicament of Jashoda who became the divine mother feeding more than fifty children through her breast. When she suffered from breast cancer there was no one to look after her.

authenticity and resistance. In the story Rashmani was the head of the family whereas her husband didn’t take any responsibility in household and financial affair. He was obsessed with the past glory of his ancestors that is a by product of patriarchal hegemony of more specifically hegemonic masculinity in the term of R.W. Connell in *Masculinities* (1995). Rashmani didn’t let her son to be grown up in the manner of his father and ancestors. She declared that as she came from a financially marginalized lower middle class family her son would be grown up in the similar manner. It would make the child capable of knowing the ground reality of the society. The maternal ideology of Rashmani asserted it that it was better for a child rather than being obsessed in the glory of forefathers whereas the present reality is extremely tough to maintain their life style.

Another fact is that Rashmani deconstructed the conception of motherhood. It was not confined within becoming the mother of a child but had been deployed to be the mistress and decision maker of the family. Notably several times she performed the role of mother of her husband who was presented as the man with full unconsciousness about everything. He was in need of a guidance and care that was accomplished by his wife Rashmani. It is mentioned in the text that, “Rashmani had attained middle age before her son came. Up to this time all the pent-up tenderness of the mother in her and all the love of the wife had their centre of devotion in this simple-hearted good-for-nothing husband....after the death of her husband’s mother, she had to assume the position of mother and mistress in one (Tagore 161).” It depicted that the conception of motherhood can be widened to the performance of a guide, counsellor and friend. It is not restricted within becoming the biological mother of a child. Basically this sort of motherhood became a way of interaction between Rashmani and her husband Bhavani. Through the strength such perception of motherhood and interaction it may

be thought that the title of the story ‘The Son of Rashmani’ indicates both Kalipada and Bhavani who are under the guardianship of Rashmani. Here motherhood is the domain to deconstruct the conventional mother-son and husband-wife relationship whereas motherhood directly indicates leadership. This leadership offers assistance to others who are in need of it irrespective of social definition of relationship or gender-based responsibilities.

Rashmani didn’t attempt to conclude the aristocrat life style including food habit of her husband but didn’t offer the same to her son. The unconsciousness of Bhavani made him incapable of seeing the ground reality of their financial incapability that caused his continuous downfall. Remarkably through denying the same to her son Rashmani made the contrast between two type of men and masculinities with reference to her son and husband. Bhavani is the representative of unpractical patriarchal prestige of tradition and Kalipada stood for high realistic mode of growing up whereas paternal lineage doesn’t matter. Notably motherhood was the tool for Rashmani to make such discrimination as it is found in the text that “She neither paid attention to the past greatness of the family, nor to its future glories,— she kept her mind busy with the actual necessities of the present, and those necessities were not small in number or quality (Tagore 159).” Though the masculine ego of Bhavani resisted against this, Rashmani was stable on the position that the identities of paternal forefathers were not enough for the development of a child. The experiences of ground reality of the mother and maternal family was also required. Here motherhood is the tool to justify the relevance of maternal families upon the life of a child. Rashmani was capable of surpassing the conventional restrictions.

Mahasweta Devi in her story ‘Breast-Giver’ presented the conception of motherhood in a different way. Its protagonist

Jashoda is presented as a woman who treated motherhood as the profession. In spite of feeding her twenty children she took the profession of feeding the numerous children of local aristocrat Halder family. However the story ends with the calamity whereas Jashoda died from breast cancer. Mahasweta Devi through this plot posited motherhood on the socio-economical complexities. Jashoda was utilized by the socially and financially elite class whereas her breasts full of milk became the way of earning food. However the point is that due to having enough milk for feeding numerous children Jashoda was celebrated as the divine power or the representative of lion seated goddess as it is mentioned in the text that “The good lord sent you down as the legendary Cow of Fulfillment (Simon 1075).” It presented Jashoda as the mythological figure. However, she was fallen from this divine seat where she became a patient of breast cancer and would not offer milk to any child. This is the irony against social estimation whereas the position of a woman is evaluated upon the ability of providing milk. If providing milk is considered as a quality of mother then such motherhood is also treated as a matter of trading. The observation by the members of Halder family in the text regarding the service of Jashoda certified the matter that “If Jashoda becomes the infants’ suckling-mother, her daily meals, clothes on feast days, and some monthly pay will be enough (Simon 1076).” Here motherhood became a matter of trading and from the perspective of Jashoda a way of earning. However, Mahasweta Devi showed the calamity of treating motherhood as a profession that no one did care for Jashoda where she has extremely suffered from breast cancer. This is the hollowness of celebrating women as the incarnation of divine figure of goddess. The story resisted also against the false celebration of women as mother as this celebration was ceased when such a mother could not offer service. It shows that the celebration of mother was nothing but the celebration of professionalism in motherhood. It didn’t care women or take any responsibility.

MOTHERHOOD AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AMONG THE TEA GARDEN FEMALE WORKERS OF THE BORSILLAH TEA ESTATE IN SIVASAGAR DISTRICT OF ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

Motherhood and reproductive health both are the major determinants of the development of a nation. Maternal and reproductive health is a social phenomenon as much as medical event, where access to and use of maternal and reproductive health care services are influenced by contextual factors. In this study intends to discuss the motherhood and reproductive health among the tea garden female workers of the Borsillah Tea Estate in the Sivasagar district of Assam. Even though women have made an entrance to outer space, it is really a sorry state of affairs for women from tea garden community whose most of the female deprive from their minimal nutrition. This study is exploratory in nature and it's based on both primary and secondary method.

INTRODUCTION

Health is multifaceted concept and thus it defies any precise definition. The narrow definition of health posits it as the absence of disease. World Health Organization's constitution defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The Plantation Labour Act 1951 made it obligatory to the planters to provide accommodation to the labourers in phases. The

In the presentation of motherhood of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahasweta Devi several common factors are apparent. In the selected stories motherhood is a tool through which the relationship between women and the socio-economical institutions can be detected. On the perspective of subaltern identity, motherhood is a parameter through which women are silenced and also women found a voice to express. In the story 'Breast- Giver', the protagonist Jashoda challenged western feminism not treating motherhood as a domestic burden. She treated motherhood as a way of earning money that is a challenge also against the indigenous nationalistic view of glorification of motherhood. Jashoda made it clear that there is not sufficient food for the mothers it's meaningless to celebrate motherhood as the divine protector for a nation. She resisted against both the western and indigenous perceptions of feminist viewpoints. It may be asserted that it's not possible to create a universally agreeable definition of feminism or motherhood as the position of South Asian women may be different from the nature of subjugation of western women. In case of Tagore's short story, motherhood was synonymous of self-identity for the protagonist Rashmani through which her autonomy in the family as well as society could be established. In case of Jashoda of Mahasweta Devi, the conception of subaltern is highly deployed. Here the identity is created not through the position of caste but through economy. Jashoda, a Brahmin woman was subjugated for her financial instability. It provokes to include the economic condition of women in the discussion of female subaltern along with social position in caste and class. This discussion may be elaborated with the reference of *The Joys of Motherhood* of Buchi Emecheta. Emecheta on the one side elaborated the pleasures of women in accomplishing the responsibilities of child bearing, mothering; on the other side expressed the pain, anxiety and complexities of motherhood. In case of 'The Son of Rashmani', motherhood was a pleasure for Rashmoni but she had to take

the financial challenge in growing up her son and maintaining the family. But acceptance of the challenge created the autonomy of Rashmani not only upon the family but upon son. However, in case of Jashoda, it can't be assumed whether Jashoda enjoyed motherhood or not. She took it as the way of livelihood being highly practical on the conception of motherhood that's why she could offer a direct challenge to patriarchy demanding that "you ate my food, now you'll give me food. Fair's fair (Simon 1080)." Whereas Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) displayed the situations whereas women are humiliated for their body, Jashoda attempted to subvert the situation in more practical sense through utilizing the body (breast) as the way of livelihood. Motherhood was not a burden or a way of glorification for her, but simply it was considered as a profession. Though she was elevated to the divine position through her service of feeding numerous children, but the calamity of hollowness of this social elevation is apparent through the lonely tragic death of Jashoda from breast cancer. It provokes to consider motherhood or feminism as a discourse for women concerning their practical problems not being attached with any socio-political institutional connection or any sort of glorification from the same institutional view-points. The pathetic condition of Jashoda shows the lack of health awareness among women of independent India. It shows also the gap in postcolonial India whereas the issues of maternity, family planning, women's health are not sufficiently elaborated. It provokes to reconsider the discursive points of postcolonial studies surpassing the political boundaries.

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to reached this number by a huge margin as the current Maternal Mortality Ratio(MMR) stands.

The maternal deaths are the only result of the delay in decision making and low priority on maternity.

In this regards the A.N.M of Borsillah Tea Estate response,

“Hiding pregnancy is very common among the tea garden female workers as they fear of losing their jobs and ultimately a source of income. This leads to the continuous hardship of plucking tea leaves while they carry the next generation of tea workers in their womb.”

It is clear that the female workers are not aware and concern on their pregnancy. Most of workers have no idea about Prega news. Most of the workers did not know about their pregnancy till three four months. And those who know they hide their pregnancy because they do not afford to loss their job. That why they going to plucking and most of the miscarriage cases are happened. And it is very risky for maternal health also. So, it is clearly seen that job insecurity play most important role for maternal health. If management ensure about their job security, then they may be getting importance on their health.

According to the WHO recommended patient doctor ratio is 1:1000. But in Borsillah Tea Estate ratio is 1:2000. Borsillah Tea Estate's two hospitals have two doctors. But during the field work only one doctor was present there. Newly appointed doctor had not joined at that time. So, this ratio is evident of the poor health status of the workers of the Borsillah Tea Estate.

Components of Reproductive Health

The broad scope of reproductive health includes numerous components.

provision is gradually implemented in most of the gardens. The situation will improve gradually with passage of time. But the condition of the labour lines remained unhygienic for many decades. (S N Singh, 2006) The tea garden community is one of the most marginalised section in our society.

Health awareness is one of the most important indicators of health status of the people irrespective of any social background. Health awareness is very important for a person to remain healthy. Lack of awareness leads to various communicable or non-communicable diseases.

India has made extensive efforts to reduce maternal mortality and to increase access to reproductive health care and in some regions much progress has been achieved. However, the progress made has been uneven and inequitable, and many women still lack access to maternal and reproductive health care. Despite improvements and a multitude of health initiatives over the years, India continues to grapple with high maternal mortality, limited access to healthcare, nutrition disparities, and mental health concerns. The challenge becomes further compounded when we consider the inter-sectionality such as caste, race

India, with a population of more than 1 billion people, has many challenges in improving the health and nutrition of its citizens. Steady infant child mortalities declines have been noted in fertility, maternal, infant and child mortalities and prevalence of severe manifestations of nutritional deficiencies, but the pace has been slow and falls short of national and Millennium Development Goal targets.

Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5 is focused on reducing maternal mortality and achieving universal access to reproductive health care. Under MDG 5, India has committed to reducing maternal mortality to 108 deaths per 100,000 live

births by 2015. The latest estimates of maternal mortality rate (MMR) in India, from 2007 to 2009, show a national average of 212 deaths/ 100,000 live births, a decline of 89 deaths per 100,000 live births since 2001-2003. The highest MMR can be founded in Assam where it is 390, and the lowest in Kerala, where it is 81. India has made extensive efforts to reduce maternal mortality and to increase access to reproductive health care and in some

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- i. To examine the reproductive health of the respondents
- ii. To know the level of awareness regarding reproductive health among the tea garden female worker in the Borsillah Tea Estate
- iii. To analyse the govt. initiatives and tea garden management initiatives for improvement of the reproductive health of the respondents

METHODOLOGY

Methodology of this study intends in both primary and secondary sources of data collection. There are three primary sources are used as method of data collection in this research. They are survey method, interview method and observation method. There are two interview method was applied for data collection, they are face to face interview and telephonic interview. And in the observation method, only non-participant observation method was used for data collection. Interview schedule were used as a tool of data collection in this research. The questions are framed manner of the interview schedule that helps the researcher to achieve the objectives of the study. Majority of the respondents are illiterate, hence instead of questionnaire the interview schedule was used as a appropriate tool for the collection of primary data. The secondary datas were based on Books, Register of India Report, Tea Board of India Report, Economic

survey of Assam Report, Statistical Handbook of Assam and newspapers, magazines', official documents of Borsillah Tea Estate and most relevant and necessary secondary source i.e. internet (Online journals, government websites and other websites). Out of the total respondents, 100 females were selected as sample for this study through simple random sampling method.

ANALYSIS

Maternal health and reproductive health is a social phenomenon as much as a medical event, where access to and use of maternal and reproductive health care services are influenced by contextual factors. The failure of reaching the targets of MDG5 is increasingly being analysed and discussed in terms of equity and recently there have been calls for greater understanding of the patterns of inequity in health within different contexts. Further, there is a need to be beyond identifying single determinants of inequity in health, and to illuminate the inter-relationship between social and structural determinants.

Problems of working place during pregnancy

During the pregnancy periods the casual workers faced lot of problems. They worked hilly area. It is very risky for pregnant lady. But tea garden authority never concerned their working place. The tea garden authority takes responsibility only permanent workers. They manage plain area to plucking for the pregnant permanent workers. But they did not take this kind of responsibility for the casual workers or contractual workers. It was one of the most crucial factors of miscarriage. So, it is one of the major health related problems of the female workers.

Maternal Health

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) intended to reduce maternal mortality ratio (MMR) by around three quarters -560 in 1990 to around 140 during 2015. But India failed

4	9-11	1	1.14
5	Above 11	-	-
Total		88	100

The table 1.2 is evident that out of the total 88(100%) married respondents, there are 15(17.04%) of workers have between 0-2 child, 59(67.04%) of the respondents have in between 3-5 child, 13(14.78%) respondents have 6-8 child and 1(1.14%) respondents number of child is in between 9-11 child.

It is clear that most of respondents have more than three children. They have no idea that it impacts on their health.

Status of Reproductive Health

Awareness and knowledge of reproductive health is most important for both male and female. Health is a broader concept, but reproductive health is one of the crucial components of women's general health. In the present study an attempt has been to understand the responses of awareness on reproductive health among the tea garden female worker of Borsillah Tea Estate.

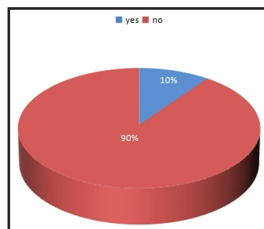


Figure 1.1: Pie Chart showing the status of reproductive health

The figure 1.1 reflects that out of the total 100 respondents only 10(10%) respondents are aware on their reproductive health. On the other hand 90(90%) respondents have no idea on reproductive health. It observed that the educational qualification was impact on their reproductive health. Only 10(10%) respondents have idea on reproductive health. All of them are matriculate. It is clear that the tea garden labourers are not aware on their reproductive health.

- Safe Pregnancy and childbirth
- Family Planning
- Sexual health, fertility and Sex Education
- Maternal health
- Prenatal delivery and Postpartum Care

Awareness on Family Planning

Family planning is closely related with reproductive health of women. Family planning always be considered as social and cultural revolution with its aim providing for change in the traditional values and curb the rate of population growth. Government implements lots of planning and schemes for family planning. Family planning is not only important step for population control. Reproductive health of female is mostly needed for adopting family planning. Too much pregnancy would be challenging for women health as well as it would be deteriorated mother and child's health.

About family planning one respondent responded:

"In contemporary time, there is the facility for family planning, sterilisation. And also have Asha worker who is always ready to advise us. But back in our days, we did not have this kind facility or treatment and nobody told us about this kind of facilities."

In the same study conducted by Singh found that the unlike the older generation, the younger generation is not unaware on family planning. But in the present research the researcher found that awareness on family planning there is not a vast difference between younger and older generation in Borsillah Tea Estate.

Table 1.1: Awareness of the respondents on family planning

Sl. No	Responses	Respondent	
		Frequency	%
1	Undergone sterilisation	20	20
2	Used only contraception	-	-
3	Only heard about family planning	10	10
4	Never heard about family planning	70	70
Total		100	100

The table 1.1 shows that awareness and understanding regarding the family planning. The table indicates that 70(70%) of the respondents never heard about family planning. They are not familiar with sterilisation and contraception. Only 20(20%) respondents are undergone to sterilisation out of the total 100 respondents. 10(10%) respondents are only heard about this concept.

It is clearly seen that majority of the respondents are not aware on family planning and reproductive health as well. In this context it has observed that education is the major determinant of adopting family planning. Because during the field work it has observed that especially illiterate women are not aware on family planning. Even primarily literate women also were aware on preventive measures. Majority of the workers never thought of family planning. In this context one respondent Durgi Majhi age 35 stated:

“I have five children and when I got the news of last unwanted pregnancy then I went to hospital for abort my child then my husband told me that the child is gift from God. We should be taken as Prasad from God.”

From this statement it is clearly seen that the level of awareness of family planning. Along with that we may also say

that they are unaware of the contraception, sterilization, preventive checks and so on. Lack of awareness and lack of education are the major factors of having their poor reproductive health. Despite of lot of facilities provided by govt. and their authority, still most of the workers are take it casually.

In this context GNM from Deopani hospital responded:

“Now a day the younger women workers have opted for sterilisation which is done in the Joysagar hospital. The older women workers did not have any idea about sterilisation. So, they did not have sterilisation.”

In Borsillah Tea Estate 90% respondents never use contraception. Still most of them are never heard about contraceptives. The contraceptive help to the female health. Use of contraceptive methods helps to prevent the sexually transmitted disease also. But in this Tea Estate female workers have no idea on it. According to World Health Organisation 214, million women of reproductive age in developing countries who want to avoid pregnancy are not using contraceptive.

Number of children

The number of children of the respondent reflects the level of awareness on reproductive health and awareness on family planning of the respondents. Through the table 1.2 will helpful to understand the number of children of the respondents.

Table 1.2: Number of children

Sl. no	Number of the children	Respondents	
		Frequency	%
1	0-2	15	17.04
2	3-5	59	67.04
3	6-8	13	14.78

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Table 1.3: Age at marriage of the respondents

Sl. No	Age at marriage	Respondents	
		Frequency	%
1	14-17	40	57.14
2	18-21	20	28.58
3	21-24	10	14.29
4	24 above	-	-
Total		70	100

The above table 1.3 reflects that for 40 (57.14%) numbers of the respondents got married in between 14-17 which belong to highest category of age of the marriage. 20 (28.58) numbers of the respondents were got married in between 18-21 and remaining 10% got married in between 21-24. And no one of the respondents were got married above 24.

It is very clear that among the tea garden workers maximum percentage of the workers practice on early marriage, it is literally known as child marriage. It is seen that most of the tea garden workers do the practice of child marriage. Most of the workers are not aware on constitutional age of the marriage. They don't know that it is illegal activity as well as it is not good for health of the female. Early marriage reflects the level of lack of awareness of the people in context to marriage. They have no idea to the early marriage is how much dangerous for health of the women.

In the same research Talukdar (2009) find out that the tea garden workers are now aware on their age at marriage. But in the study of female workers of the Borsillah Tea Estate, it is clear that still they are not aware on the age at marriage.

Vaccination

The tea garden female worker's most of the time did not go to take of the vaccine during pregnancy. They did not think that vaccination is most important not only for their health also important for their child. They are not concern to any kind of vaccination. Increasing rate of ignorance of vaccination is create challenge of medical science. Increasing the risk of contracting vaccine preventable diseases and disrupting herd immunity, and also impairs the trust in the capacities of health care systems to protect people.

Govt. Schemes regarding female health

Table 1.4: Awareness on governmental health related schemes

Sl. No	Name of the scheme	Yes		No	
		Nos.	%	Nos.	%
1	Rastriya Swasthya Bima Yojna	20	20	80	80
2	Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojna	5	5	95	95
3	Wage Compensastion Scheme	90	90	10	10
4	Atal Amrit Yojna	30	30	70	70
5	Poshan Abhiyaan	5	5	95	95

The table 1.4 it is shows that most of the respondents are not aware on government schemes except of wage compensation scheme. Most of the respondents are aware on wage compensation scheme. Out of the total 100 respondents there are 90(90%) respondents aware on wage compensation. Most of the respondents are unaware on another health related schemes.

Role of tea garden management on healthy motherhood

Medicinal supplement helps to boost natural immunity & fight illness. It also helps to increase metabolism and help to detox. Due to poor economic conditions, the tea garden workers can't able to consume healthy food. For this reason, tea garden hospital authority gives the female workers some kind of medicinal supplement, like iron, folic acid etc.

But the workers did not take this regularly. They take only two or three pills. Another of the pills they throw to the dustbin. (Responded by the doctors of Borsillah Tea Esate). It clearly seen that they have no idea to the importance of this kind of medicinal supplements.

Conclusion

Despite of Govt. Schemes and tea garden Management initiative, the health status of the tea garden female employees still not improve like other females in our nation. It is crucial for adults and adolescents to be knowledgeable about sexual health, reproduction, contraception. And STDs. This will help the reproductive system's physical and emotional well-being of the females. Every pregnancy and delivery are different. To ensure that all women have access to respectful & high-quality maternity care, it is critical to address inequities that affect health outcomes, particularly in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as healthy motherhood.

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structures of family in India shall also be addressed. It addresses how legal amendments are being made in India to give the new woman her rights, going beyond taboo and stigmatization. Through this study, the paper questions the problems that single mothers have to face in India even today. Especially middle aged single mothers with a painful past may go through psychological distress and extreme loneliness, which bear the risk of becoming serious clinical problems in some cases. The paper is also suggestive of how radically Bengali (regional) cinema has shifted from its subject and portrayal of the mother, motherhood and mothering.

Keywords: *single/lone mother, empowered motherhood, feminist motherhood / mothering, individualization, family.*

INTRODUCTION

Indian cinema's increasing glory at the international forum makes for a strong foundation of India's individual identity, cultural diversity and Nationhood. In fact, the Bollywood-centric identity of Indian cinema has disintegrated and the so called 'Regional Cinema' has earned almost equal reverence worldwide. This also has to be attributed, in part, to the age of the 'Viral', popularity of the OTT platforms due to which strict boundaries of language, expression, culture have almost been effaced. The significance of cinema in representing, as well as shaping cultural discourses is undeniable. Moreover, when cinema is distributed to a larger audience through the medium of television, it comes closer to and is potential of greater impact. The 'Mother' and 'Motherhood' have occupied a position of immense importance in cinema and other content, even though it may not have been the central theme in most cases. Motherhood and mothering, in all its forms and dimensions has become a very complex phenomenon in the contemporary society. It is an important socio-cultural dimension, especially in India, where the discourses of motherhood are intricate, complex and ever shifting. From

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READING THE REPRESENTATION OF SINGLE MOTHERHOOD/MOTHERING IN SELECT CONTEMPORARY BENGALI TELE FILMS

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to study and analyse the various dimensions of single motherhood / mothering as represented in three Bengali Television films namely—Ekla Cholo (2015), Maa er Biye (2015) and AbaarEkla Cholo (2016). One pattern that runs through all three is that they portray stories of single mothers, who are in their middle age, and their daughters. This shows an emergent practice in the Indian context of motherhood. This paper attempts to analyse the various social and individual factors behind this emerging social practice of lone mothering, especially with respect to the young women who wish to become single mothers by choice through Assisted Reproductive Technology. Even women embracing motherhood at later stages of life through the same process is another rising phenomenon that will be addressed through the textual reading. Questions regarding the ethical, social, medical discourses on willful older motherhood may be raised. Reading the texts through the theoretical lenses like those of 'empowered mothering', 'feminist mothering', theories of 'individualization' and 'choice' in late modernity, the paper argues that lone motherhood (especially, the one by choice) has made many women transcend the traditional strictures of patriarchal motherhood, which has effected self-development and growth of the mothers as individuals, which is a prerequisite of 'feminist mothering'. How these changing discourses of motherhood / mothering are forming new

motherhood is rising” (“Meet The Single DIY Moms”). She did not want to wait any longer than when she turned thirty- five as she was conscious of her biological clock ticking, but she was not in any relationship with a man at that point of time (had gone through a broken one before that) and she opted for a biological motherhood; being single, she faced numerous social challenges.

One of the most important factors of the youth, crucially aware of their individuality and choice, is that they wait for the ‘right’/ ‘perfect’ partner whom they can marry and this may be eternally delayed, also due to prior experiences of heartbreak (Riya’s mother in *Ekla Cholo* categorically tells her that she would never get a ‘perfect’ partner, hence not to expect such things in life). Some women do not wish to marry for long periods while others do not believe in marriage but wish to become mothers, some may be divorced after years of marriage but do not want to be deprived of motherhood. Such women do not wish to delay parenthood as they find a sense of fulfillment in it, as for women biology is a time-bound aspect. Also, modern urban upper-/ middle class women are probably finding a kind of emancipation and fulfilment in this kind of motherhood/mothering experience:

While love between women and men becomes unstable and predestined for failure, the relationship with a child gives permanence and stability. This may be a reason for lone motherhood. Romantic love for a man, who does not fulfil the expectations, is being replaced with love for a child, who cannot hurt nor leave the woman. Because of the instability of relationships, children become the final alternative to loneliness ... (25)

If one scratches the depths, question may arise that why motherhood? It is a grave responsibility, emotionally, physically

conceiving the mother/motherhood as qualified for ‘divine’ reverence to an absolute social stigmatization, oppression of the mother and erosion of her autonomy in the patriarchal framework, to their struggle for emancipation and well-being, motherhood discourses are variegated. The contemporary socio-cultural scenario witnesses the many dimensions of motherhood/mothering like the single, adoptive, surrogate, working, queer, barren mother, or even, the no-mother (childfree by choice). This paper seeks to study the representation of single-motherhood/mothering in three contemporary Bengali tele films: *Maa er Biye*, *Ekla Cholo*, and its sequel *Abar ekla Cholo*. The extremely significant and relevant contemporary motherhood/mothering issues in India can be addressed through a reading of these films. The themes of single motherhood, motherhood through IVF, older motherhood, working motherhood, the traditional mother and the transcending mother, shall be analyzed.

The paper attempts to study some of the dimensions of single motherhood, though focusing primarily on the ‘single mother by choice’. It seeks to analyze the various social and individual factors behind this emerging social practice of lone mothering, especially with respect to the young women who wish to become single mothers by choice through Assisted Reproductive Technology. In this regard, the paper strongly argues that mothers like those in the films are transcending patriarchal forms of motherhood and transitioning to ‘empowered’ and ‘feminist mothering’. It also touches upon some of the problems that older lone mothers undergo, like, loneliness, depression, and existential crisis, lack of purpose or meaningfulness in life. How the new motherhood discourses are changing the contemporary family structure in India, may be addressed. This study shall also reflect the evolution in the representation of the ‘mother’ / motherhood in Bengali films.

DISCUSSION

To speak about these three films, this is almost an unimaginable shift from the content that box-office block-busters provide. When it comes to catering to the taste of the middle-class Bengali audience, conditioned to the taste of Bengali daily soaps with traditional family drama, these three films are bold in their subject and treatment and are much ahead in time than the changing real scenario of Indian culture and society. It may be argued that some comic and typical elements have been stuffed in these otherwise ‘different’ films to mellow the boldness of the subject, mainly because these are television films, a new venture initiated at that time by *Zee Bangla Cinema*. These three films, directed by Sudeshna Roy and Abhijit Guha, are primarily stories of single mothers, of willful lone motherhood by IVF, conflicts of these forms of single motherhood etc.

The film *Ekla Cholo* (the title can be read as a call for ‘going alone’) is the story of a young girl Riya (played by Saayani Ghosh) who has been brought up by a ‘single mother’ (played by Joon Malia) and the girl wishes to become a single unmarried mother when she repeatedly fails to pursue her partner for marriage and finally their relationship ends. She desires to be a single mother, precisely, an unmarried mother and to have a child through In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF) technology. Riya reveals to her mother that she wants to be a single mother like her and it is understood from her words that she feels confident about bringing up the child without a father because she has seen how single-handedly her mother has brought her up. In *Abar Ekla Cholo*, the sequel, it is Ranita, Riya’s mother, who wants to have an individual meaningful life of her own, she is tired of performing the traditional duties of a middle aged mother in mothering her daughter’s child, after voluntarily retiring from her job. For this, she attempts single motherhood at an older age through IVF.

Maa er Biye addresses the perpetual themes of loneliness of an ageing single mother (by circumstance) and the daughter’s ‘quirky’ ways to get her mother married to a suitable match to beat this loneliness.

The very idea of a single mother has traditionally evoked a sense of sympathy or criticism for the mother, it is inclusive of sorrow, difficulty, struggle, even taboo and the like. That one could willfully become a single unmarried mother by choice despite enough time and scope for marriage and for having a baby out of that marriage, is probably still unthinkable in a society that operates so much on normativity and traditionalism. Yet, it is not quite unthinkable in this very Indian society, where, long back, Sushmita Sen became a young single unmarried mother through adoption and set an example of the new ‘empowered’ Indian woman who sets her own life choices. Women like Neena Gupta have boldly carried herself as an unwed single mother in an Indian society which was far more typical and conservative back then.

In the movie, Riya primarily represents those young people in the society, increasing in number (though we know more about the celebrities than of common people), who are opting for single-parenthood without marriage. She aspires to be a ‘single mother by choice’ rather than a ‘single mother by circumstance’. The ‘single mother by choice’ is not an unreality in India, rather it is a phenomenon that has come into existence since quite long, though many women have not come out in the open to share their IVF motherhood journeys. Filmmaker Anindita Sarbadhicari is one of the first women in India, certainly the first in Kolkata, to become a single mother through IVF and also bring it into the public eye. *The Times of India* report of 2018 that covers stories like that of Sarbadhicari, states that “now doctors say the number of single women opting elective

Then, do these women see motherhood as the sole identity providing factor in their lives? I would like to argue against this claim. ‘Empowered Mothering’ requires that motherhood does not define or help women realize their identity (7). When one sees Riya’s actual mothering practices in the movie *Abar Ekla Cholo* when her child is born and Riya is a new mom, one finds that she has more things in life other than intensively mothering the baby. She has her job (paid employment), she goes out for movies and shopping while she engages her mother and husband in taking care of the child. She is often faced with the irritation of these two people but she is least bothered and it can certainly not be labelled as her whimsicality. She seems to believe that mothering is not her sole responsibility, she divides the care giving responsibilities between her and her husband Rupam, allotting him this duty for two days a week while on the others she does the duties. Empowered mothers, elaborates O’ Reilly, look to friends, family and their partners to assist in childcare, they believe in ideas of co-mothering and other-mothering, full-time intensive mothering demanded in patriarchal motherhood is not practiced by such mothers, they create a mode of mothering that is more compatible with paid employment (7). Riya represents these mothering practices/values in *Abar Ekla Cholo* and mothers from a position of agency/authority; she is also seen to be caring enough for her child, attending to his needs, experiencing the maternal ambivalent feelings of love, weariness and frustration in the mothering processes. But a conflict arises when Riya’s dependence on her mother Ranita for looking after the child while she is away enjoying the other things in her life, Ranita being the independence-loving woman rebels against being the over-engaged ‘nanny’ for her grandchild. She has repeatedly made it clear that she loves to enjoy life on her own, she has other things to do than only fulfill her ‘duties’ as Riya’s mother by taking care of Riya’s baby all the time. Ranita says that devoting all her

and economically more demanding; especially in a country like India, living as a single mother has even had taboo attached to it. Riya’s mother attests to this when she says that for twenty years she has intensively taken care of Riya, faced a lot of hardships in single-handedly bringing Riya up after the latter’s father left them for another woman; she could have brought in another man in her life but rather than focusing on herself, she engaged in a paid job. It may be argued that embracing motherhood singularly, without feeling the need for a man’s ‘support’ and having a child who is solely the mother’s ‘own’, who, the mother hopes, will remain her closest and strongest support throughout her life’s journey—all this lends her a sense of empowerment and meaningfulness about her life. Also, it is an empowerment and liberation from a ‘patriarchal discourse’ as there Riya justifies her desperation for a child saying if she has to walk the path of life without a man, the child will be her “*abalamban*” (support system). In *Abar Ekla Cholo*, this time it is Ranita (Riya’s mother) who fails to find fulfillment in men at this advanced stage in life, she again fails to enter into a stable relationship with the man she dates, she is frustrated with a life where she has to constantly look after Riya’s child and chooses to have a fresh new life of her own by having a child through IVF.

This deliberate rejection of the patriarchal normative system that Riya and her mother are seen to do in both the films, *Ekla Cholo* and *Abar Ekla Cholo*, qualifies as part of the ‘Feminist Mothering’ (as conceptualized by Andrea O’ Reilly and others) process. Klett-Davies refers to many critics/theorists and her own research findings (though specifically rooted in Germany and Britain, the observations transcend time and space) and states that the feminist view of lone motherhood focuses on the positive aspects for the children and the liberating effect on the mother (16). She refers to Heiliger according to whom “children with

lone mothers receive more time, care and love, they are more independent . . . sometimes especially talented” (16). This is better achieved in cases when the parent is single from the very beginning, the child does not have to go through conflicts and separation between parents, custodial battles, degeneration of quality of life due to balancing acts with others in the family etc.; rather they learn to be more independent and self-dependent. This claim can be testified by Sarbadhicari’s comments on how she is bringing up her son single-handedly despite her work commitments and what positive effects this is having on the boy’s growth (“Antorjatik”). A report published in July 2022 in the *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* states a research (carried out in Delhi-NCR) on the effect of single-parenthood on children who are now young adults. About the positive side it states that these young people have “an increased sense of responsibility, decision-making, and resilience can be considered while dealing with the unique challenges faced by them” (Sangeet and Singh). One side of the argument may be that Riya in *Ekla Cholo* and her mother Ranita in *Abar Ekla Cholo*, both want a baby through IVF to fill a ‘gap’ in their lives, to find meaning, bliss, engagement and fulfillment. This may be interpreted as one kind of selfish/self-centric behaviour while the baby may be deprived of many things or have to face unique situations in this alternative family arrangement. Mothering from a position of authority and agency is more easily possible when one goes for lone mothering and “both mothers and children benefit when the mother lives her life and mothers from a position of agency, authority, authenticity, and autonomy (*Feminist Mothering* 6-7). But it also true that since she has so much urge for a baby, she can give more love and care than others in a traditional familial arrangement as explained above. Moreover, seeking motherhood for one’s own well-being and shaping the mothering discourses on one’s own terms is again part of ‘Empowered Mothering’ practice where “empowered

mothers do not always put their children’s needs before their own. . .” (*Feminist Mothering* 7).

It is her mother’s mothering that shapes Riya’s idea of, even obsession for, motherhood. Mother’s ‘legacy’ of mothering is important in shaping a daughter’s mothering practices when she grows up and embraces motherhood. Rose L. Glickman’s observation stands true— “The mother’s struggle to shake off the dust of tradition was [is] the basic dynamic of the daughters’ formative years” (qtd. in Andrea O’ Reilly, *Feminist Mothering* 5-6). In this case, this mother-daughter duo set an example of ‘Feminist Mothering’ when they reject the need of a man for their motherhood/mothering processes. Riya, on finding out that she has successfully been impregnated through IVF, shares her happiness with her mother and clearly tells her that she wants to be a single-mother like her. Riya’s mother had been betrayed by her husband and as Riya tells, her mother had repeatedly cautioned her, since her childhood, against believing in men easily. This is part of the mothering process of her mother that has partially shaped Riya’s thoughts and her sense of independence. Riya’s mother has been portrayed as a strong, independent, progressive woman who is not strictly conditioned by traditional patriarchal social discourses. She is not hyper-reactive or melodramatic regarding Riya’s decision to be a mother. She herself engages in a romantic relationship with a man at this stage in life, she believes in independent living which is better understood in the sequel movie *Abar Ekla Cholo*. Though her character shows moments of ambivalence where she acts somewhat stereotypically, insisting on Riya’s marriage, the necessity for the name of Riya’s child’s father and worries about how she would tell Riya’s *naani* (maternal grandmother) about this unwed IVF-pregnancy etc., but all these do not seem to be excessively typical or strongly melodramatic insinuations; they must also be seen as issuing from a mother’s concern for her daughter.

baby, the desire of the mother to be a “good mother” and the guilt or anxiety related to it (*Encyclopedia of Motherhood* 51). Her subconscious dilemma may be about whether she is doing something wrong with her unborn child by not providing the traditional provisions that are supposed to give the child ‘stability’, ‘security’ and ‘comfort’:

Here latent in her could be the anxiety as to whether she will be able to provide what her child deserves or what is necessary for his happiness and growth, here she is driven by the social and cultural discourses. The psychological relationship based on love and hate is [thus] also shaped by social and cultural conditions of mothering and the internalized image of a ‘good mother’, which women try to achieve (*Encyclopedia of Motherhood* 51).

Klett-Davies precisely states in the book *Going it Alone? : Lone Motherhood in Late Modernity* that the idea of ‘individualization’ is an integral part of late modernity, it is the most influential social theory of the present times; it puts the individual at the centre of the society, it allows the individual to exercise agency, power, make choices and construct one’s way of life (3). It can firmly be argued that this idea of ‘individualization’ may be read in context and explains, to a great extent, the case of wishful lone mothering or the category ‘single mother by choice’ as seen in the films. Individuals’ lives are no longer governed by traditional assumptions/expectations. Klett-Davies refers to Bauman who correctly observes that ‘choice’ is integral to modernity but the availability of choice is the undoing of relationships or deinstitutionalization of them (25). Each of these three films portrays a non-traditional family that is headed by a single-mother who has a single grown up daughter. The older mothers in these films seem that they do not want to bring in a man in between the mother-daughter duo, the ‘stability’ of which would otherwise

time for Riya and her child disrupts her free living. Ranita wishes to carve an ‘individual’ life for herself and ‘chooses’ late lone motherhood as her path. The theory of ‘individualization’, ‘choice’, alternative families, and even older motherhood and confirmed lone motherhood are features of ‘late modernity’ and explain the kind of motherhood/mothering that Ranita represents, especially in the sequel film.

Another equally important factor is the economic independence linked with the modern (late modernity), urban, educated, upper-/middle class women’s strongly found idea of individual independence to make their own choices for their own happiness and well-being, rather than sacrificing all for others in the patriarchal family system. Riya works at an advertising agency; she reiterates that self-sufficient, economically independent single women can carry the responsibility of a child and that the society should have no problem even after sixty-five years of India’s independence if an unmarried girl wants to be a single mother. When Riya goes to fertility clinics, she is turned away by them as they insist on the existence of the father or, at least, the father’s name. It is slightly ironic when these mothers themselves become keen on knowing the donor’s name later in the movies, but then, this fluctuation is natural in a process of transcendence.

The father’s name is an important legal-cultural aspect in India that has been a hurdle for many single mothers, since the schools harass these mothers by asking for the child’s father’s name. Pooja’s mother Aparna in *Maa Er Biye* relates her struggle when in the absence of Pooja’s real father, one of his friends had given Pooja his name (surname) for all documentation purposes. This has been a true story in India, testified by many single moms. Laws have gradually undergone amendment with the changing socio-cultural discourses. In 2015, the Honourable Supreme Court of India gave the verdict that single women could claim the sole

guardianship of their children without naming the father or needing his consent. In 2016 the Ministry of External Affairs stated that only one parent's name on the passport was enough ("Single DIY Moms"). Now children can even use the mother's surname which is a furthering of the rights and an empowerment of single mothers.

Riya and Ranita both take the help of Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) that refers to processes like IVF etc. Questions of legality, ethics, transcendence from private and public patriarchy, and issues of psychology arise in this context. Young unmarried women becoming mothers through reproductive technology has been a dubious issue in India, but the latest laws state that any woman who is above the age of twenty-one and is a citizen of India may avail ART services, which therefore includes single women, regardless of their marital status, who can avail this rightfully (Sahay, "IVF for Single Women in India"). Questions become more complex in Ranita's case as she embraces what can be called 'older motherhood'. Is it a 'luxury' for an economically over-stabilized woman? Whether older motherhood through IVF is progress for medical science at the cost of women's health? Is it a subconscious challenge or obsession that independent minded women throw at themselves to believe they have autonomy over their body? Or is it a way to a fresh new life and purposeful living for an ageing single woman/mother? Doctors at many clinics and finally, Dr. Subhankar Basu (Koushik Sen) do not give Ranita consent for IVF easily due to her age (she is above forty). But as her reports are good, she becomes eligible for IVF and this becomes a great opportunity for Dr. Basu to lead such a challenging project. This conflict between the woman's affirmation of autonomy over her body with respect to motherhood and the stretches of medical science for human good, the ethical question of using the ageing female

body as an object of experiment, is crucial and may be addressed through films like this. Older motherhood like this is often considered a better choice since the woman is experienced, has more knowledge of and power over her 'maternal body', the emotional turmoil of a younger mother is supposedly lesser due to what may be called a 'cathartic maturity' and greater emotional stability. Ranita seems confident as she has enough experience of mothering and care, though she is slightly pained by the usual physical strains of pregnancy.

Klett-Davies states that 'individualization' is primarily a kind of 'detraditionalization' but it may not mean a total "demise of tradition", rather a transformation of it (29-30). Riya's story in *Ekla Cholo* begins with her desire to marry; in the comic day-dreaming sequences Riya keeps on visualizing about having a baby from a prospect donor's sperm, she sees a 'family photograph' being clicked with that donor, a kid resembling the father (donor) and herself in the frame. In short, she visualizes a 'happy family', a somewhat 'complete family'. This, it may be argued, contradicts her commitment of singlehood as a mother; but that she has always wanted marriage and thereby, it is implied, a 'family'. This ardency of her desire may have developed due to the fact that she has never known what it is to grow up in a traditional/normative family, a desire for a normative sense of fulfilment. I would like to argue that this ambivalence in her desire is not a mere dilemma / conflict of desire, or hypocrisy in her wish to transcend normative patriarchy. It may be explained as part of her 'maternal ambivalence' in setting the parameters for 'mothering' the child she wants, whether to put herself before in desiring the child singularly or to prioritize the traditional needs of a child, what would mean loving the baby and herself simultaneously. Maternal ambivalence, as a concept, refers to the coexistence of love and hate emotions in the mother for her

and struggles to raise the child, social stigma, insecurity from men who think she is easily available etc. These need to be continuously addressed at the clinical, socio-political, cultural and economic levels. That such ‘regional’ television films, around the middle of the last decade, have dealt with subjects that portray an increasing social reality of India and its various dimensions, films that portray such ‘mother’ characters who are not traditional, is a radical shift in the world of cinema, television and online content. A portion of Bengali cinema and television, for these reasons, may be considered much ahead in time and very global in approach.

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be ruined. These mothers have a peaceful and settled life of their own with their work, their daughters, household work, self-enjoyment etc. In *Maa er Biye*, when Pooja’s mother gets to know that Pooja has been arranging for her marriage, she turns totally insane and would no way allow any man in their rather ‘stable’, ‘comfortable’ familial space that they have made for themselves despite initial struggles. The emergence of lone mothering has further changed the picture of the traditional family structure in India which has been undergoing constant evolution. Nuclear families, adoptive families, unmarried cohabitation, separated couple, families where child is cared by grandparents as parents live away for work (an example is the Bengali film *Posto*) etc. have been the alternative forms of family in late modernity. Klett-Davies refers to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim to term such family structures as the “post-familial family”, a result of individualization (25) and the focus of such families is shifting from partnership-centred to being children centred (25) and this again explains the need for a child in the lone(-ly) mother household in the films. This gives a picture of the changing social reality in contemporary India where the postmodern ‘families’ (30) are on the rise rather than the traditionally structured Indian family.

The theory of ‘Individualization’ and ‘choice’ in choosing lone motherhood may not be entirely befitting in case of the film *Maa Er Biye*. It has a serio-comic wrapper but at the core raises a very serious, significant and relevant issue—that of an ageing lonely single mother (by circumstance) and her future when her daughter is married off or goes away for studies/career. The mother in this film is evidently not like Ranita in the other two films who enjoys her lone status. Pooja’s mother suffers from extreme loneliness. She is a professor of Bengali in a college, but after coming back from work, she only wishes that Pooja will

spend some time with her. She repeatedly tells this to Pooja, who being over-indulgent in her own life in college, parties, with friends, and mobile phone addiction, is not able to understand the needs of her mother. She is too busy to take her mother to the doctor despite having committed to accompany. Aparna does not want Pooja to go abroad for her studies. Aparna is a lone mother by circumstance. She had become an unwed mother and due to some miscommunication, was left alone by the man who fathered Pooja. Aparna and her new-born daughter were brutally thrown away from the man's house (in his absence) when she went to meet his parents and ask them to accept her and Pooja as part of their family. Suppression of this pain and being repeatedly haunted by it even at later stages of life results in psychological distress; her sense of 'lack' and 'loss' due to Pooja's individual adult life (separate from the mother's) may develop a sense of being unwanted and aggravates her loneliness, all of which, it may be argued, may build up into a state of depression which is evident when the mother repeatedly tells her daughter that when the latter comes back home after a long absence, she would find her mother dead. As a mother, it may assertively be said that she suffers from 'intergenerational maternal ambivalence' (*Encyclopedia of Motherhood* 52). Such psychological/emotional distress often become serious clinical problems for middle aged mothers. The 'problem' of loneliness may be perpetual, but in contemporary times, despite spending hours at the paid employment, having access to various forms of entertainment, better communication with people through technology, why is this problem more excruciating than ever? This is a grave psychological question that needs to be addressed immediately. She never got the support of anyone, made sacrifices, took the pressure of filling up the gap of the father, worked extremely hard to bring up her daughter alone. The importance of paid employment plays a very significant

role in such cases because the concept of state support is not much prevalent in India. The character of Aparna inspires the study of the various problems faced by single mothers in India. When they are young they face challenges in raising the child, facing stigmatization, unwanted approaches from men, some face serious financial distress etc., while at a later stage in life there are other challenges like being 'doubly-loned' when the adult son/daughter leaves to make a life of their own, which is now a common social phenomenon in all families and an important subject of gerontological studies.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the paper has primarily argued, through a close textual reading of the films, that lone motherhood, in all its forms, has been emergent in the contemporary Indian society which is driven by ideas of individualization, choice making, economic independence, transcending traditional strictures etc. It delineates how there has been a shift in the perception of single motherhood from stigmatization, struggle and suffering to the idea of women opting for lone motherhood by choice. This postmodern celebration of singlehood, it has been argued, is transcendence from patriarchal motherhood for these women/mothers and this helps them practice 'empowered mothering' and even 'Feminist mothering'. Empowered Mothering and Feminist Mothering effect social change and that is reflected when these films are read from such perspectives. The paper discusses how family structures are changing in India due to these factors. Instances of how young Indian women are taking progressive steps, amendment in laws and other such factors are leading to a major social change and change in the discourses of motherhood. Albeit huge trappings of 'toxic' typicality still exist. The paper has also thrown light on the common problems that single mothers face—psychological issues (like persisting depression) around loneliness

independent. For her, becoming a mother is a choice, freed from the bio-deterministic patriarchal views on motherhood that often emphasizes the physiological abilities of a woman in birthing a child. As a single mother, Medemla has her fair share of challenges to overcome. However, the toughest ordeals in her journey to becoming a mother to little Martha are caused by the obvious ‘genetic and cultural disparities’ between the two. Taking note of how different her daughter looked when compared to herself, Medemla observes:

I was an Ao-Naga, of medium height, fair complexion and still young at twenty-six. And Martha? Dark as a bat, with distinctly aboriginal features and a head of thick curly hair already showing signs of an Afro! I was all too aware of these obstacles but strangely, they only reinforced my desire to take this child and make her my daughter. (Ao, *Laburnum*, 69)

Medemla’s anxieties are not unfounded. Adoptive families, especially interracial ones, often face othering, even in close-knit communities (Ruggiero and Clark). However, anthropological studies on adoption practices has conclusively demonstrated that “adoption is neither curious in terms of rarity, nor is it curious in terms of supposed deviation from a norm that is biological kinship” (Leinaweaver 4). Groundbreaking works like Kath Weston’s *Families we choose: lesbians, gays, kinship* and Micaela di Leonardo’s “The Female World of Cards and Holidays” have foregrounded the idea that all kinship is, in fact, adoptive, and that consanguinity and sharing the same bio-genetic material are not sufficient for sustaining kinship ties. In Ao’s story, Martha is subjected to relentless bullying because of the colour of her skin and the texture of her hair. However, her passionate assertion to her mother and her grandmother that she accepts them as her family, despite the differences in exteriority, serves as a crucial

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REPRESENTATION OF MOTHERS, MOTHERING AND MOTHERHOODS IN SELECTED SHORT STORIES OF TEMSULA AO

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ABSTRACT

The terms 'Mother', 'Mothering' and 'Motherhood' gain polymorphic significations in the context of the ever-changing contours of gender ideologies in the twenty-first century. The present paper aims to study the politics and ethics of representation of maternity in selected short stories of Tamsula Ao. Ao writes about the othering of mothers, the victimization and violation of mothers as well as the triumph of mothers over various adverse life experiences. Her narratives offer illuminating insights into the influence of children and men in the lives of these women who mother. The inclusivity of approach and the wealth of diversity when it comes to the depiction of mothers and their lives in Ao's narratives are noteworthy.

Keywords: Motherhood, diversity, victims, kinship, sexuality, emancipation.

ARTICLE

Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering* asserts that “Women’s maternal role has profound effects on women’s lives, on ideology about women, on the reproduction of masculinity and sexual inequality, and on the reproduction of particular forms of labor power” (11). Motherhood, as an experience or an identity impacts women’s lives so thoroughly that at the outset of this discussion, it shall be imperative to

acknowledge the limitations of the discursive practices of Motherhood Studies. Motherhood, in its entirety or totality, is truly an inexhaustible area of inquiry. The contemporary times are witnessing rapid changes in societal perceptions of mothers and motherhoods. As such, it merits taking a closer look into the representational aspects of women’s reproductive and caregiving labour in the twenty-first century. As an impassioned, lifelong supporter of women’s rights in North-East India, Dr. Tamsula Ao (1945-2022) has written about women extensively. She was the recipient of the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award and she was also honoured with the Padma Shri for her contributions as a writer, educator and ethnographer. Several of Ao’s narratives successfully manage to capture the defining aspects of motherhood while simultaneously rejecting any notion of a monolithic, homogeneous maternal experience. The present paper will focus on the depiction of motherhood in selected short stories from Ao’s collections *These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone* (2006), *Laburnum for my Head* (2009) and *The Tombstone in my Garden* (2022).

Social scientists insist that no two women approaches and experiences motherhood in the exact same manner. Contemporary motherhood studies recognize the need to embrace intersectionalities, acknowledging the fact that mothers’ lives are shaped differently based on factors like race and class, among others. Ao’s stories also represent different kinds of motherhoods. She asserts that there are different ways of becoming a mother, and it is important to validate non-traditional forms of mothering and ‘kinning’, including adoption and fostering. In the short story, “Three Women”, Ao takes us on an exploration of motherhood as experienced by three generations of women in a family. Medemla, a young woman employed as a nurse, decides to take on the responsibility of adopting and raising a child on her own. Medemla is unmarried and financially

of anthropology, psychiatry, and kinship theories in documenting the experiences of mothers raising CBSV. Studying the pregnancies caused by the sexual assault of women in Rwanda in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi population, Odeth Kantengwa finds that in spite of difficulties including the stigma of rape and a severe 'lack of psychosocial resources', "motherhood played a positive role for many women, often providing a reason to live again" (417). Scholars like Brison argue that reestablishing happiness and trust through motherhood can provide survivors with a reason to live again and help them remake their selves (158) while Bernstein et. al have deduced that the capacity to tolerate negative emotion ('distress tolerance') could be an important component of resilience (265-66). Ao acknowledges that sexual abuse within the framework of intimate relationships is multiply problematic given how it negatively affects the family dynamics and leaves adverse lasting impact on the children being raised in such households. However, her stories track a valorizing trajectory for these mothers, narrativizing their journey from victimhood to agency and rehabilitation.

Motherhood is as much about a mother's subjectivity and her unique, intimate, personal experiences as it is about the perceptions of her children towards her. In "The Potmaker", Sentila inherits her mother Arenla's talent and love for pottery. Initially, the mother refuses to teach her trade to her daughter because she does not wish to burden her daughter with a low-paying, labor-intensive profession. However, as she is pressured by the village elders as well as Sentila herself, Arenla soon caves and begins giving lessons to her daughter. Arenla proves to be a difficult and spiteful teacher and after a disastrous year of these unhelpful lessons, Sentila fails to make any progress in learning the craft. It is only after she learns to genuinely emulate her mother's skillful hand movements and her keen eye for details that Sentila manages to create a pot that matches the ones made

reminder of the idea that a successful parent-child relationship requires "upkeep, assent, and intentional or matter-of-fact fostering" (Leinaweaver 5), and not mere assertion of blood ties.

In "Soaba", Ao offers another moving depiction of maternal affection that extends beyond biology against the backdrop of armed conflicts, violence and counter-insurgency measures in a small town in Nagaland. Imtila, the embittered wife of the notorious leader of a Home Guards outfit, decides to care for an intellectually disabled orphan who seeks shelter at her husband's home:

The coming of the boy, now called Supiba, therefore was a welcome diversion for the lonely woman. She would go out to the shed where he stayed and watch his simple-minded activities like rolling on the ground or playing with sticks and stones all by himself. Seeing how dirty he was, one day she ordered her servants to give him a proper bath and bought him new clothes to wear instead of the rags he was always seen in. He was given a free run of the compound but was not allowed inside the house. By and by his section of the wood shed was cleaned up and a new cot was put in on her orders. She always enquired whether Supiba had been given his meal or not. This transference of affection to the idiot began to have a strange effect on Boss's wife; for the first time in her life she began to think for herself and assess the true nature of her husband's work. (Ao, *These Hills*, 15)

While the term 'adoption' bears legal connotations emphasising upon the inheritance of property and family name, fostering a child involves a more fluid and flexible process of caregiving. Imtila is already a mother to multiple children when Soaba/Supiba comes into her life. Yet, when the boy is violently murdered by her husband, her grief is profound and deep, like

that of any parent: “With a piercing cry of anguish, Imtila rushed to the body of the fallen idiot crying over and over again, ‘Oh my poor boy, were you born for this? Why did I let you come into this evil place?’ She was disconsolate, weeping and muttering these words again and again in a monotonous dirge-like tone” (Ao, *These Hills*, 18). Imtila’s lament proves that not only did she love Soaba as her own, in the absence of any biological or social kinship, but also how she viewed her inability to protect him as her maternal failure. Her decision to prepare Soaba’s corpse for burial by dressing him in her husband’s best three-piece suit is indicative of her newfound courage, in a stark departure from the timid ‘Boss’s wife’ who chose to silently witness the atrocities committed by her husband under the guise of maintaining peace and order in the town. Despite the differences in tone and resolution, “Soaba” and “Three Women” can be read as celebrations of empowering mothering ideology and the other mothers, who are not biological parents, but mothers and maternal figures in their own rights.

Crimes against women, especially those of a sexual nature, are common occurrences in conflict-ridden or war-ravaged regions. Several of Ao’s short stories represent the unquantifiable trauma of women who are sexually assaulted and subsequently become pregnant and the multifarious challenges they face in raising the Children Born of Sexual Violence (CBSV). Lipoktula in “Three Women” conceives her daughter Medemla after she is raped by her neighbour while her husband is away. Out of fear of bringing shame to her husband and her family, she chooses to conceal the truth of Medemla’s parentage. Years later, her decision cost Medemla dearly when she fell in love with a man who happened to be the son of her biological father, making her his half-sister, albeit unacknowledged, and making their union impossible. Dolly Kikon’s 2015 monograph, *Life and Dignity: Women’s Testimonies of Sexual Violence in Dimapur (Nagaland)*

highlights the culture of silence on the topic of sexual assault of women and the frequent instances of victim-blaming in Naga societies when such incidents do come to light. As Kikon observes, “There was a popular belief that women got ‘it’ (sexual violence) because they asked for it” (26). Moreover, it is found that “two institutions in Naga society emerged as primary sites of violence- the family unit and the Naga armed groups” (Kikon 28). Reflecting this unfortunate ground reality, the perpetrators of sexual violence in Ao’s stories also range from men in the armed forces and other state machinery to men in the community, and the men in the women’s own homes. Repasongla in “Saga of a Cloth” is violated by the man she would eventually marry while Lily Anne in “Tombstone in My Garden” is raped by her new husband about a month into their marriage. In both instances, the women, despite being brutalized by the encounter with their assailants, take a step back from their painful experiences in order to focus on their impending motherhoods and subsequently on raising their children. Reflecting on her motherhood, Lily Anne notes that although her joy was tainted by the memories of how the child was conceived, she was grateful to have her son with her:

Yet when my firstborn son was placed in my arms, I experienced a mysterious and extraordinary sense of joy and fulfillment. But at the same time it galled me when I remembered how I wrested this piece of heaven from the brute of a husband on that fateful night... From the moment I held my firstborn in my arms, and later my secondborn, my world became an exclusive zone for just the three of us. (Ao, *Tombstone*, 116)

The recent decades have witnessed a growing interest among scholars of anthropology, psychiatry, and kinship theories in documenting the experiences of mothers raising CBSV. The recent decades have witnessed a growing interest among scholars

like their father she sounded sometimes! (Ao, *Laburnum for My Head*, 15)

According to Akshita Arora, one of the biggest hurdles in Indian women's empowerment is their inability to manage their personal finances independently and responsibly (220-1). Ao's narrative thereby makes a pointed statement on how financial literacy and the ability to make informed choices regarding the handling of one's material assets are typically and incorrectly regarded as masculine traits. "Laburnum for My Head" dismantles the low competence feminine stereotype. As a powerful protagonist, Lentina refuses to be reduced to the expectations of ideal, docile motherhood and stakes her claim over power that is instead reserved for men.

Adrienne Rich, in *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976), made a memorable statement about the crucial link between motherhood and female sexuality. Judith C. Daniluk reiterated this position in *Women's Sexuality Across the Lifespan* (1998), suggesting that birthing, breastfeeding and other bodily experiences related to childbirth and child-rearing leave an indelible impact on a woman's perceptions of herself as a sexual being. However, it is important to note that the sexuality of mothers is still an immensely divisive and taboo topic. Regarding literature and media, while there is no dearth of highly sexualized images of women, instances of representations of mothers at different stages of the family life cycle as sexually active and attractive people are usually quite rare, except for pornographic, fetishistic imagery. As Shipps and Caron have pointed out:

Women may turn to the popular or academic literature on mothering to understand their sexual feelings when breastfeeding their child, or to make sense of the changes in their intimate relationships and levels of sexual desire

by her mother in its symmetry and beauty. This momentous occasion in the young girl's life coincides with the death of her mother whereby Sentila truly comes to inherit the mantle of the village Potmaker. The story is highly symbolic as it depicts a mother in the role of a teacher, imparting knowledge 'meant for women' (Ao, *These Hills*, 62), and it concludes with a daughter assuming the position held by her mother. "The Last Song" depicts the brutal rapes of a talented singer Apenyo and her mother Libeni. Libeni's devotion to her daughter and her decision to not abandon her daughter despite being aware of a similar fate awaiting her speaks volumes about the courage of a mother. Their rapes and subsequent murders unite the mother and daughter in the tragic outcomes of their lives. In "Three Women", the daughters respectively refuse to repeat the mistakes of their mothers, thereby succeeding in breaking the cycle of generational trauma. Lipoktula's secrecy about Medemla's parentage leaves heartbreak and a failed relationship in its wake. In contrast, Medemla's transparency in revealing to Martha how she came to be adopted allows for a healthy, loving mother-child bond to thrive. The story of these three women that began with a child born of rape culminates in the arrival of Martha's son who was conceived in love. If one refers to Nancy Chodorow's groundbreaking research on motherhood, the most foundational observation she makes is with regards to the mother-child relationship, more specifically, "the intra-psychic dyad between mother and daughter, and its intergenerational transmission" and the "confluence of gender and generation" that arises from it (Bueskens 4). The daughters in Ao's stories often define themselves in terms of their experiences of being mothered. While some choose to reject the maternal ideals expressed by their respective mothers, others quite literally turn into their mothers. Ao's explorations of these myriad facets of the mother-daughter relationship in the aforementioned narratives complement and add to the sheer diversity of maternal subjectivities in her stories,

Connecting the idea of femininity and motherhood to the non-human nature and its resources that sustain all life is a recurring trope in Temsula Ao's literary works. In the poem "Requiem", Ao compares environmental degradation with the charred corpse of a bride who was a victim of domestic violence:

Who will mourn?
Who will mourn this blackened mass?
This charred carcass
Of a recent blushing bride
Roasted on the pyre
Of avarice (Ao, *Book of Songs*, lines 1-6)

In "Lament for an Earth", Ao mourns the lost beauty of nature that was once verdant and virginal, and compares the environmental crimes committed by humans to a 'rape' (*Book of Songs*). Ao's environmentalist-feminist ethos and poetics have been noted and discussed by various scholars. From the 1970s onwards, theorists like Carolyn Merchant, Rosemary Ruether and Karen Warren have suggested that women, on account of their status as being more frequently oppressed and marginalised, are better suited to be more sensitive to environmental justice concerns. These critics who are usually identified as ecofeminists share the conviction that the ideologies that sanction injustices on the basis of gender are analogous to the ideologies that promote environmental degradation. In the short story "Laburnum for My Head", Ao establishes clear parallels between the triumph of a lone mother and the triumph of Mother Nature in their attempts to reclaim their due space from the oppressive tyrannies of patriarchy. Lentina's desire to be buried beneath a blooming Laburnum tree, as opposed to a grand, ornate gravestone, is repeatedly thwarted by the men around her, including her own sons, because it defies tradition. While there is no uniform socio-cultural code in the Naga society, given how diverse the practices and customs of the various tribes are, it is also important to take

note of the commonalities. According to I Waitula Longkumer, one such common ground is the role and position of women in the different tribal communities of Nagaland. Breaking the myth of the liberated Naga woman in mainstream popular imagination, she notes that "an indigenous Naga woman is twice subjugated: by the patriarchal social system on the one hand, and on the other, by the stringent tribal laws and customs that restrict her participation in larger social activities by limiting her resources and opportunities" (Longkumer 8). As the Chairperson of the Nagaland State Commission for Women, Temsula Ao drew attention to these gender-discriminatory practices embedded in traditional Naga socio-legal codes that simultaneously marginalise and undervalue women. Ao noted that it was imperative to redefine the traditional laws and customs to ensure that Nagaland's women find their rightful places in the twenty-first century. She campaigned tirelessly for women to be included in various legislative bodies, ensuring their representation and participation in policy making processes as well as advocating for women's rights to inherit parental property. In "Laburnum for My Head", the readers witness instances of negative gendered stereotyping whereby a woman is typically believed to lack competence, especially with regards to financial matters. The men in Lentina's community harbour deep-seated scepticism about women's entrepreneurial abilities and their financial management skills. Therefore, Lentina's shrewd real estate deals and the effective manner in which she executed her plan to secure the burial site of her choice surprise her sons. Their new-found respect for their mother leads them to seek her advice on various important matters:

The sons too, sensing a new spirit in their mother, began to ask for her advice on business and family matters, something which had never happened during the father's lifetime. They were pleasantly surprised to find how sharp her mind still was. They also discovered how uncannily

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during the early years of parenting. However, in so doing, they will find few answers to their questions. (94)

Temsula Ao makes a stark departure from these common representational strategies that render the sexuality of mothers invisible. In "Tombstone in My Garden", Lilabati, the middle-aged mother of Lily Anne, longingly remembers the sexual pleasures she had experienced in the arms of her estranged husband:

She missed his raucous laughter or yell, his big paws on her body when he was in the mood even after so many years. And suddenly she began to think that it was his 'bigness' in every meaning of the word which had attracted her when she saw him on horseback for the first time. (Ao, *Tombstone*, 105)

By presenting mothers as persons with sexual concerns and interests, Ao attempts to prove that motherhood and sexuality are not, in fact, mutually exclusive topics. Her description of the 'pleasurable pains' of childbirth as experienced by Martha in "Three Women" is indeed quite graphic:

Martha hears her and with an ultimate effort gives another push and the baby slithers out of her exhausted body. The baby's wet and slimy contours as it surges through the passage produces such a sensuous effect on Martha that she will always remember it as more sublime than the transient ecstasies of sex. (Ao, *Laburnum*, 79)

Taylor C. Neff has theorized that the processes of 'maternal objectification' are comparable to the processes of 'sexual objectification' of women, whereby women experience evaluation (as mothers or as sexual objects) primarily via the objectifying gaze of society and are held to the measuring standards communicated by the specific sociocultural context. "Perpetual exposure to objectifying experiences leads to an

internalization of the evaluative standards and finally, self-objectification” (Neff 1). Given the overall lack of representation of mothers as sexual beings along with society’s steadfast refusal to appreciate postpartum female sexuality, it is difficult for mothers to reconcile their maternal selves with their sexual selves. Temsula Ao’s frank, unapologetic depictions of co-existing maternity and sexuality are, therefore, progressive and inclusive in equal measures.

Any discussion on the portrayal of mothers in Ao’s stories shall remain incomplete without a mention of the fathers. Ao’s narratives, while foregrounding the mothers’ experiences, are usually ambivalent in their representation of fatherhood. In “Three Women”, Martha’s husband Apok is characterised as a loving husband, and an emotionally involved father. However, he is literally pushed to the periphery during the birth of his son:

Apok, the new father, who is watching the activities of the women from the doorway, now comes forward, directing his gaze towards the bed in order to have a closer look at his just-born son. But his vision is obstructed by the daunting circle of women... He is reluctant to break the spell and, feeling like an intruder in a sacred ceremony, slips out unobserved. (80)

As per the substantial body of research on the geography of health and qualitative antenatal care models, the availability of a safe birthing space, at home or in medical care facilities, determined the perinatal and maternal outcomes to a large extent. As opposed to the contemporary discourses on parenting, which encourage mothers and fathers to equally share the parenting responsibilities and experiences including the birth of the child, Ao is keen on conveying the age-old sanctity of women’s-only spaces, like the birthing chamber of a new mother. Her depictions of fatherhood mostly include absent and/or emotionally distant fathers (“The Saga of a Cloth”, “Soaba”) and nominal fathers

whose sole contribution is to provide his genetic material and to acknowledge paternity of the child (“The Night”).

CONCLUSION

There exists still a great degree of reluctance on the part of writers, editors and publishers to consider giving the subject of motherhood a serious literary treatment. Writing or reading about motherhood may feel all-encompassing, raw and intrusive. As a result, it is common to find writers or readers shying away from the topic of motherhood. Temsula Ao is a rare author who represents the women of her community unflinchingly with all their strengths as well as their vulnerabilities. The fictional mothers in her stories are ordinary Ao-Naga women, leading mundane lives. However, their struggles, sacrifices, desires and regrets seem truly extraordinary because of Ao’s compassionate portrayal. Her tone is free of judgmental scrutiny, and her eagerness to accommodate a diverse array of maternal subjectivities is commendable. Ao’s stories posit mothers as active agents. The experiences of these women highlight the autonomy of the female subject, while simultaneously critiquing the frequently coercive socio-cultural influences that seek to suppress individuality.

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act though the father Carl Jones is the egregious offender. The consequences of abandonment, abuse, and trauma are suffered by the child alone.

Ramona Lofton, better known by her pseudonym Sapphire, is an African-American writer. Her works have addressed several taboo issues with unstinting realism. Push underlines the issue of incest and violation with the help of explicit language and it is in sync with the aggressively defiant attitude of Sapphire (a name chooses to fit with stereotyping of Black women).

Set in the Harlem section of New York in the 1980s, the turbulent time was marked by active attacks on social welfare programs, especially the “welfare queens” (Jones 331) The novel is written in the first person narrative of Precious who is battered by the complex tripartite structure of abuse- sexual, mental, and physical- inflicted on a twelve year old which leaves emotional as well as mental lacerations on the marginalized girl. Precious is an obese, poor, young, illiterate black female. She gives birth to two children due to her repeated rape by her father. Mary due to her own marginalized status deliberately does not let her daughter emerge as a self-sufficient and capable woman. The mother’s denial of the violation on her child leads to irreparable damage, Mary even assaults Precious further. The second child is born healthy due to the timely intervention of the surrogates which metaphorically leads to the rebirth of Precious as a young woman. The racist perspective also impacts the role of mothering as Mary has internalized her inferiority thereby expects and imposes the same on Precious leading to extreme insecurity and lack of confidence in the young girl.

The influence of cultural dictates and standards as well as a need to conform, limits the mother’s ability to protect and provide for her children. Mary discredits the image of the strong,

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THE MENACING MOTHER: A STUDY OF THE DYSFUNCTIONAL MOTHER- DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP IN SAPPHIRE'S *PUSH*

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ABSTRACT

The Twentieth-century Literature presented a manifestation of trauma by creating a new image of the mother, these novels unleashed a scathing attack on the role of women and motherhood. Sapphire's Push (1996) critiques the bad mother and underscores the trauma emerging from abandonment, rape, incest, negation, child pregnancy and motherhood inflicted on the girl by her own marginalized mother. The objective of this paper is to provide an alternative and pluralistic perspective towards the role of women and motherhood. This turns a critical eye on mothers underscoring a situation which is beyond the traditional rhapsodized models of motherhood and it explores the mother-daughter relationship in a late twentieth-century American novel with a complex presentation of surrogacy. It also investigates the consequences of social, economic and physiological circumstances that make mothering and nurturing difficult leading to the rejection of the role of ideal mother. The narrative is rewritten with the notion of a fragmented representations of motherhood where the role leads to a rejection of self-potential.

Keywords: Trauma, motherhood, childhood, incest, other, dysfunctional, education.

ARTICLE

INTRODUCTION

The Twentieth-century Literature presented a manifestation of trauma by creating a new image of the mother, these novels unleashed a scathing attack on the role of women and motherhood. Sapphire's *Push* (1996) critiques the bad mother and underscores the trauma emerging from abandonment, rape, incest, negation, child pregnancy and motherhood inflicted on the girl by her own marginalized mother. Sapphire also presents the role of socio-economic conditions and patriarchal conditioning that create mothers who fail to protect their daughters from the grasp of marginalizing forces. The idealized representations of motherhood and the act of mothering is scrutinized. Mary, the mother of Precious becomes the source of her own daughter's traumatic and unrealized childhood. There are certain characters created to act as mothers for Precious directing her towards a better life. These women are seen as the non-normative other-mother (surrogates). The mother is shown as complicit with the social institutions in an attempt to keep her daughter subjugated thereby making the mother-daughter relationship dysfunctional and traumatizing. The mammy-jezebel archetypes are employed to further denigrate the girl child. The distancing from the destructive maternal space and education aids the assertion of the tyrannized and traumatized self.

DISCUSSION

"I don't understand why some kids get a good school and mother and father and some don't. But Rita say forgit the WHY ME...." (Sapphire 139)

These words of a sixteen-year-old girl, Precious, are extremely consequential to understand the harrowing experience of her childhood days. It broaches the accountability of the mother (ironically named Mary) who was complicit in incestuous

Precious displays the urge and dilemma typical of trauma victims, feeling the persistent need for disclosing the past and a longing for an appropriate listener as well as being apprehensive of the listener's reaction. The trauma causes transformation in identity or assumption of a new identity in order to negate the horrendous experience. The precarious situation of Precious corroborates the extreme outcome of the mother's silence in the case of traumatized child.

The recollections and the journal of Precious become testimonies of the traumatic gendered experience that she undergoes. Her journal can be read with the objective of probing into the clandestine traumatic gendered experiences. When the character recall their inconspicuous psychological wound and verbalize their trauma they cease to be victims and their testimony aids in integrating the incoherent and fragmented events into a narrative. There is no peace in silence and the inarticulation of the victim leads to the perpetuation of evil. Shoshana Felman mentions the words of Elie Wiesel "If someone else could have written my stories, I would not have written them. I have written them in order to testify. And this is the origin of the loneliness that can be glimpsed in each of my sentences, in each of my silences." (3)

Precious gains literacy and starts to tell her life story, this is an act of testimony. The journal is also used as a connection to her surrogate-mother, Ms. Rain thus literacy paves the path for Precious' independence. She starts to move out of her objectified state as well as gains an identity and agency. Precious says, "I am happy to be writing. I am happy to be in school. Miz Rain say we gonna write everyday, that mean home too. 'N she gonna write back everyday. 'Thas great" (62). The process of journaling continues even when Precious is in the hospital (Ms. Rain visits her and Mary does not) and there she decides to continue her school even after her child.

reliable and independent black matriarch who was a provider and protector. She does not attempt to establish a better and different life for her daughter. Through Mary and Precious, Sapphire recreates the stereotyped images of mammy and jezebel (objectified sexual being). Mary even calls Precious a Jezebel and other sexually explicit names like "Miss Hot-to-Trot" (14).

Carl, being a man, exercises his sexual freedom. Mary, too, chooses to use sexual freedom and possesses her child as an example of her mothering behaviour. In the process both Mary and Carl devalue Precious reducing her to an object for their own pleasure. Toosie, Precious' grandmother furthers the abuse by aiding Mary's ways. She enables the seamless entrapment of her granddaughter in the cycle of sexual, physical, and mental abuse. Precious writes in her journal entry after Abdul's birth that- "Grandmother come visit and say only a dog will drop a baby and walk off...say later not even a dog" (71). Ms. Rain is baffled by the lady's harsh judgment of Precious for considering giving up Abdul for adoption, and asks, "Where was your grandmother when your father was abusing you?" and "What is going to be the best thing for you in this situation?" (71).

Mary's small apartment becomes the space that ensnares Precious and the role reversal is evident as Precious provides for Mary. She runs the household errands, completes the chores and cooks meals for Mary. Precious is also coerced into being a sexual partner for her mother a substitute for Carl. This reversal depicts the most destructive and detrimental results on a child.

The concept of food as nourishing is subverted by Sapphire as it becomes poisonous for Precious, and the kitchen (a maternal space) becomes a diabolic space involving abuse and victimization. Mary uses food as a weapon (adventently overfeeding Precious to make her undesirable therefore invisible to the outside world) and trap to push Precious into the image

of the Mammy. She is forced to overeat due to the paralyzing fear of her mother

“I’m not hongry,” I tell her. Devil red sparks flashes in Mama’s eyes, big crease in her forehead git deeper. I’m scared. (17)

Precious’s father refers to her weight while he exploits her, calling her with derogatory weight-associated names, for instance, “Two Ton of Fun” (35) “Big Mama” (58). She is trapped by her parents for their own consumption (literally and metaphorically). She is diminished to the status of sexual captive and abused prisoner. Her mother permits her enslavement due to her own insecurity, frustrations and persecuted situation.

Champagne in the essay “True Crimes of Motherhood: Mother-Daughter Incest and Dissociative Disorders” discusses dissociation as a coping mechanism for the abused child. When Precious was being violated, she visualizes her alternative self as a video dancer. The use of the alternative personality is a form of dissociation. She creates an alternate world in her mind with Mr. Wicher, her instructor, as another escape from the traumatic experience she sustains.

Cathy Caruth asserts, “the traumatized person...carries an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess” (5) The novel employs flashback technique to provide details of the girl’s various traumas. The flashback provides the girl with distance to revisit (thereby relive) the harrowing experience. Precious recollects the fierce stare of her mother while she prepared and served dinner. It is unpleasant to hear her “holler ‘n shout on me all day like she did the last time.” (9) Mary would scream “Who! Who! WhOoooo like owl in Walt Disney movie I seen one time. Whooo? Ya wanna know who—” (9). This underscores the

abusive relationship, the use of derogatory language for her daughter and the image of ruined innocence as well as an unfulfilled childhood due to mention of the Walt Disney movie. The flashbacks of the first childbirth are given when Precious is expecting her second child. A homeless Precious after the birth of her second child, Abdul reminiscences her mother’s brutality at the time of her first delivery- “Miz West! Live down the hall from us, stop Mama from kicking me to death when Mongo being born.” (80). She delivered her first child on the kitchen floor as her mother beats and kicks her (hinting at the reason for the child suffering from Down Syndrome due to trauma and lack of oxygen supply).

There is another instance of sudden recollection which happens when the nurse is speaking and Precious hears the kids at school remark “Claireece [Precious] is so ugly she laffing ugly.” (12) This reflects her existence as a child in an adult’s world.

Precious carries the baggage of trauma and the analysis of the novel presents the mechanism of individual trauma victim’s coping with the memories of the harrowing event, how the recollections and narrations affect the victim’s identity and sense of self, their relation to the present and past and their equation with others who played either instrumental or inconsequential roles in their traumatic experience. There is an attempt to analyze the significance of memory and its absence in the life of the traumatized individual because repression and remembering are both sabotaging peace, Marina Leslie, appositely states- “Forgetting is a kind of death, but then so also is remembering” (48). At a point in the novel Precious seems to lose track of time as she is perplexed and remarks-” I’m twelve, no I was twelve....I’m sixteen now. For past couple of weeks or so....1983 and 1987, twelve years old and sixteen years old, first baby and this one coming, all been getting mixed up in my head.” (19)

never do anything. One time I ax her, when I get up from her knocking me down, she say, 'That's what you here for' (22). While registering at the alternative school realization dawns upon her about her role in Mary's life. The receptionist states "Oh I see, so your mother has custody of you and your daughter, in other words you're on her 'budget' (28). The gradual transformation is initiated from the contact with Ms. Rain. "I hate my muver. She don't love me. I wonder how she could love Little Mongo (thas my daughter)." (34)

Precious expresses her disdain and ponders "Men, women, and kids waiting at bus stop to go to school and downtown to work, how I'm gonna get out HER house? I hate her" (23). In her neighbourhood Precious realizes the presence of a sense of security unlike her house where she is always threatened, "I'm walking slow slow now. No one say nuffin' to me now..." (59)

Precious introspectively contemplates the value that she brings to her mother's life, after my baby and me come out of the hospital my muver take us down to welfare; say I is mother but just a chile and she taking care of bofeus'es. So really all she did was add my baby to her budget. (34) When she tells her mother that she is tired it is not acknowledged, "Why I say that, she don't care" because her mother orders her to "Fix us some lunch" (58).

Vickroy analyses the perpetuation of trauma through familial relationships and studies the role of a surrogate in the initiation of the process of healing, the "re-mothering" by a "non-biological mother" (117, 120) and the need for self-mothering (32). The alternative school becomes her family and she confides that when "I go home. I'm so lonely there. I never noticed before." (62)

When Precious is about to enter the alternative classroom, her anxiety increases as school reminds her of several traumatic experiences. She describes that her "head is like the swimming pool at the Y on one-three-five", image of drowning and overwhelming feelings. Her classmates isolated her due to her repulsive obese look and to cope with this she begins to pretend, "stare[s] at the blackboard pretending...I'm reading along with the class on page 55 of the reader" (38). The physical reaction that Precious has to this trauma and isolation in the traditional classroom is to urinate on herself – "I wanna die I hate myself HATE myself." "Other kids run all round. Me...sit down, don't move until the bell ring to go home. I wet myself. Don't know why I don't get up, but I don't...Finally Principal say, Let it be... Focus on the ones who can learn" (37) She has been conveniently put in the category of the illiterate child. Precious had always taken some seat at the back as being invisible was her coping mechanism though she could not see the blackboard.

Precious' meeting with the Nurse acts as a catalyst leading her to the maternal circle of Ms. Rain. "Twelve years old, twelve years old...Was you ever, I mean did you ever get to be a child?" Thas a stupid question, did I ever get to be a chile? I am a chile." (13) Precious does not realize the significance of the innocent and carefree days snatched from her. Precious admits, "It still tripping me out that I had a baby. I mean I knew I was pregnant, knew how I got pregnant...But thas all I knowed. I didn't know how long it take, what's happening inside, nothing. I didn't know nothing. (11-12) Adulthood has been thrust upon her non-existent childhood.

The presence of Ms. Rain helps Precious to gain confidence. She asked her what was she good at, Precious responds, "Nuffin"(46). Ms. Rain responds "Everbody do something good" (46). Precious ultimately reverts "I can cook" (47) This participation makes her feel better. Precious feels comfortable

to confide in Ms. Rain “I wanted to tell her what I always wanted to tell someone, that the pages, ‘cept for the ones with pictures, look all the same to me...tear is coming down my eyes, but I’m not sad or embrass” (48). She starts to give vent to her pent-up emotions.

When a surrogate exists, the child gets unconsciously transferred from the ineffective birth mother to the surrogate mother. The severing of the child from the mother engenders the sense of bereavement and betrayal. The surrogate shoulders the responsibility of protecting and filling the void of neglect for the children Mary spurns her motherly instinct while the outside forces (the surrogate Ms Rain) embrace it with complete sincerity and commitment. Precious is able to competently face the gruesome reality of birthing two babies conceived in an incestuous relationship with her father and being HIV infected, due to the affection of Ms Rain, the ‘other-mother’. The teacher guides her beautifully and renders her capable of being a loving mother to her own children. The Nurse Butter provides Precious with “warm kindness from her I never feel from Mama and I start to cry...I crying for me who no one never hold before” (18). The nurse also tells her, “Look at me, sweetie, you gonna get through this. You really are gonna get through this” (18). Her first child, Mongo, suffers from Down’s syndrome, as there was “some oxygen deprivation at birth. (17). Precious “hold out baby” for Nurse Butter to take it away (17). This illustrates Precious’s rejection of motherhood. The child lives with her grandmother while Mary tells the welfare authority that she care for it while I’m [Precious] in school” (34) Precious’ maternal affection surface for Mongo as she views the removal of her child as a negation of her motherhood. Initially, she considers a handicapped and retarded child as a trouble. However, soon she realizes the need to provide for her. She even thinks “but am I safe from Carl Kenwood Jones? This is my second baby for my

daddy, it gonna be retarded too?” (23). She feels a sense of concern and a protective instinct for her child. In the scene where Mary discloses that Carl had AIDS, Precious is baffled and the realization dawns upon her that she and her children could be the possible sufferer.

Precious even questions the relationship of Carl-Mary and his role as her biological father. Mary considers the question as an attack on her womanhood and fidelity, she vehemently responds “He your daddy, couldn’t no one else be your daddy I was with him since I was sixteen. I never been with nobody else” (86). Mary reveals herself as the other in the man’s life therefore marginalized by Carl. She also talks about her status in his life “We not married though, he got a wife though, a real wife, lightskin woman he got two kids by” (86). As the “other” woman Mary has been conditioned to not comprehend her own objectification. This also raises the question of Precious’ legitimacy Precious instructs her mother- “You better get tested” (86)- this presents an instance of the reverse parent-child role. The child becomes the nurturer to the parent. She has been pushed from a non-existent childhood to an unprepared adulthood. “I feel the baby in my stomach. Don’t feel good. I try not to think about my stomach big like this – the heavy pressing down on my bladder parts, like a fucking watermelon under my skin.” (51)

When Precious starts her alternative school, Mary attempts to dissuade her from attending her classes “School?... Go down to welfare, school can’t help you none, now” (22). She wants to ensure that Precious remains an illiterate and dependent woman. Precious is only seen as a means to get government’s public assistance. Precious needs to sneak out of her house, “Mama sleep. I be back before she wake up, back in time to clean up and fix breakfast for Mama,” and she wonders, “Why Mama

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND THEIR IMPACT ON MOTHERS IN THE TEA TRIBE COMMUNITY OF ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

This study undertaken to find out the socio-economic status and challenges of motherhood women in the tea tribe communities in Assam. 'Mother' is the most beautiful words in the world. No word is sweeter and beautiful other than 'mother' or 'maa'. A child is an open book for a mother. She knows each and everything about her children. Motherhood changes everything. It is the greatest potential influence either for good or ill in human life. A mother is selfless, loving person who sacrifices her own dreams, hopes, expectations for the sake of her children. Assam tea is famous for their aromatic quality in the world. Assam's tea industry plays a very crucial role in the socio-economic development of the society. Mothers have been playing a significant role in the field of tea industry. Around one million women work in the tea gardens of Assam producing more than 50% of tea in India. This study is mainly based on the secondary data. Women as well as mothers have been facing several challenges in the tea industry in Assam as well as in India since time immemorial.

Keywords: Motherhood, Tea Tribe community, socio-economic, tea gardens, mothers.

The first day after school, Precious begins to assert herself with her mother. Mary is extremely displeased “Where did you sneak...?” (55). Mary wants her to leave her education and focus on the monetary benefits from welfare, Precious decides to appease her mother by saying, “I go to welfare tomorrow – Tuesday. Wednesday I go to school. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday I go to school” (57). Precious both complies and asserts herself in this interaction but admits to herself that “this gonna end, even if it end by me stop breathing” (57).

Precious begins physically and mentally to move away from Mary's control. She contemplates “Mama wrong. I is learning. I'm gonna start going to Family Litearcy class on Tuesdays. Important to read to baby after it's born. Important to have colors hanging from the wall. Listen baby, I puts my hand on my stomach, breathe deep. Listen baby (I write in my notebook). (65) This act of putting her “hand” on her stomach, Precious accepts her maternal responsibilities and is willing to care for the child.

During her second pregnancy Precious is surrounded by a new support system. These women encourage her to accept her motherhood. She suffers from ignorance as her mother never let her visit a doctor, it is these surrogates who guide and care for her. Precious shares that “Well, I don't know 'bout baby, I'm happy 'bout baby, I'm sad about baby” (67) because she wants to continue her education but is unsure how this will work with a new child. Ms. Rain suggests Precious to put Abdul up for adoption in order to ensure a better life for him and provide Precious the chance to excel in her life. She trusts Ms. Rain and follow her path as she said “she read the truth shall set you free” and she gives out the truth about Mongo's care.

At the closure of the novel the readers see a different Precious. Ms. Rain mentions an Asian proverb in class, “the

longest journey begin[s] with a single step” (49) and it resonates with the life of Precious, a victim of incest and abuse who starts to journal her experience and therefore finds a mean to express herself. Ms. Rain provides Precious with developmental and survival mechanisms however, Precious must learn to mother herself. As the surrogate-mother she initiates the healing process for Precious.

Sapphire’s *Push* thus augments the argument that by “not confronting the category of motherhood and by identifying only the individuals who occupy social spaces as the agents of transgression, the text assumes a neutral and natural belief that [these mothers] were simply evil anomalies of motherhood” (Champagne 138). It is crucial to understand that the mother is not born to be bad mother, but evolves into one from a lack of precedent and as a response to their very own marginalized realities. Mary a black woman effectively manipulates and exploits the social welfare system and, in this attempt, Precious becomes a mere pawn. The text critiques extolled ideals of motherhood and mothering, it brings the motherhood myths that prevail in society under severe scrutiny and provides an alternate view on the idea.

“At least when I look at the girls I see them and when they look they see ME, not what I looks like.” (98)

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skill and precision, as only the top two leaves and a bud are typically harvested to produce high quality tea. Women are preferred for this task because they are often perceived to have the dexterity and attention to detail needed for effective plucking.

2. Processing: After plucking, women are also engaged in the initial processing of the leaves, which includes withering, rolling, fermenting, drying, and sorting the tea. This stage is crucial for determining the final quality of the tea.
3. Field Maintenance: Women are involved in maintaining the tea gardens, including weeding, applying fertilizers, and managing pests. These activities ensure the health and productivity of the tea plants.
4. Supervisory and Managerial Roles: In some regions, women also hold supervisory and managerial positions within the tea gardens overseeing the work of other labourers and ensuring the efficiency of operations.
5. Community and Social Roles: Beyond their work in the tea gardens, women often play a central role in the social and community life of tea estates. They are involved in organizing social events, maintaining cultural traditions and supporting community welfare activities etc.

In the tea industry, women play a significant role for the development of the socio-economic condition of the society. During pregnancy period and post-natal period, women have been continuing to engaged in hard work. Their socio-economic condition is not good. Due to the poor socio-economic, illiteracy, over-crowded and unhygienic living conditions in the residential colonies makes tea garden populations helpless to various communicable diseases and underfeeding (Mrs. Sangeeta Saikia, 2013). The women folk are the worst victims of such situation.

INTRODUCTION

‘A mother is she who can take the place of all others, but whose place no one else can take.’

- Cardinal Mermillod -

Undoubtedly, ‘Mother’ is the most beautiful words in the world. No word is sweeter and beautiful other than ‘mother’ or ‘maa’. Motherhood is the state of being a mother. A lady enters in to motherhood when she became a mother. Motherhood means family, happiness, love, joy and contentment. The best gift among all the gifts in the world is the gift of being a mother i.e motherhood. Being a mother is considered one of the most important roles in the society. Being a mother means experiencing the joy of raising children providing guidance and instilling values and morals. Becoming mother is not an easy task. It is very difficult, risky and challenging. No love is sweeter other than mother’s love. It is the deep, all embracing, all accepting, nourishing warm safe, supporting love that soothes the place inside our hearts that felt scared and lovely. In fact, motherhood is a relationship not a role. The best relationship of the world is the relationship between mother and son, between mother and daughter. A mother automatically feels her children’s feeling, thinking, problems and loves.

A child is an open book for a mother. She knows each and everything about her children. Whatever the child feels, the mother knows it far better than the child. Nothing can be remained hidden as a secret from the sight of a mother. Mother is the best judge as well as the true friend, philosopher and guide of the children. Mother is very conscious regarding the personality of her children. She makes sure that the child is treated and well-disciplined according to the norms of the society.

Motherhood changes everything. It is the greatest potential influence either for good or ill in human life. A mother

is selfless, loving person who sacrifices her own dreams hopes, expectations for the sake of her children. Nobody can take place of mother. That is why, the poet says – “*Aaihoman bobo kun, Noi homan bobo kun?*” That means nobody can flows like a mother and no one can the place of a mother. A mother works very hard so that her children are equipped with proper knowledge, skills, abilities, courtesies so that they may become a competent and perfect human being. Indeed, mother plays a pivotal role in our life.

The poet says-

Melilu Pratham Saku Tumar kulate Aai
Jivanar Adim Puwat,
Mudimakou Saku Tumer kulate hui
Jivan bekhsandhiyaat. (Nalinibala Devi)

Infact, motherhood is a journey filled with joy, love, dedication, sacrifice and immense strength. Everyday mother work tirelessly to nurture and support their families. Mother often faces lots of challenges with unwavering resilience. There is a close connection between motherhood and work culture. A recent report titled, ‘Predicament of returning Mothers’ uncovers a disheartening reality: 50% of India’s working women leave their jobs by the age 30 to prioritize childcare and nearly half of those who return to work ultimately quit within four months. Woman specially mothers have been playing a very significant role in the field of work culture in the various fields like teaching, nursing, office, small industries various farms, shops etc.

Mothers have been playing a crucial role in the field of tea industry. Around one million women work in the tea gardens of Assam producing more than 50% of tea in India. It is the second largest tea producer in the world. From the picking of

tea leaves to the processing and packaging of tea, women have been playing an important role in tea industry. But unfortunately, woman in the tea industry often have been overlooked and undervalued.

OBJECTIVES

1. To evaluate the socio-economic status of the motherhood in the tea tribe community.
2. To analyse the various challenges of the tea tribe community faces by the mother.

METHODOLOGY

The Present study is mainly based on the secondary data. The secondary datas are collected from the various sources such as Articles, Journals, different research papers, different organizations and websites. This study specially based on descriptive method and exploratory method.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE TEA GARDENS

The role of women in the tea gardens is significant and multifaceted. More than 50% of workers engaged in the tea gardens are women. This indicates that the women have a very large stake in the production of tea of the country. They are engaged in the tea garden both as permanent and temporary workers. The tea industry of Assam has also been empowering women by giving them job opportunities in the tea garden. But the various mechanisms used to empower the women has not worked well (Saikia, Development of Tea Garden Community and Adivasi Identity politics in Assam).

The women are engaged in different fields in the tea industry. They are discussed as follows:

1. Plucking Tea leaves: The most prominent role of women play in tea gardens is the plucking of tea leaves. This task requires

C. Work-Related Challenges:

1. **Physical Labour:** Mothers often engage in strenuous physical labour in tea gardens, which can lead to health issues and complications during pregnancy and postpartum periods.
2. **Long working Hours:** The demanding nature of tea garden work leaves little time for childcare and rest, leading to physical and mental exhaustion.
3. **Work Burden:** Mothers often work long hours in tea gardens under harsh conditions, balancing heavy physical labour with childcare responsibilities.

D. Social and Cultural Challenges:

1. **Gender Inequality:** Gender inequality is an important problem in tea tribe community. Deep-rooted gender norms and discrimination limit women's access to resources, education, and decision-making power within the household and community.
2. **Early Marriage and Childbearing:** This is another problem of tea tribe community. Cultural practices of early marriage and childbearing pose significant health risks and limit educational and economic opportunities for young mothers.
3. **Domestic Violence:** Women in tea tribe communities are often vulnerable to domestic violence, which negatively impacts their physical and mental health.

E. Educational Barriers:

1. **Low Literacy Rate:** High illiteracy rates among women restrict their access to information on maternal health, childcare, and nutrition, perpetuating a cycle of poor health outcomes.
2. **Limited Educational Opportunity:** The need to work from a young age often prevents mothers from pursuing education,

The women in the tea garden live a very busy life and with the changes in norms of the society along with the time the role of these women becomes more challenging (Devi, 2014). Devi also highlights that the women are having a large role in the labour market. In the tea garden, women workers of Assam are contributing largely to the economy of the country. Devi in her paper also mentioned that 72.25 per cent of the tea garden employed women are illiterate and their monthly salary ranges from Rs.1000 to Rs.5000 only.

Significance of Women as Mothers:

The role of mothers in the tea garden encompasses a broad range of responsibilities that significantly impact both their families and the tea industry. In the tea gardens, they have juggle multiple responsibilities, balancing their roles as tea workers with the demands of raising children and managing households. Their contributions are critical not only to the tea industry but also to the social fabric of their communities. Some key aspects the role motherhood workers in the tea garden such as Plucking tea leaves, processing, field maintenance, supervisory roles etc.

Besides, working in the tea plantation, they have different responsibilities such as Childcare, Household management, Education and Healthcare. The Working mother often bring their young children to the fields or leave them in the care of older siblings or other relatives. Balancing work with childcare is a significant challenge. Besides their work in the tea gardens, these women are responsible for household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and fetching water, often with limited resources. Ensuring their children receive education and health care is a priority, although access to these services can be limited in remote tea garden areas.

Socio-Economic Conditions of Mothers in the Tea Tribe Community:

Economic Conditions:

In tea tribe community's economic conditions is not good. They often face severe economic hardships. Low wages, lack of job security, and minimal access to financial services to contribute to persistent poverty. In tea tribe community, their haven't well transport and communication system for the education system. Most of the people faces inadequate housing. Their living conditions like a slum dweller. Specially mother of this community have faced several problems.

Educational Conditions:

Educational condition is not good in the tea tribe community. In the early phase of the development of tea gardens, there was no any provision for education within the tea garden of Assam. Limited access to quality education perpetuates the cycle of poverty High dropout rates and low literacy levels hinders socio-economic mobility. Most of the girls in the tea tribe community get married at a very early stage due to lack of proper education and awareness.

Health and Living Conditions:

Inadequate healthcare infrastructure results in poor health outcome Due to the lack of education, and economic conditions health care facilities is not good. Malnutrition, high infant mortality rates, and limited access to maternal health services are prevalent.

Due to the lack of economic development, poor conditions of education level, healthcare deficiencies, the living conditions is not good in this community. They have no proper house for standard living and sanitation condition is not good.

Challenges faced by Mothers as Tea Garden Workers:

In the tea garden, the mother of tea garden worker faced several challenges. These are briefly discussed below:

A. Economic Challenges:

1. **Low Wages:** Low wages in the tea industry means that many motherhood women struggle to provide for their families, often working long hours with little financial security. Women in the tea tribe community often earn meager wages, which are insufficient to meet their basic needs and those of their children.
2. **Job Insecurity:** Employment in the tea industry is often seasonal and insecure, leading to financial instability and stress, which impacts the well-being of mothers and their families.
3. **Debt Cycles:** Many families are trapped in cycles of debt due to the need for loans to cover basic expenses, which further exacerbates financial strain.

B. Health and Nutrition:

1. **Malnutrition:** This is one of the major problems as well as challenges in the tea tribe community. Pregnant and lactating mothers often suffer from malnutrition due to poor diets leading to health complications for both mother and child.
2. **Limited Healthcare Access:** Pregnant women in tea tribe communities face significant health risks due to malnutrition, lack of prenatal care and insufficient medical facilities. Inadequate healthcare infrastructure results in insufficient prenatal and postnatal care, high maternal and infant mortality rates, and prevalence of preventable diseases.
3. **Lack of Reproductive Health Services:** Limited access to family planning and reproductive health services contributes to high fertility rates and associated health risks.

THE SYMBIOSIS OF MOTHERHOOD: CULTURAL REFLECTIONS ON BLESSINGS AND AGONIES IN *THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD*

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ABSTRACT

The Joys of Motherhood, a novel by Buchi Emecheta, portrays the life of Nnu Ego, a Nigerian woman whose identity and worth are deeply rooted in her ability to bear children, particularly sons. Published in 1979, the novel explores the complexities of motherhood against the backdrop of colonial influence in Nigeria. This research analyzes the cultural reflections on the blessings and agonies of motherhood as depicted in Emecheta's novel. Through Nnu Ego's story, Emecheta sheds light on the traditional tribal values and customs that shape Nnu Ego's life and the shifting dynamics as colonial presence grows. The novel challenges accepted notions of motherhood, wifehood, and womanhood, forcing readers to consider the dilemmas of adopting new ideas and practices versus clinging to tradition. Emecheta reveals the joys derived from fulfilling familial responsibilities, such as childbearing, mothering, and nurturing, while also highlighting the anxieties, obligations, and pains that come with these roles. The said novel is a compelling narrative that delves into the complexities of motherhood, tradition, and societal expectations, making it a poignant and relevant piece of literature that transcends cultural boundaries. This article will endeavor to analyze the tragedy as well as ecstasy of motherhood in the context of African society.

Keywords: Woman, identity, motherhood, tradition, Nigeria, custom etc.

thereby limiting their socio-economic mobility and ability to provide educational support to their children.

F. Social Support and Infrastructure:

1. Lack of Childcare Facilities: The absence of adequate childcare service means mothers must balance work with childcare, often under difficult conditions.
2. Inadequate Social Support System: There is often a lack of community and institutional support for mothers, which exacerbates their isolation and stress. Limited access to childcare services and social support networks increases the burden on mothers.

Efforts to Improve Conditions:

Various initiatives have been undertaken to improve the conditions for women in tea gardens:

1. Fair Trade and Ethical Sourcing: Fair trade certification and other ethical sourcing initiatives aim to ensure fair wages, better working conditions and social benefits for tea workers.
2. Educational Initiatives: Efforts to provide better educational facilities and support for children of tea garden workers help mothers ensure a better future for their children.
3. Health and Nutrition Programs: NGOs and other organizations run programs to improve the health, and overall well-being of women in tea gardens. Programs aimed at improving maternal and child health, including prenatal care, vaccination drives and nutritional support, are critical for supporting motherhood women.
4. Economic Empowerment: Initiatives such as microfinance programs, skill development workshops and income diversification projects help motherhood women gain financial independence and improve their economic stability.

5. Gender Equality Initiatives: Efforts to promote gender equality within the tea industry include leadership training for motherhood women, equal pay campaigns and measures to prevent harassment and discrimination.
6. Advocacy and Rights: Advocacy for better working conditions, fair wages, and gender equality in the tea industry is essential. Organizations working in this area strive to ensure that motherhood women receive the respect and support they deserve.

CONCLUSION

The socio-economic challenges facing the tea tribe community significantly affect motherhood within this group, creating a cascade of adverse impacts on maternal and child health. Limited access to quality healthcare results in inadequate prenatal and infant mortality and morbidity. Poor nutritional standards, exacerbated by economic hardships, contribute to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Additionally, the lack of education and economic opportunities restricts mother's ability to improve their own and their children's well-being. Economic exploitation and insufficient wages force many mothers to contribute working under strenuous conditions during pregnancy and after childbirth, comprising their health and that of their children. Poor living conditions further expose mothers and their children to health risks, perpetuating a cycle of vulnerability and disadvantage.

In the tea garden motherhood women play a vital role both in the tea industry and their communities and also they contributing significantly to both the agricultural and social aspects of tea production. Despite facing numerous challenges, ongoing efforts seek to improve their working conditions and promote gender equality in the industry.

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Joys of Motherhood offers a complex and nuanced portrayal of motherhood, examining it as both a personal experience and a social construct shaped by cultural and historical contexts. Through its exploration of these themes, the novel invites readers to reflect on the universal aspects of motherhood while also recognizing its unique challenges and complexities in different cultural settings. It also portrays the harsh realities and cultural practices surrounding death and fertility in Nigerian society. The funeral scene of Agunwa, Nwokocha Agbadi's senior wife, demonstrates the traditional custom of sacrificing a slave to accompany the deceased into the afterlife. This practice, though cruel and inhumane, reflects the deeply ingrained beliefs and customs of the society depicted in the novel. The birth of Nnu Ego, meaning "twenty bags of cowries," symbolizes hope and new life for Ona and Agbadi. However, the tragic deaths of Ona and her son reveal the fragility of life and the harshness of fate. Ona's death in childbirth and the subsequent loss of her son underscore the dangers and risks faced by women in childbirth, as well as the high value placed on fertility and childbirth in the society. Nnu Ego's barrenness despite her desire for children highlights the pressure and expectations placed on women to bear children in order to fulfill their societal roles. Her husband's decision to take another wife who is able to conceive further emphasizes the importance of fertility and the consequences of infertility in the society depicted in the novel. *The Joys of Motherhood* offers a stark portrayal of the complexities of life, death, and fertility in Nigerian society, highlighting the challenges faced by women and the cultural practices that shape their experiences. Nnu Ego's life is a testament to the trials and tribulations of motherhood in Nigerian society as depicted in *The Joys of Motherhood*. Married off to Nnaife without even seeing him, she hopes for a child to find love in her marriage. Despite her initial dislike for Nnaife, she prays for a child and eventually gives birth

INTRODUCTION

Motherhood, a universal experience, is often depicted in literature as a source of both immense joy and profound sorrow. Buchi Emecheta's novel *The Joys of Motherhood* explores this dichotomy through the life of Nnu Ego, a Nigerian woman whose identity is intricately linked to her role as a mother. Set against the backdrop of colonial Nigeria, the novel delves into the complexities of traditional tribal values and the challenges faced by women as societal norms shift. In the novel, Emecheta paints a vivid portrait of Nnu Ego's journey, highlighting the cultural expectations and personal sacrifices that define her experience. Through Nnu Ego's story, Emecheta invites readers to consider the broader cultural implications of motherhood, challenging traditional notions of femininity and motherhood. This paper explores the cultural reflections on the blessings and agonies of motherhood as depicted in Emecheta's novel. By analyzing the interplay between cultural influences and individual realities, this study aims to offer a deeper understanding of the complexities of maternal experiences across cultures. *The Joys of Motherhood*, a classic of feminine literature, is Buchi Emecheta's poignant novel that delves into the complexities of motherhood in Nigerian society. Published in 1979, the novel follows the tragic story of Nnu Ego, a young African woman striving to embrace motherhood in a patriarchal society where a woman's worth is often defined by her ability to bear children. Set in Lagos, Nigeria, over several decades, the novel portrays Nnu Ego's struggles and triumphs as she navigates the challenges of infertility, multiple pregnancies, and the shifting cultural landscape that challenges traditional notions of womanhood. Narrated in the third-person omniscient perspective, the novel opens with a gripping scene of Nnu Ego contemplating suicide on Carter Bridge in Lagos, highlighting the despair and desperation she faces in her journey.

The story then shifts back in time to Nnu Ego's early life in the village of Ogboli, where she is born to Ona, a woman who dies in childbirth, and Agbadi, the local chief who claims ownership of Nnu Ego based on tribal customs. The novel traces Nnu Ego's life from her failed first marriage to her eventual relocation to Lagos, where she marries Nnaife and raises several children. Throughout the novel, Emecheta explores themes of tradition versus modernity, the impact of colonialism on Nigerian society, and the complexities of motherhood and womanhood. Nnu Ego's story is one of resilience, as she faces numerous hardships, including the loss of children, poverty, and societal expectations. Despite these challenges, Nnu Ego's character remains strong and determined, embodying the strength and sacrifice often associated with motherhood. The article titled "The Symbiosis of Motherhood: Cultural Reflections on Blessings and Agonies in *The Joys of Motherhood*" seeks to analyze Emecheta's novel through the lens of cultural reflections on motherhood. By examining the interplay between cultural influences and individual realities in Nnu Ego's life, this research aims to offer a deeper understanding of the complexities of maternal experiences across cultures. Through a close reading of the novel, this study will explore how societal norms, traditions, and expectations shape Nnu Ego's experiences, highlighting the joys, sorrows, and challenges of motherhood as depicted in the novel.

DISCUSSION

In the context of the blessings and agonies of motherhood, *The Joys of Motherhood* presents a nuanced portrayal of Nnu Ego's experiences, highlighting both the fulfilling aspects and the challenges she faces as a mother. One of the blessings depicted in the novel is the sense of purpose and identity that motherhood brings to Nnu Ego. Through her children, Nnu Ego gains respect and recognition within her community, giving her a

sense of fulfillment and accomplishment. The novel celebrates the joys derived from fulfilling maternal responsibilities, such as nurturing and caring for her children. However, alongside these blessings, Emecheta also explores the agonies of motherhood experienced by Nnu Ego. These agonies include the physical and emotional toll of childbirth, the loss of children, and the societal pressures and expectations placed on mothers. Nnu Ego's story illustrates the anxieties, obligations, and pains that can accompany the joys of motherhood, highlighting the complex and often contradictory nature of maternal experiences. Through Nnu Ego's journey, Emecheta forces readers to confront the realities of motherhood, challenging idealized notions of maternal bliss and highlighting the complexities and challenges faced by mothers. The novel offers a poignant and realistic portrayal of the blessings and agonies of motherhood, inviting readers to empathize with Nnu Ego's experiences and reflect on the broader societal attitudes towards motherhood. Nwokocha Agbadi and Ona, sets the stage for broader themes related to motherhood in *The Joys of Motherhood*. The novel delves into the multifaceted nature of motherhood, exploring not only the joys and fulfillment it can bring but also the challenges, sacrifices, and societal expectations that come with it. Through the character of Nnu Ego, the protagonist of the novel, Buchi Emecheta examines the complexities of motherhood in a patriarchal society. Nnu Ego's life revolves around her children, and she derives a sense of identity and purpose from her role as a mother. However, she also faces numerous challenges, including infertility, the loss of children, and the pressures of traditional gender roles. The novel also explores the impact of colonialism on traditional African societies and the changing roles of women in the face of modernization. As Nnu Ego navigates these challenges, Emecheta portrays the resilience and strength of women, highlighting the ways in which they negotiate and resist oppressive structures. *The*

measured by her ability to bear children, especially sons. For Nnu Ego, motherhood initially brings a sense of purpose and identity. She gains respect and recognition within her community as she fulfills her role as a mother. However, as the novel progresses, the limitations and challenges of this expectation become apparent. Nnu Ego faces numerous hardships, including infertility, poverty, and the lack of support from her husband. These challenges highlight the complexities of motherhood and the unrealistic expectations placed on women to derive their happiness solely from this role. The novel also explores the theme of sacrifice and the toll that motherhood can take on a woman's life and identity. Nnu Ego's relentless dedication to her children and her constant struggle to provide for them come at great personal cost. Her loneliness, isolation, and eventual tragic death underscore the idea that motherhood, while fulfilling in many ways, can also be a source of agony and hardship. Through Nnu Ego's story, Buchi Emecheta offers a critical examination of the societal pressures and expectations surrounding motherhood. The novel challenges the notion that women need motherhood to be happy and highlights the need for society to recognize and respect the diverse paths to fulfillment and happiness that women can pursue. The concept of symbiosis in the context of *The Joys of Motherhood* can be understood through the interdependent relationship between Nnu Ego and her children, as well as the broader societal and cultural forces at play. On one hand, Nnu Ego's identity and sense of purpose are deeply intertwined with her role as a mother. She derives meaning and fulfillment from her children, and her actions are motivated by her desire to provide for and protect them. In this sense, motherhood is symbiotic for Nnu Ego, as her well-being is intricately linked to that of her children. On the other hand, the novel also explores the symbiotic relationship between motherhood and societal expectations. Nnu Ego's value as a woman is largely determined by her ability to

to a baby boy. However, tragedy strikes when she discovers him dead, pushing her to the brink of despair. Over the years, Nnu Ego becomes a mother to nine surviving children, but her struggles are far from over. Her husband's absence during wartime leaves her to fend for herself and her children, barely managing to feed them. Adding to her challenges, Nnaife inherits four wives from his deceased brother, one of whom sparks a bitter rivalry with Nnu Ego. Despite her hardships, Nnu Ego is determined to provide for her children's future. She sacrifices to send her oldest son to secondary school, hoping he will support the family. However, her children's ambitions place further strain on her, as they seek support to study abroad. Her daughter's elopement and her son's imprisonment add to her woes, yet she remains steadfast in her role as a mother. Nnu Ego's life takes a lonely turn in her later years, as she returns to her village and is regarded as a great woman for her children's success. However, the recognition comes too late, as she dies a lonely death, only to be celebrated lavishly in death by the children who neglected her in life. Her story poignantly illustrates the joys, sorrows, and sacrifices of motherhood, portraying a complex and often harsh reality faced by many women. Nnu Ego's journey in *The Joys of Motherhood* offers a profound commentary on the complexities and challenges of motherhood, particularly within the context of Nigerian society. Through Nnu Ego's experiences, Buchi Emecheta explores themes of gender, identity, tradition, and the impact of colonialism on African women. One of the central themes of the novel is the conflict between traditional African values and the changing roles of women in a rapidly modernizing society. Nnu Ego's life is deeply rooted in traditional beliefs and customs, where a woman's worth is often measured by her ability to bear children. However, as colonial influences seep into Nigerian society, traditional gender roles are challenged, leading to a clash between old and new ways of life. Nnu Ego's story also highlights

the harsh realities faced by many African women, particularly those in polygamous marriages. The rivalry between Nnu Ego and her husband's new wife underscores the competition and jealousy that can arise in such relationships, adding to the burden of motherhood and the struggle for survival. Emecheta also critiques the role of men in African society, portraying them as often indifferent or even detrimental to the well-being of women. Nnaife's absence during wartime and his subsequent inheritance of multiple wives place additional burdens on Nnu Ego, highlighting the unequal power dynamics within marriage and the challenges faced by women in asserting their autonomy. Despite the hardships she faces, Nnu Ego's resilience and determination shine through. Her unwavering commitment to providing for her children's future, even at great personal cost, speaks to the strength and sacrifice of mothers everywhere. However, the novel also serves as a poignant reminder of the often unacknowledged and underappreciated role of mothers, whose contributions are only truly recognized after their death. *The Joys of Motherhood* is a powerful and thought-provoking novel that offers a nuanced portrayal of motherhood in African society. Through Nnu Ego's story, Emecheta sheds light on the joys, sorrows, and complexities of motherhood, inviting readers to reflect on the enduring strength and resilience of women in the face of adversity. *The Joys of Motherhood* presents a nuanced exploration of motherhood that intertwines blessings and agonies, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of the maternal experience. This dualistic portrayal is central to the novel's thematic depth and serves to illuminate the broader socio-cultural context of Nigerian society. The blessings of motherhood are evident in Nnu Ego's deep-seated desire for children and her initial belief that motherhood would bring love and fulfillment to her life. The birth of her children brings her a sense of purpose and identity within her community, and she gains respect and

recognition as a mother. The novel celebrates the joys derived from fulfilling maternal responsibilities, such as childbearing, nurturing, and providing for one's family. Through Nnu Ego's character, Emecheta highlights the cultural and societal value placed on motherhood and the joys that come with it. However, alongside these blessings, the novel also delves into the agonies and challenges faced by Nnu Ego and other women in her position. The pressure to bear children and the stigma attached to infertility are sources of great anguish for Nnu Ego, leading to feelings of inadequacy and despair. The novel also explores the hardships of single motherhood, poverty, and the sacrifices that women often make for their families. Nnu Ego's struggles to provide for her children, the rivalry with her co-wives, and the lack of support from her husband underscore the agonizing aspects of motherhood. Furthermore, the novel critiques societal expectations and the limitations imposed on women, particularly in traditional African societies. It highlights the constraints of patriarchy, polygamy, and colonialism, which contribute to the complexities and challenges of motherhood. The portrayal of Nnu Ego's lonely death and the belated recognition of her worth by her children serve as a poignant reminder of the often-unseen sacrifices and hardships endured by mothers. *The Joys of Motherhood* presents a compelling narrative that delves into the blessings and agonies of motherhood. Through Nnu Ego's story, Emecheta offers a profound commentary on the complexities of maternal experience, highlighting the joys, sorrows, and sacrifices that define the role of motherhood in Nigerian society. In the context of *The Joys of Motherhood*, the idea that women need motherhood to be happy is deeply ingrained in the societal and cultural norms portrayed in the novel. Nnu Ego, the protagonist, is raised with the belief that her ultimate purpose and fulfillment lie in becoming a mother and bearing children. This belief is reinforced by her community, where a woman's value is often

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bear children, particularly sons, and fulfill her role as a mother according to traditional norms. This societal pressure reinforces the idea that motherhood is essential for a woman's happiness and fulfillment, creating a symbiotic relationship between individual desires and societal expectations. However, the novel also highlights the limitations and challenges of this symbiotic relationship. Nnu Ego's sacrifices and hardships underscore the complexities of motherhood and the ways in which societal expectations can be burdensome and oppressive. In this way, *The Joys of Motherhood* portrays motherhood as a symbiotic relationship that is both fulfilling and challenging, highlighting the complexities of women's experiences and the ways in which they navigate their roles as mothers within a broader social and cultural context. In the said novel, Buchi Emecheta explores how a patriarchal society shapes the experience of motherhood and reflects on feminist themes within an African context. The novel portrays the challenges faced by women like Nnu Ego, who must navigate traditional gender roles and societal expectations that prioritize motherhood and male authority. One way patriarchal society poses motherhood is through the commodification of women's bodies and reproductive capabilities. Women are valued primarily for their ability to bear children, especially sons, which reinforces the idea that motherhood is the ultimate fulfillment for women. This places immense pressure on women like Nnu Ego, who are judged and valued based on their ability to fulfill this role. Additionally, patriarchal norms dictate that women must prioritize their roles as wives and mothers above all else, often at the expense of their own autonomy and aspirations. Nnu Ego's life is defined by her sacrifices for her children and her struggle to provide for them, highlighting the limitations placed on women's agency within a patriarchal society. Feminism in the African context, as depicted in the novel, challenges these patriarchal norms and seeks to empower women to define their

own identities and futures beyond traditional gender roles. Nnu Ego's journey can be seen as a feminist narrative, as she grapples with the limitations of her societal expectations and strives to find fulfillment and autonomy in her own right. *The Joys of Motherhood* offers a complex portrayal of motherhood and feminism within an African context, highlighting the ways in which patriarchal society shapes women's experiences and the challenges they face in asserting their own identities and agency.

CONCLUSION

In the African patriarchal society depicted in *The Joys of Motherhood*, motherhood is portrayed as both a blessing and a source of agony. On one hand, motherhood is celebrated as a woman's ultimate fulfillment, providing her with purpose, identity, and respect within her community. Women like Nnu Ego derive immense joy and pride from their children, and motherhood is often seen as a sacred and revered role. However, this portrayal of motherhood as a blessing is juxtaposed with the harsh realities faced by women within a patriarchal society. Women are expected to bear children, particularly sons, and are judged and valued based on their ability to fulfill this role. This places immense pressure on women and can lead to feelings of inadequacy, failure, and even despair when they are unable to meet these expectations. Moreover, the novel highlights the sacrifices and hardships that women endure in their roles as mothers. Nnu Ego's life is marked by poverty, loneliness, and the constant struggle to provide for her children. Her experiences reflect the agony that many women face in a society that places limitations on their autonomy and agency. *The Joys of Motherhood* portrays motherhood as a complex and multifaceted experience, encompassing both blessings and agonies. It challenges us to consider the ways in which patriarchal norms shape women's experiences of motherhood and to advocate for a more inclusive and empowering narrative for

women in African society. In a patriarchal African society, motherhood is often presented as the ultimate source of a woman's happiness and fulfillment. However, this portrayal overlooks the diversity of women's experiences and desires. Feminism challenges the notion that motherhood is essential for a woman's happiness, advocating instead for the recognition of women as individuals with varied aspirations and paths to fulfillment. Feminism asserts that a woman's worth should not be contingent upon her ability or desire to bear children. It emphasizes the importance of autonomy and agency, allowing women to define happiness on their own terms. While motherhood can bring immense joy and fulfillment to some women, others may find happiness through pursuits such as career, education, creativity, or personal relationships. In this light, it is essential to recognize and respect the choices and experiences of all women. By embracing a feminist perspective, society can move towards a more inclusive and supportive environment where women are empowered to pursue their own paths to happiness, whether or not it includes motherhood.

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Single Mother

A family is considered to be the basic social unit that molds human beings as distinct individuals (Hossain & Ali, 2014). The so-called 'normal' family is comprised of a father, mother, and children, which is identified as a miniature mode whereas an extended family includes grandparents, other related families, etc. The structure of a family is regarded as significant since it is the roles executed by each of the family members that contribute to the living (Rosenthal & Marshall, 1986). Since the ancient era, men and women were assigned a part to perform as contributions to family well-being. Moreover, the concept of child-rearing is a shared responsibility of both parents although mothers are normally looked at as the primary caretakers. It is the responsibility of the fathers to assist the family financially, provide shelter, and assure safety for the family members (Karunanayake et.al., 2021).

The regular structure of a family is put into many changes along with the evolution of humanity. The concept of single parenthood was a rarely spoken term a year ago, although it has been adjoined as one of the types of family and parenthood in contemporary society (Young, 1995). Single-parent families are the unit of a family where the sole parent who is either the mother or father is responsible for child-rearing (William et.al., 2009). Although the concept of single fatherhood is present in society, single mothers are the overwhelming majority of single parents (Karunanayake et.al., 2021). According to Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000, a single mother is the parent of one or more children in the absence of the spouse generally due to separation, divorce, or death. According to Goldscheider, et.al., 2015, if the single parent is the mother, she is engulfed with the responsibilities of a mother as well as a father. After the loss of the partner, a single mother becomes the head of the family and takes charge of the obligations that were generally entitled to a father for economic

UNDERSTANDING THE STRUGGLES OF A DEPRIVED SINGLE MOTHER THROUGH THE LENS OF ASHWINY IYER TIWARI'S FILM *NIL BATTEY SANNATA*

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ABSTRACT

Motherhood- The state of being a mother itself is a challenging part of any woman. Indian cinema has depicted and rejoiced mothers for years now. A famous Bollywood dialogue by Amitabh Bachchan "Mere paas Maa hai Maa" means he has a mother and that is enough for him is the most celebrated dialogue for mothers. Mothers are worshipped and loved and it is believed that there is heaven on mother's feet. One fine afternoon, in a conversation with one of my renowned professors, he recalled his childhood and mentioned his mother as 'Khusi'r Maa' a Bengali proverb that means a mother of happiness as she always smiled, no matter what. This proverb put me in a dilemma, why mothers are always happy? Are they happy? Don't they have any problems? Or just an adjustment pretending to be a 'good mother' in society. This paper tries to understand the various challenges that are faced by mothers in general and single mothers in particular by analyzing the movie Nil Battey Sannata (2015) by Ashwini Iyer Tiwari.

Keywords: single mother, women, motherhood, challenges, mother.

ARTICLE

INTRODUCTION

Movies are the signboard of our society and are considered a central part and parcel of our lives. Nowadays, it is characterized as an integral component of our life and emerges to be an undeniable entity. Its expanding area is further consolidating this point that a movie can alight and delight people (Rai, 2017). A brief history of Indian cinema is enough in itself to expose the harsh and scathing truth of Indian cultural politics which have placed women in a peripheral and subsidiary position (Rai, 2017). Cinemas have been one of the sources of entertainment for years. For years, Hindi films also known as Bollywood have depicted mothers as self-sacrificing, subservient, and lovable and these signs of a woman make one a 'good mother' and self-love, career-oriented mothers are not well accepted even in a modern educated society. Mothers are glorified when they sacrifice their happiness, and career for their family and their children. Being a mother, itself is glorified by society. Mothers are the primary caregivers of their babies. Although the manners in which mothers raise their children could vary in reality, 'good mothers' are generally expected to be devoted and even sacrifice something valued for the greater good, especially of their children (Arendell, 2000; Elliot, Powell, & Brenton, 2015). Mother's self-sacrifice has been long considered an inborn instinct across societies and cultures. Drawing on the traditional conception of family, mothers tend to perceive/experience strong conflicts between work duties and family obligations; they are pressured to put greater emphasis on their children's needs than their careers (Bahr & Bahr, 2001). Drawing on the ideology of intensive mothering, mothers who prioritize their lives with their children are ashamed of their lack of maternal affection and disregard for their duty (Hay, 1996; Lowe, 2016).

In this paper, we will try to understand various challenges faced by mothers, particularly single mothers through analyzing the movie '*Nil Battey Sannata*' by Ashwini Iyer Tiwari. The film shows how a single mother manages to play a dual role of being both father and mother to provide for her only daughter. It has also shown that how a mother can go to any extent to make their children aware of their aims and goals. The narrative of a single mother struggling with many petty jobs and her daughter knows the importance of education and empowerment particularly for women.

This paper tests the assumptions that all mothers in general face several challenges during their motherhood. Society puts an invisible pressure and expectation on them to be a 'good mother'. Motherhood is not an easy task, especially for single mothers and it is okay to seek help from family members or any reliable one.

Overview of *Nil Battey Sannata*

Chanda- a single mother lives with her only daughter *Appu* in a slum area of Agra. Chanda is a widow who is earning hard for her daughter. She is doing multiple petty jobs to run the house and save for her daughter's education. *Appu* lacks motivation in her studies and thinks that she is destined to be a '*Bai*' i.e. maid like her mother. The film highlights all the challenges and struggles of a deprived single mother with multiple odd jobs to survive and give her daughter a better standard of living. It shows the struggle of a single mother to maintain a healthy mother-daughter relationship. A single mother struggles to play a duo role- a bread earner and a 'good mother' irrespective of all the odds. Chanda enrolls in school alongside *Appu* to encourage her. The film beautifully explores themes of education, ambition, and the bond between a mother and daughter, delivering a poignant and uplifting narrative.

Chanda's decision to go back to school is driven by her desire to provide a better future for her daughter. She sacrifices her own comfort and faces numerous challenges, like loss of job, extra working hours at night in a Dhaba to ensure *Appu's* success.

3. Balancing Work and Family: Juggling work and family responsibilities can be overwhelming for single mothers. *Chanda* struggles to balance her job as a maid with her desire to support her daughter academically. But, while trying to fulfill the financial needs, there is an unbalance situation in a mother-daughter relationship. Daughter does not care for her mother is portrayed in a scene where *Chanda* says: "To get you educated, I sob floors, day night. And, her you are enjoying and having a chat?" while in return *Appu* doesn't care about her questions and hardships but asks: "Why didn't you come home in the afternoon? I had to eat noodles" (*Nil Battey Sannata*, 2015, 00:24:31-00:24:43).

4. Social Stigma: Single women, particularly single mothers, may face social stigma and discrimination in conservative societies. Chanda encounters judgement and skepticism from others regarding her aspirations for her daughter's education. In fact, her own daughter *Appu* says: "Mo, have you lost your mind? What is the point of clearing SSC exams. And even if I do it, do you have the money... to pay for my further education. I'll end up as a maid. So what good is education?" (*Nil Battey Sannata*, 2015, 00:25:16-00:25:30).

5. Lack of Support System: Single mother may lack adequate support systems, both emotionally and practically. *Chanda* faces challenges without a partner or family members to rely for help. She fulfils dual responsibilities of both being a mother and a father to her daughter.

6. Emotional Turmoil: *Chanda* experiences emotional turmoil as she grapples with the fear of failure and the pressure

as well as psychological needs. According to a study, single mothers encountered many negative incidents for both personal as well as economic well-being (Williams & Compass, 1988). Most of the single-parent families in China are headed by single mothers and are the fastest-growing families living in poverty (Li, 2020). While in India an estimated 4.5% of households are run by single mothers, the UN Women report puts the figure of lone-mother households in India at 13 million (Pandit, 2019).

Challenges Encountered by Single Mothers

With the responsibility of child and family, challenges too come along with it. The first and foremost challenge is financial issues if the woman is entirely dependent on her husband's earnings. The death of the husband leads to a huge economic crisis if the finances are not well-planned or if the family belongs to the lower middle class or lower class. Sometimes it also leads to poverty in the family. Financial income was directly connected to the social condition of single mothers (Hernandez, et.al, 2009). Single parents in comparison to dual parents were under financial strain and lacked support to maintain childcare responsibilities. The single parents who worked had the additional burden of managing time efficiently to maximize meeting the needs of their children (Lee, et.al, 1999). With financial issues, the sole responsibility of taking care of the children is another major challenge. Mothers need to be very protective, especially towards a girl child. Another major challenge for a single mother is the rising cost of education. Quality of education in India comes with a cost that is not possible for the deprived population to receive. Hence, illiteracy is very common in our country. With the economic crisis, social crisis is also one of the challenges for single mothers. Their social life comes to a halt due to their divorce or widowhood, sometimes, their in-laws too do not support them. These are some of the major challenges encountered by single

mothers. Further, we will analyze the film, and understand more about such challenges.

ANALYSIS

In this part, we will analyze the film *Nil Battey Sannata* in the context of the challenges faced by *Chanda* as a marginalized single mother to give her daughter a better education and standard of living. The physical establishments like one barrack room of *Chanda* and *Appu* in a slum area, no source of comfort and luxury and only the fulfillment of necessities, old television, a sewing machine, and *Chanda's* old clothes with torn sandals which are sewed several times depict the economic deprivation of *Chanda*. This portrayal settles the topographical space, the underprivileged socio-economic background, and the marginalized position of the central characters in society, further suggesting their hardship, struggle for survival, humiliation, lack of access to resources as well as vocational options (Karunanayake, et.al., 2021).

1. Financial Constraint: By the first scene itself, we can understand the economic condition of *Chanda*, as she wakes up and leaves for the job as a maid in a doctor's house. *Chanda* works multiple jobs to make ends meet and provide for her daughter's education. The financial burden of being the sole breadwinner weighs heavily on her, leading her to take up unconventional methods to ensure her daughter's future.

2. Lack of Educational Opportunities: *Chanda* herself was not able to complete her high school but is working hard and sacrificing everything to make her daughter receive education. And to understand the education system, she therefore asks, Dr. Deewan, who she calls as Didi:

“I want to ask you something... studying medical and engineering must be really expensive, right?” And Didi says: “Not when I used to study. That's how I became a doctor.

But now... education has become more of a business. It cost somewhere around 500,000 to 1 million. At some places, the fee is between 2 to 5 million” (*Nil Battey Sannata*, 2015, 00:14:00-00:14:25)

A deprived single mother working as a maid, shows how big her dreams are for her daughter but in the present scenario where education has become so expensive. This scene has portrayed, one of the leading problems of high-rise fees in education system due to high privatization. Private institution charges high fees for their courses, making education unaffordable for many students. This has led to an increasing gap between the rich and poor, where only those who can afford it can access quality education (Meenu, et.al, 2023). Another scene from the movie: “Look Chanda... The thing about coaching classes are.. we offer discount to students with marks above 75%. coaching classes need good results.. which we get only from above average students. And if they're already good, then, they don't need us. So, we've to give them discount” (*Nil Battey Sannata*, 2015, 00:23:04-00:24:00), shows us how the education system has become a business.

2. Sacrifices and Hardships: Another major challenge shown in this film is as a single mother, *Chanda* sacrifices her own desires and comforts to prioritize her daughter's education and well-being. She endures hardship and societal judgement, including ridicule from her own daughter, all in the hopes of securing a better future for *Appu*. While *Appu*, on the other side, is concerned with only her wishes, living with no aim in life as she is sure that she will pursue her mother's vocation: “I will be maid.... An engineer's son becomes an engineer... and a doctor's son becomes a doctor. What else can a maid's daughter be? Maid. It's that simple” (*Nil Battey Sannata*, 2015, 00:16:27-00:16:34). Though a single mother is marginalized but has high hopes from her daughter, but the daughter is not living up to her expectations.

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to fulfil her responsibilities. Her journey is marked by moments of self-doubt, frustration, and despair. In one of the scenes, *Chanda* says: "I don't have money to educate you, I had saved the money with great difficulty. And you spent it all in one day" (*Nil Battey Sannata*, 2015, 1:22:34-1:22:38). It happens when *Appu* steals all her hard-earned money and spends unnecessarily not thinking about mother breaks her, as Appu believes, "It wasn't you hard-earned money..... I 've seen the guy who drops you every day" (*Nil Battey Sannata*, 2015, 1:22:40-1:22:50).

With the challenges, the film has also shown various positive outcomes such as:

- 1. Breaking Stereotypes:** Chanda Challenges societal stereotypes and norms associated with single mothers, proving that with determination and hard work, they can defy odds and achieve greatness. Her story serves as a powerful reminder of the strength and resilience of single mothers in the face of adversity.
- 2. Role Model and Inspiration:** Despite facing numerous challenges, *Chanda* emerges as a strong, resilient role model for her daughter. Her unwavering dedication to education and self-improvement inspires *Appu* to dream big and strive for success, breaking the cycle of poverty and ignorance. Her words: "You know, there's nothing wrong in failing... What's wrong is admitting defeat without trying. Always remember one thing. Your dream is only yours. Lot of people will laugh on your dream. Ask them to go to hell. They can't snatch your dream. There are few people who will understand your dream. Keep them close. They will keep your dream alive. You will face difficulties on the way. That's for sure. But always remember one thing. If you have your dream in your sights... no difficulty will last for

too long. Just don't let your dreams out of your sight. Do you know why? Because if there's anything we have to progress in life..its.. our dreams. And no one can snatch it from us." (Nil Battey Sannata,2015,01:35:35-01:38:06) are aspiring and a lesson to learn.

3. Celebration of Motherhood: Above all, "*Nil Battey Sannata*" celebrates the unconditional love and sacrifice of mothers, particularly single mothers, who go to extraordinary lengths to secure a better future for their children. Chanda's journey exemplifies the profound bond between mother and child and the transformative power of maternal love.

4. Supportive Community: Throughout the film, we see instances of women supporting each other. Whether it is Chanda's friend and employer supporting her decision to study or the camaraderie among the female classmate, the film showcases the strength of solidarity among women.

5. Empowerment through Education: Chanda's journey back to school not only motivates Appu but also inspires other women in the community. Her determination to break societal norms and pursue education empowers not just herself but also those around her.

CONCLUSION

"*Nil Battey Sannata*" is a heartwarming Indian film that beautifully portrays the struggles and triumphs of a single mother, Chanda and her daughter, Apeksha, also known as Appu. Through their journey, the movie sheds light on the challenges faced by single mothers in society and the determination required to overcome obstacles and achieve dreams. In essence, it is not just

a story about education or success; it's a poignant portrayal of the indomitable spirit of single mothers who navigate life's challenges with grace, courage, and unwavering love for their children. Chanda's journey resonates deeply with audiences, serving as a reminder of the profound impact of a mother's love and the limitless possibilities that arise from resilience and determination. This film has beautifully portrayed the theme of women helping women through uplifting and empowering each other through education and solidarity. It highlights the transformative impact of women helping women in breaking barriers and creating opportunities for themselves and future generations.

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and her interactions with other individuals in the novel, we will delve into the complexities of motherhood and the transformative power of love in the face of overwhelming adversity.

Through a close reading of ‘The Half Mother’ and a comprehensive analysis of its thematic underpinnings, this research paper seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on resilience, motherhood, and justice. By examining the novel’s depiction of maternal love and the pursuit of justice, we hope to illuminate the universal power of these concepts and their capacity to inspire courage, perseverance, and transformation in the face of unimaginable adversity.

Haleema’s Resilience: Exploring Maternal Love and the Pursuit of Justice

“... A daughter still waits for her father to wed her off. A wife searches for her husband. And a mother still pines for her son and waits for him to be a pallbearer when she dies”. (Bashir, 2014). The excerpt highlights the poignant portrayal of Kashmiri daughters, wives, and mothers who find themselves trapped in a state of yearning and desperation, fervently awaiting the reunion with their beloved ones who have been forcibly abducted by forces. This evocative quotation resonates with the profound trauma and affliction endured by Kashmiri women in the midst of a relentless conflict and the pervasive oppression imposed by the insurgency and counter insurgency presence.

Within the pages of Shahnaz Bashir’s ‘The Half Mother,’ an extraordinary tapestry unfolds, capturing the indomitable spirit of Kashmiri women who navigate the treacherous path of conflict or oppression. At the heart of this seminal and polemical work lies a profound exploration of the intertwined themes of motherly love and the relentless pursuit of justice, which serve as beacons of hope amid the darkness of their circumstances. Bashir’s novel offers an unflinching documentation of the trauma

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UNVEILING RESILIENCE: MATERNAL LOVE AND THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE IN SHAHNAZ BASHIR'S *THE HALF MOTHER*

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ABSTRACT

Literature has long served as a means to illuminate the human experience, uncover untold stories, and shed light on diverse cultures. Shahnaz Bashir's debut novel, 'The Half Mother,' stands as a powerful example of this, capturing the resilience of women amidst the backdrop of the Kashmir conflict. This research aims to analyze the profound implications of Bashir's poignant narrative, delving into themes of maternal love, loss, resilience, and the pursuit of justice amidst the Kashmir conflict. Through the harrowing journey of Haleema, a mother grappling with the uncertainty of her son's disappearance, the study reveals the resilience of countless Kashmiri women who carry the weight of loss while displaying unwavering strength. Bashir's evocative prose vividly depicts the impact of conflict on individuals and society against the war-torn landscape of Kashmir. The research aims to unravel the layers of 'The Half Mother' and shed light on the microcosm of experiences endured by Kashmiri women, emphasizing their remarkable resilience. It also investigates the portrayal of the psychological state of Kashmir's inhabitants, often overlooked, and explores the existential challenges faced by women in the conflict-ridden zone. By examining maternal love and loss in the novel, this study illuminates the unheard voices of women and their pursuit of fulfilment amidst a crumbling world, providing insights into the psychological impact of conflict and the strength of Kashmiri women in seeking justice and healing.

Keywords: *Half Mother, maternal love, loss, resilience, psychological impact.*

ARTICLE

INTRODUCTION

Maternal love and the pursuit of justice are two fundamental aspects of the human experience that often intertwine, shaping narratives of resilience and strength. Shahnaz Bashir's poignant novel, 'The Half Mother,' delves into the lives of individuals caught in the midst of conflict and turmoil, particularly exploring the extraordinary resilience exhibited by mothers in the face of unimaginable challenges. Through the lens of a gripping story set in the backdrop of Kashmir, Bashir's work invites readers to reflect on the universal themes of love, sacrifice, and the struggle for justice. In the tumultuous region of Kashmir, where violence and political unrest have become deeply embedded in daily life, Bashir's 'The Half Mother' shines a light on the harrowing experiences endured by families torn apart by conflict. The novel takes us on a journey alongside Haleema, a Kashmiri mother, as she grapples with the agonizing uncertainty of her son's disappearance after being apprehended by security forces. Haleema's resilience, her unwavering love for her son, and her tireless pursuit of justice become powerful narratives that encapsulate the resilience and strength of countless mothers who have endured similar experiences in conflict zones worldwide.

This research paper aims to examine the themes of maternal love and the pursuit of justice in Shahnaz Bashir's 'The Half Mother,' exploring the ways in which these elements intertwine to illuminate the resilient spirit of mothers in challenging circumstances. By analyzing the portrayal of Haleema's character

staccato startled the birds in the plum tree. ‘Sisterfucker!’ Kushwaha said after killing Ab Jaan, the fevered barrel of his rifle still smocking. Haleema frenetically slapped her face and her chest and pulled her hair. Blood began to gurgle out of Ab Jaan’s throat. She fainted. The entire neighborhood was now watching from their rooftops, verandahs and windows. Men and boys jumped off and rushed to help. Major Kushwaha cocked his gun. His men followed and pointed their guns at the people who tried to come towards the Joos. Women of the neighborhood wailed from their rooftops and verandahs and pummeled their chests. The major fired some warning shots. ‘No one will come here. Whoever does shall meet the same fate!’ he announced” (Bashir,2014).

The novelist delves into the profound anguish and suffering experienced by Haleema and others of her kind in the novel, primarily focusing on their heart-wrenching separation resulting from the abduction of their beloved ones. It is this profound sense of separation that permeates the narrative, casting a shadow over the central character, Haleema. Following the tragic demise of Haleema’s beloved father, Ab Jaan, she manages, to some extent, to come to terms with the pain. However, when her sole son, Imran Joo, is abducted by the hands of Major Manoj Kushwaha, Haleema crumbles and is left utterly debilitated. In every aspect, she endures the erosion of her physical strength and the deterioration of her mental well-being. Desperate and tormented, she exhausts herself in an unrelenting quest to find her son, as he represents her sole beacon of hope and the very essence of her strength. In this context, Dr. Ihsan Malik writes:

“Imran’s arrest makes the beginning of the most agonizing phase of Haleema’s life, the repercussions of which take a heavy toll on her physical and psychological

and anguish experienced by Kashmiri women trapped within the oppressive grip of insurgency violence. Amidst this harrowing backdrop, their maternal love emerges as a guiding force, nurturing an unwavering resilience and fierce determination. In the face of unspeakable atrocities, these mothers draw upon their boundless love for their children, igniting an inner flame that compels them to challenge the status quo and demand justice. The pursuit of justice becomes the driving force behind their actions, an intrinsic part of their identities as mothers. Fueled by an unwavering commitment to protect their families and communities, these women navigate the intricate web of resistance and resilience. With every step they take towards truth and accountability, they weave a collective narrative of empowerment and resistance, challenging the very foundations of the oppressive system that engulfs their lives.

However, this pursuit is not without its costs. These valiant women endure unimaginable sacrifices as they confront the systemic violence and corruption perpetuated by authorities. Yet, driven by an unyielding love, they persist, weaving threads of hope and inspiring others to join the fight for justice. The culpability for the anguish and adversity endured by Kashmiri women rests squarely upon the shoulders of the forces or entities responsible, as Bashir’s narrative resoundingly echoes. Their relentless perpetration of heinous crimes has unleashed immeasurable suffering and psychological trauma upon these women. Through the lens of ‘The Half Mother,’ the interconnectedness of the actions of these forces and the profound injustices experienced by Kashmiri women becomes unequivocal, unveiling the chilling reality of their lived experiences.

In this seminal work, Shahnaz Bashir offers not only a harrowing account of the trauma endured by Kashmiri women

but also a testament to the unyielding power of motherly love and the pursuit of justice. Through their unwavering love for their children and their tireless struggle for truth and accountability, these women carve out spaces of resilience, illuminating pathways to healing and societal transformation. 'The Half Mother' stands as a testament to their courage, reminding the world of the urgent need to address the crimes perpetrated against them and to honor their unwavering pursuit of justice. In this regard Dr. Bashir Ahmad Dabla contends that "...the state-sponsored gun in the hands of military and Para-military forces led to all sorts of excesses against women including abusing their chastity" (Dabla,2009).

The central character of the novel, Haleema, personifies the complex and vulnerable existence of Kashmiri women, serving as a poignant embodiment of their plight. Within the narrative, Haleema's journey unfolds through various roles, each highlighting the manifold challenges faced by women in Kashmir. Initially, she assumes the role of an orphan after her father, Ghulam Rasool Joo, is unjustly killed by forces in her presence, despite being innocent. Subsequently, Haleema experiences the pain of being divorced by her husband mere months into their marriage. Ultimately, she takes on the role of "Half Mother" when her only son, Imran Joo, is forcefully abducted by Major Manoj Kushwaha based on mere suspicion and mistaken identification.

The multifaceted experiences of Haleema symbolize the pervasive struggles endured by Kashmiri women. They are not only victims of multiple problems but are consistently placed in vulnerable positions in the context of every conflict. The novel underscores the systematic marginalization and victimization faced by women, highlighting their continued vulnerability and the urgent need for addressing their rights and well-being.

Throughout the narrative, Shahnaz Bashir presents an unflinching portrayal of the challenges faced by women in Kashmir, shedding light on the societal dynamics that perpetuate their suffering. Haleema's journey serves as a microcosm of the larger plight faced by countless women who bear the brunt of conflict, violence, and systemic injustices.

The character of Haleema, with her diverse roles, underscores the need for comprehensive attention to the multifaceted issues faced by Kashmiri women. By placing her within the wider social context, the novel prompts critical reflection on the urgent necessity for addressing gender-based inequities and securing the rights and well-being of women affected by conflict. In this context According to Chandra Talpade Mohanty,"Women have never been secure within (or without) the nation state-they are always disproportionately affected by war, forced migration, famine, and other forms of social, political, and economic turmoil" (Mohanty,2003)

Within the somber and melancholic passages of the novel, the reader is confronted with the profound anguish endured by Haleema as she is subjected to the agonizing separation from her son at the hands of forces. The narrative unfolds as a sequence of harrowing arrows of suffering, each piercing Haleema's heart with an unbearable weight. The initial arrow of pain strikes with devastating impact when Major Manoj Kushwaha, accompanied by his cohorts, callously snuffs out the life of her father, Ghulam Rasool Joo, in broad daylight, unleashing a barrage of bullets that pierces his chest. The author artfully captures this momentous event through a poignant narrative, employing evocative language that resonates with the reader's emotions.

"Three bullets were pumped into Ab Jaan. One in the neck. One in the heart. One in the stomach. The rapid

it poignant words that escape her lips: 'Imran saeba? Aakha? Imran. Have you come?' (Bashir, 2014). It is the anguish resulting from her son's inexplicable vanishing that ultimately precipitates Haleema's mental breakdown and eventual demise. The novelist portrays the scene of Haleema's demise as follows:

"Haleema's grave has been dug beside Ab Jaan's, her father, amid a cluster of irises and their long knife-like leaves. The freshly dug soil makes a mound on the edge of the grave. Some boys open the coffin and gently lower into her final abode. The undertaker places a soft rock of soil under her head. The last rays of the sun shine on the grave as mourners start crossing handfuls of earth into the rectangular trench". (Bashir, 2014)

CONCLUSION

The exploration of Shahnaz Bashir's novel 'The Half Mother' reveals the profound impact of the violence caused by insurgency and counter insurgency, oppression and atrocities on the lives and fate of Kashmiri women. Within the narrative, the novel poignantly depicts the tragic consequences of these acts, resulting in orphanhood, widowhood, and the emergence of Half Mothers weighed down by traumatic conditions. Through the character of Haleema, the author encapsulates the collective plight of Kashmiri women, symbolizing the pain and anguish endured by thousands who yearn for their disappeared loved ones, often succumbing to despair and even death in their relentless wait. By fearlessly contesting the injustices imposed by the authorities, Bashir universalizes the suffering of Kashmiri women, highlighting their resilience amidst an environment of oppression and violence. Moreover, the research highlights the power of literature to effectively depict and navigate the experiences of trauma faced by survivors in conflict zones worldwide. It showcases how literature, as a record and retelling of the workings

health. She now embarks on a long, interminable, and demoralizing journey. A journey of the unavailing endeavors of trying to find out the whereabouts of her only son. She moves from one army camp to another looking for her only son but no officer or cop at any of the camps claims to have seen him, she runs to the official electronic media to request them to bring her plight to the notice of the authorities only to come across a few abrasive men whose harsh words push her further down the vortex of despair" (Malik, 2014)

Driven by an unwavering determination to unearth any clue regarding her son's whereabouts, Haleema exhausts all available resources in her quest. When her financial reserves dwindle to nothingness, she is compelled to part with her prized possession—the cow and jewelry—selling them to her neighbor, Shafiq, in exchange for a meager sum of ten thousand rupees. The novelist artfully portrays this poignant episode, depicting Haleema's desperation and the profound sacrifices she is willing to make in her unyielding pursuit, emphasizing the depths of her plight:

"Haleema sold her cattle to Shafiq for ten thousand rupees, as well as her jewelry and more expensive copper utensils. The Joo house wore an empty look now. Each day, consoling neighbors would drop by, and once they left, she would find herself entirely alone. She began talking to herself or to the walls. Sometimes, she would talk to the things that belonged to Imran, crying and wailing alternately". (Bashir, 2014)

The profound trauma inflicted upon Haleema by the separation from her son manifests in poignant ways, as she unknowingly reaches for his garments and engages in heartfelt conversations with them. In her yearning for Imran amidst the

excruciating void, she sings songs that epitomize their painful separation. Shahnaz captures this haunting spectacle, portraying Haleema's poignant ritual of retrieving her son's clothes, engaging in intimate dialogues with them, tenderly kissing them, and inhaling deeply to catch a trace of his lingering scent. With meticulous care, she then delicately folds the garments once more, a bittersweet ritual that symbolizes her enduring love and longing for her absent child.

Then, melancholically, she would croon a song:

Kyazitscaa'iroodhammaah-i-nam kebilaal tai?

Doh goum pyaaraan, chbi na tsalaan malaal tai?

O crescent moon, why do you hide from me?

Sulking as you are, why have you kept me? (Bashir, 2014)

Haleema's frantic search for her son takes her from place to place, but her endeavors end in dejection and an overwhelming sense of hopelessness. Initially, she visits the radio station with the intention of reporting the abduction of her son, Imran. However, the news producer firmly and unequivocally informs her 'Radio doesn't air this kind of news' (Bashir, 2014). Through this narrative, the novelist seeks to underscore, with heightened emphasis, the pervasive reluctance of others to offer assistance to Haleema, as extending help would potentially endanger the lives of those involved. The solitary figure who endeavors to aid Haleema in her relentless pursuit of her son's whereabouts is journalist Izhar, yet his efforts prove futile, hampered by the callous and unsympathetic nature of those in positions of power. Undeterred, Haleema embarks on a solitary odyssey, traversing from one prison to another in a desperate search for Imran, only to return each time crestfallen and consumed by sorrow. Acting on an anonymous tip, she ventures to Papa 2, a prison cum torture center situated on Gupkar road

in Srinagar, only to find her hopes dashed once again as Imran is not there. She encounters Rehar Khan, who suggests that Imran may be held in Badami Bagh Cantonment, but this leads to yet another heartbreaking disappointment. Alongside her neighbors, she undertakes a journey to Tihar Gaol in pursuit of Imran, yet the outcome remains the same—no trace of her beloved son. Haleema leaves no stone unturned, even searching morgues in her tireless endeavor, yet each endeavor concludes with her returning disheartened and despondent. The novel, emotionally chilling and poignant, unflinchingly portrays the anguish and trauma endured by a mother in her relentless pursuit of a son who has been snatched away by uniformed oppressors. Javaid bin Nabi offers his discourse on the matter, articulating his observations in a manner befitting the context:

"The author of the book describes in detail the pain as well as tears that the poor mother sheds while waiting for her son's return. Haleema, not knowing the whereabouts of her son dies a new death every day. The author of the book conveys how men in uniform directly or indirectly maligned and befouled every Kashmiri and left their families crippled". (Bin Nabi, 2016)

The absence of Imran from every prison serves as a grim indication that he may have met a tragic fate, his life extinguished and his remains discarded in some remote and desolate location. This grim reality echoes the plight of countless disappeared individuals in Kashmir, who, once taken into custody, vanish without a trace, never to be seen again. As the narrative approaches its conclusion, we learn that Haleema's relentless waiting for her kidnapped son takes an unbearable toll on her sanity. Consumed by an overwhelming longing, she experiences an acute and profound yearning for her beloved child. As Haleema nears the end of her earthly journey, her final breath carries with

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of the unconscious mind, captures the agony, misfortune, and deep-seated pain of those who have lived through traumatic incidents. Through the character of Haleema, Bashir serves as a voice for the unrecognized woes and worries of people living in the turbulent times of the Kashmir conflict, amplifying the voices of widows, half-widows, and orphans swept up in the torrents of war. Thus, the research underscores the profound ability of literature to shed light on untold stories and unaddressed struggles, ultimately serving as a medium for resilience, empathy, and a call for justice in the face of human suffering.

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