

**ASPECTS OF MOTHERHOOD- UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITIES AND  
ITS RELATION WITH CONSCIOUSNESS AND IDENTITY OF WOMEN**

**THESIS**

**SUBMITTED TO THE**  
BABASAHEB BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR UNIVERSITY  
LUCKNOW

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**SUBMITTED BY:**  
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**UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF**  
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*Dedicated to my loving and  
caring family who always  
supported me in my  
decisions...*



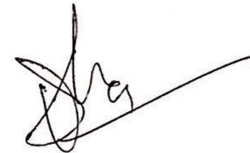
## Declaration

I Usha Bharti Singh, declare that the work embodied in this thesis entitled, “**Aspects of Motherhood- Understanding the Complexities and its Relation with Consciousness and Identity of Women**” has been carried out by me, under supervision of **Dr. Brajesh Kumar**, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar (A Central University), Lucknow.

The work included in this thesis has not been submitted for any other degree and unless otherwise stated, is all original. I have duly acknowledged all the sources used by me in the preparation of this thesis. I also declare that the thesis is essentially free from all kinds of plagiarism.

Place: Lucknow

Date: 06/08/2019



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## Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled “**Aspects of Motherhood- Understanding the Complexities and its Relation with Consciousness and Identity of Women**” submitted by **Usha Bharti Singh** is an original research work and has not been previously submitted in part or full for the award of any other university.

This thesis submitted to Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University Lucknow, satisfies all the requirements as stipulated in the *Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) regulations-1999 as amended in 2008/2010/2013* and it is fit for submission and evaluation for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the of the University.

Date: 06/08/2019



Supervisor



Head of the Department

## **Acknowledgement.**

I am thankful to my parents and my brother who motivated me and helped me to stay stable and sane and helped me to complete my PhD. Without my supportive family I might have left the work in between.

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Also my acknowledgement to those people as well who were there just to create hurdles and problems and increase the work load.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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## Preface

*From where should I start the discussion of such a sensitive and complicated societal matter*

*Should I start from the struggles and hardships of my Maa, Naani and Daadi...*

*Or should I talk about that 15 year old rape victim who not had to undergo an abortion but also had to fight a legal battle against the culprit...*

*Or should I talk about the exploitation of illegitimate and abandoned children in the shelter homes.*

*Or should I talk about the extreme grief of Jyoti 'Nirbhaya's mother and its impact on the women of the country...*

*Or should I talk about the disturbing declining sex ratio in this country, which has crept its way even in the South India which was supposed to be women friendly.*

*From a safe distance we often don't remember the statistics, and when we read it with empathy, we understand how horrific it is. All the pain, all the drama, and also the complicated silence (which has its own price), a heavy load of blood flow...and often times the woman has to make a difficult decision, and also live up to it.*

*Kamakhya and Sabrimaala, are the two extreme poles of the identity of women.*

*The identity debate and the struggles of Neena Gupta and Massaba Gupta!*

*The premise, plot and the progressive tone of a film like 'Badhai ho'...*

*The politics about the mothers of Rahul Gandhi and the Prime Minister Narendra Modi...*

*When media gains their TRP from the pain, loss and heavy grief from the mothers of martyred soldiers...*

*Or problem with over the top glorification of all the aspects of motherhood, be it media, society or religious scriptures.*

*The horrifying statistics of non institutionalized delivery and the pathetic condition of Pre and Post Natal care*

*When religious wombless and brainless religious leaders who keep on preaching that women should produce a lot of children because they need more scapegoats to fight the enemy religion and die..*

*The lethal and deadly abortion laws in some of the ridiculous religious countries*

*The controversies surrounding the role of church in dictating the tight abortion laws and their attempt to demonize the use of contraceptives and other birth control methods even in the colonized countries.*

*A very very important question in the modern society pertaining to the violence and severe sexual assault of women is 'How exactly boys are raised by their parents?' And the toxic phenomenon of 'ladla beta'.*

*The rituals and their interesting symbolism surrounding the women, her fertility and the child*

**Parents are parents, they are a guiding force for an individual, they are not the owners of children. This problem needs to be identified, especially in the case of ‘toxic’ and ‘manipulative’ people.**

The above mentioned statement can be easily taken out of context but the problem needs to be identified and accepted. True there a lot of people who do their best for their children and put in a lot of effort, but seldom do the issue of toxic and opportunistic parents is put forth and discussed. A prominent reality that proves my point is the existence of child marriages all over the world (even in developed countries like USA), and in some countries it is legal if the parents agree to marry off their children. Motherhood and parenthood are the two faces of the same coin. At the end of the day women are also flawed human beings and sometimes their transition into motherhood (which requires a strong sense of responsibility and dedication), does not turns out to be foretold in the mainstream societal folklore. Motherhood and Parenthood are two intimately related emotions, and cannot be radically differentiate (this is something which I discovered in some of the case studies which I did for the Chapter 4 which explains the family part). Before I set out to do real field work on the family set up, a lot of my assumptions were false, like motherhood is not just a linear process of bringing up children, it’s multilayered and it has complicated phases. Not to mention that it is hugely underpaid and underappreciated job ever.

Humans are not scientific and rational, and to do a rational research on the motherhood and how it defines or undefines a woman has a disturbing history and statistics of its own. Coming to a scientific conclusion in a qualitative based research is puzzling and somewhat cathartic as a woman. And since it’s my preface I will take the liberty to discuss some of the important women who gave me perspective in different aspects of life. Starting with my mother, and how her conviction in me produced this thesis, but more about her maybe later.

<sup>1</sup>Jasvinder Sanghera’s strong and gripping take on the reality of honor killing against the backdrop of Indian Diaspora, and how she stood up on her feet and gave her children more choices in matters of marriage and education, another strong and inspiring woman on the esteemed stage of Ted Talks. Because not only Indians but also Asians when they move around, they also carry their cultural baggage with them, be it the inherent internalization of caste, honor and killing their own family members to preserve that honor, and glorification of arranged marriages. And the second powerful Ted Talk pertaining to the this issue is the very touching and powerful speech by Khadeeja Gabla and her experience as a victim of FGM and how she had to migrate to Australia, all the adjustments she had to make, and most importantly when she confessed that how FGM affected her periods and also created complications in the child birth. Both of these women in their Ted Talks are very insightful and it’s one of those few videos which teaches compassion and also explains the interlink between gender, power structure and how often times women uphold the cruel blind spots of religious and patriarchal atrocities.

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<sup>1</sup>Her ted talk has been discussed in detail in Chapter four titled, ‘The Tradition and Historicity of the Motherhood-Defining the spirit of Nationalism on the Pure and pious body of Mother India’. Also the Ted Talk given by Khadija Gabla has also been discussed in the same chapter itself.

Even though there are numerous research undertaken on the complexities of maternal health and Motherhood in the academia, but I still feel I might have something new to contribute to the discussion. Sort of witnessing the whole underneath drama of three successful child delivery, one unfortunate miscarriage, and two violent miscarriages and also witnessing a heart broken mother crying wildly over the dead body of his sixteen year old son who was murdered. Motherhood is a demanding and unpaid job. Not only are there a lot of physical changes but there's also a lot of familial 'drama' that goes on underneath. For my third chapter on maternal health, one thing which I did was sit in the waiting area of the gynae department (in the hospital or in a small clinic) and listen and observe the conversations and their body language as well. Apart from that who comes with who is also something interesting to note, whether the woman in question comes with her mother, or husband, or mother-in-law, or sister-in-law is something that is not to be missed. Even the body language, tone of voice and even hand gesture says a lot about that family power structure. Mechanisms to control the married and unmarried wombs is something which is common across all the cultures and ethnicities, the advocates of Cultural Nationalism might argue for the diversity and freedom of the people but motherhood is the one with contradicting aspects. Participatory observation (especially with women) opened my eyes to the little details and big efforts which women as mothers put in for their children and family. But abusive and indifferent parents and how their behavior affects the child is an entire different matter altogether. When a congregation of women sit down with each other, two important topics that often recur is the issue of domestic abuse (and violence) and the issue of maternal health (often at the community and societal level).

In my research ahead I have tried not to glorify motherhood to epic proportions because there are already a lot of cultural and societal elements to do so. Because when motherhood is glorified, it severely subdues the reality of parasitic parents especially the mother. Because the powerful assumption that all mothers are naturally tender hearted and caring is misleading and harmful. This is something which I observed in abundance in my field studies and while interacting with the subjects. And 'invisible parasitic parents' are also one of the reasons why people take long to realize that they are being taken advantage of. Domestic violence and abuse being one of the serious societal side effects of 'invisible parasitic parents' or 'mothers.' And then there's the whole paradigm about the relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law and how their complex relationship things turn up later on.

But all the above written words aside, I don't mean to dismiss or discredit the efforts put in by 'actual parents'. And although I am not a Cultural Feminist but I do agree on a large part when they say that Mothers play a big role in the upbringing of children. In the current scenario where the debate is tilting towards the question, 'how are boys brought up?' and the question 'why are daughters not empowered enough to be independent', unlike the earlier scenario, where this question was raised but not with such force and vigor. In my qualitative research I have tried to address this issue. As a woman who loves her freedom more than anything else, this question has always remained at the back of my head. If we scratch the surface of our conscious we as women always knew and still realize the importance of honor and the safety in society and how it has locked down our capacity as a part of human race. So coming back to square one, 'What exactly

are we teaching our sons’? This deep and important question is something which dominates the social media, news screens and ‘bedrooms’ (discussions among women, often seated in the interiors of their houses) every time a severe sex assault case captures the attention of the nation.

This preface and this thesis will be incomplete if I don’t mention the efforts my mother has put in me and my brother. Some of the important influences on my thesis have been my mother and some of her unconventional ways in bringing up her children. Had it not been for the constant support of my parents, I might have left research in the middle. To begin with, in a world full of horrifying statistics relating to child induced violence and abuse, it is a luxury to have a normal abuse free childhood and to have a caring and supportive parents (I will try to be as brief as possible, when bragging about my mother). But despite having a caring and warm home to fall back into, I don’t believe in stereotyping motherhood as a whole bundle of joy because in reality it is not.

### **The Wisdom in the Books**

Apart from my mother, Simone De Beauvoir’s, work, ‘The Second Sex’ was an eye opener for me which gave me deep insights into the different dimensions of womanhood. And ironically there are some of the ‘decisions which women make’ is often similar and a shared conscious all over the world. Especially the desperation to get rid of an unwanted and unplanned pregnancy. Simone-De-Beauvoir’s ‘Second Sex’ is an undoubtedly explosive feminist text that radically challenges the perception of society about women. It is a powerful narration of the backstories of women from different societal backgrounds. The struggles of womanhood especially the reproductive rights (the desperation to take charge of it) are same across countries. Especially in those countries where laws are guided and designed by religious teachings which often aims at making women just a passive machine who produces children. In this book she has delved into the evolution of the condition of women and the gradual decline of status of women, and she also pointed out that how there is connection between reproductive slavery and the rise of patriarchy. She further goes on to explain that how there was an entire system created to make sure that the genuinely of the womb and controlling of property are always in the hands of patriarchs. In her lengthy and a very tough book she has covered almost every aspect of womanhood and the experiences, like virginity, menstruation, marriage, evolution of women’s freedom struggle and their struggle for identity is quite a vision shaping book. One of the main reasons why I am specifically mentioning the name of Simone’s ‘Second Sex’ is it’s sympathetic and an understanding tone even for those women who are often at the margins that is the sex workers and those women who had to undergo home abortions using painful methods. Obviously she received a lot of backlash from the patriarchal academia, scholars and writers. And unsurprisingly the book was placed in the ‘List of Prohibited Books’ by the Vatican. To be more precise this book detoxifies people from the toxic masculinity and gives us the capability to be more inclusive and empathetic in our thoughts and perspective.

Janani- Mothers, Daughters, Motherhood- A beautiful book, worth reading several times has been edited by Rinki Bhattacharya, this is very important book because it gave me closure and helped me selecting the topic for my PhD thesis, and a lot of story narrated in the book feels

personal and touching which is like exploring the dynamics of my relationship with my mother. It is a compilation of motherhood journey of women writers, activists and academics like Maitreyi Chatterji, Urmila Pawar, Maithili Rao, Kamala Das, Nabaneete Dev Sen, Shashi Deshpande, Mallika Sarabhai and other women telling their journey as mother and also as daughter. It's a fulfilling and interesting book right from the contents to the foreword penned down by Jasodhara Baghchi- 'Motherhood Revisited' which is quite a piece in itself. The book is very perfectly and beautifully divided into three parts. The first part is, 'Our Mothers', the second part is 'Ourselves' and the third part is titled, 'Our Children'. The writer in this anthology gives voice to the women in their narration of their journey to manage home, career, their relationship not only with their daughters but also with their mothers. The generational difference is something that we can feel when reading the book, and also feel the dilemma of the women who had to make a lot of tough decisions (with or without the support of their family.) This anthology of autobiographical short stories for women, about women and by a woman is a strong feminist narration in itself. A multi layered narration of women bonding with each other and making a space for themselves not only in the patriarchal family set up but also in the family.

These two books which I will mention now are like the two sides of the stick resembling patriarchy, which defined the womanhood on her marriage and fertility. The first book is 'Great Women of India' edited by Swami Madhavananda and Ramesh Chandra Majumdar is book which a cultural and a more feminine take on womanhood, the light under which the cultural patriarchy views women, so even if a woman is queen or a warrior in the battlefield she should always remain under the spectrum of patriarchy. I read this book when I was in tenth standard, it was a difficult read then because of a lot of complicated and tough words that were used. It is a complicated read today because I can now see past the hypocrisy of the editors and authors who worked on the book together. But the book cannot be dismissed entirely despite its heavy and hard attempt to justify child marriage and a glorified writing of Manu and his laws and views of women. It is heavily philosophical and draws many references from the Vedas, Puranas and Smritis. In the first few chapters it is all about the similarities of the Mother Nature and women and how the very essential nature of women is caring and nurturing itself. Apart from being a philosophical book it is vastly a historical book as well and it helped me to understand the history of women and also understand the evolution of mother worship in India. Most importantly this book made me familiar with the names of female scholars of ancient India (like Gargi Vachaknavi, Vadavi Pratitheyi, Sulabha Maitreyi and others) and how they were the respected a lot in the Indian cultural society. This is the book that goes on to narrate the great Hindu women not only from different parts of India but also from the different chapters of history, like the Ramayan and Mahabharata and the great women from the Buddhist era, and also there's a chapter on the great Muslim women of India, talk about being inclusive. In most part of this book womanhood is celebrated alongside motherhood and explaining that the two of them co-exist together.

The book that runs counter parallel to this book in the sense that shows the true cost women have to bear to keep the culture alive in this country or any country. The book 'Shadow Lives-writings

on widowhood' edited by the Uma Chakravarti and Preeti Gill is a book on widowhood which has been edited by women. One of the problems with the writings on widowhood is that more often than not it is written by men and this has done a fair share of damage in understanding the plights of widows especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The scary and a very chilling thing about this is that it shatters all the 'market myths' of widowhood and shows how deeply and painfully the lives, freedom and choices of women become nil. The system of oppression, chaining her down, and the way she is forced to look ugly is to make sure that the widows do not get loose and bring shame to the family. The situation becomes worse even for high caste Hindu widows for whom the code of restriction gets even more tight and restricting. Widows reduced to just one piece of white clothing and a simple thing like even being able to keep their hair was something that required more than ten generations of constant works and negotiation. So this book stands in full contrast to hullabaloo of marriage and fertility celebration associated so much with Indian womanhood. Reading this book before delving deep in my PhD cleared a lot of my perspective on culture and women. And most importantly it made me understand the importance of women writing about women for the women.

### **The Arguments of Atheists vs. the Religion**

As an Atheists, a lot of Atheists thoughts caught my attention, but here I will only mention three Atheists who influenced my work, and inspired me to be more brave and more open when writing about religion and how they have done more harm than good for the people- Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins and Ayaan HirsiAli. And I will try to be as brief as I can.

<sup>2</sup>Christopher Hitchens- A charming and a very influential atheist who questioned each and every thing sacred. A passionate believer and a defender of human rights and freedom of expression. A radical Atheist to be more precise. No one beats religion left, right and center the way Christopher Hitchens does. He was very critical of Monotheist Abrahamic religions especially Catholic Christianity and Islam and how religion is and always has been a danger to the sanity and peace of this world. Although he had radical opinions on a lot of issues but here I will just stick to his views on religion. The first time I heard him, he called out Islam in being hypocrite religion and he had some harsh words for the prophet, but that's Hitchens for everyone. Watching and hearing the speeches and thoughts of him gave me courage to be more brave in my approach to anything and everything. If we want to make this place a better place, deep questions should be asked about each and every religion. He was also a harsh critic of Mother Teresa and her hypocrisy (and how she was against the powerful idea of giving reproductive rights to women), and how her rigid belief in the values of catholic Christianity were problematic. Empowerment of women lies in breaking the shackles of religion and coming out of its attempts to brainwash people and take away their ability to empathize. When religious ideals occupy the political power, the first casualty is always the reproductive rights of women. And if the radical religious zealots are not checked it will lead to repressive society, who just reduce women to child bearing mammals. In his stern views about religion and scientific temper are two unrelated

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<sup>2</sup>All of Christopher Hitchens lectures and debates are available on You Tube and it was from here that I got to know more about his views, knowledge and arguments.

state of mind, he was often unapologetic about his choice of words to describe religious fanatics. He went on to state that how religion is manmade and people need to develop their reasoning skills. He was a very vocal critic of Islam (in its entirety) and how moderate muslims are not helping. Being a critic of religion and especially to be a critic of Islam is a risky thing in itself to do. One of his famous quotes goes like this, ‘What can be asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence’, and this quotation became known as the Hitchen’s razor. Hitchens was a legend not only in his living years but also in his death he proved that he is a true believer of science, because when he was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, he was not only under the care of Francis Collins but he was also the subject of Collin’s new cancer treatment. And after his death his body was donated for further medical research as per his last wishes. He died at the age of 62, on 15<sup>th</sup> December, 2011. The world lost a very precious and brave atheist when he died.

Richard Dawkins- He was not exactly a champion of the rights of women. But here I am mentioning him because of one of his experience with the madarssa and how they taught science in their religious school. But more of that later after a brief introduction to him. I always thought that my knowledge of science and scientific theories are very limited and I still have to go a long way. And then I stumbled upon dozens of you tube videos, where Richard Dawkins an accomplished biologist answering all the stupid questions, mostly totally unrelated to science in some of the esteemed conferences of the world. First world problems, depleting common sense and understanding of science. The mind boggling amount of ignorance he has to deal with is really astonishing. Clinton Richard Dawkins was an English ethologist and evolutionary biologist, who was born on 26 March 1941. He was well known for the criticism of creationism and religious faith and endorsing the idea of promoting science and rationality. Apart from that he was an open and outspoken atheist often debating religious people and putting his life on line for the sake of science and knowledge. In 2006, he founded the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science. Dawkins has himself confessed that he was religious and believed in god until he came across the Theory of Evolution and works of Charles Darwin, which fascinated him more to the biological and the gradual evolution of the homosapiens. Dawkins came into public eye with the publication of his controversial book, ‘The God Delusion’, in 2006. He was astonished to the level to which even the responsible people at important positions of authority were ignorant and ‘uneducated’ in the true essence of biology and evolution. It is an absolute delight to listen to his lectures and debates along with other esteemed scientists and atheists.

<sup>3</sup>And now coming back that to the issue of Richard Dawkins and his visit to an Islamic religious school, and how that school tackled the issue of evolution and biology. This video has an interesting gender perspective and a subtle display of power structure. When Dawkins enters the Islamic school he is greeted by the male Imam of Madani High School in the city of Leicester (in the East Midlands of England), an all Muslim faith school. And from here each and every conversation becomes interesting. And this is one classic book example of why religion and school education should not be mixed. The first and a very true thing that Richard Dawkins says in the start is this, “Faith schools are sometimes accused of closing children’s minds down by

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<sup>3</sup>[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbQv-YSA\\_rl](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbQv-YSA_rl)

teaching them this is the one true faith. And you get your truth from holy scriptures, rather than from opening your mind to the world.” In the rest of the video, the female teachers and the girls talk about science the way religious women do and that how they are free to have their own views and opinion. And incidentally all the pupils along with the ‘science teacher’ come to the same conclusion, regarding evolution, which basically means accepting whatever is written in their religious scriptures. And in this process science again takes a back seat. Some of the interesting thing about the entire video is the power structure at play here and the illusion of the freedom that they have their own opinion and views. And even though the school is an all girls school, the head principal is a male, an obvious classic cliché example of patriarchal oppression where the man is at the decision making position. And when Dawkins came to understand what is the status of science education in that religious school, there were only a few handful of girls there to interact with him, and even then there were only two girls who practically interacted with Dawkins. The underlying tone of this video is very telling in the sense that how girls are taught science, but it is supplemented by religious indoctrination in the next period. And this is how we have women who are often the gatekeepers and defenders of religion and culture, and in the end Dawkins gives this suggestion to the head, “You are never going to win the fight against evolution, it is a fact. What you should do is to look at the Quraan and reconcile it with evolution, which is what the Christians have done.” This world has a long history of bigotry, bloodshed and baby vending women machines (for whatever maybe the religion), but despite the Dawkins stating this about Christians, Christians still have problem with a lot of scientific theories. And as far as women are concerned, its high time religious studies are dropped from the curriculum. History is witness to the fact that narrow minded women (even though educated) sometimes proves detrimental even to the coming generations.

A few words for Ayaan Hirsi Ali: No research on women is complete without taking the interference of religion into consideration, because no matter whichever is the religion, they have a track record in being abusive and oppressive towards women, either in a subtle way or in blatant ballistic way. Ayaan Hirsi Ali is an Atheist as well as an ex Muslim who provides an in-depth critique of Islam, and its shortcomings, for which she has been issued death threats throughout her life. She being a victim of female genital mutilation, is an intrinsic part of her anger and one of the important part of her personality which can be seen, FGM is something against which she has spoken openly and does not shies away also from the fact that how it is something which is an intrinsic part of Islam and its teachings. As a black Muslim woman from a problematic country like Somalia, she opens up a lot of taboo subject debates, and all the time risking her life in the process to do so. I can go on and on about the bravery of Ayaan Hirsi Ali and about how she endured a lot of violence but a tragic point came when the film maker Theo Van Gogh was assassinated in Amsterdam on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 2004. This brought the death threat more and more closer to Ayaan. Actually she had collaborated with Theo and made a film titled ‘Submission’ which sparked anger not only among the Dutch Muslims but among the Muslims all over the world, the film narrated the plight and the oppression of women under the Islamic State and had a lot of controversial scenes right till the end. This film was another strong turn in the life and career of Ayaan Hirsi Ali. She was important influence in shaping up my perspectives on various gender issues and not to mention she as a woman is a true epitome of

bravery, resilience and survival. Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a Somali born who wears many hats, she is a feminist, a film maker, an activist, also a politician and also a constructive critic of Islam which put her life literally to fatal danger, an atheist and later an ex-Muslim. Her arguments will attract any rational thinking person. Although I have seen a lot of videos of her giving arguments and politely replying back to regressive questions of religious fanatics, here I will only give reference to only three important video, which I saw and which I deem very important for myself and also for this thesis. She is also one of the reason why my illusion about the Indian reporter Barkha Dutt (that she was a great journalist) was gone. In one of the panel discussion ‘What is the Future of Women in Islam’, (Which was organized in 2016, Women in the World Summit) and Barkha Dutt did the comparing and I can’t write if she did even an average job when asking questions or even trying to contradict it, that was when I lost all respect for Barkha. And obviously when Ayaan was in the panel she said a lot of important things regarding Sharia, Islam and women and the solution to radicalized Muslim Youth.

The second video which I saw of Ayaan Hirsi was quite strong and enlightening. In this video which has its origin sometime in late 90’s is about the arguments of Ayaan with the Dutch Muslims and answering all the regressive questions of offended Muslims. Undoubtedly Ayaan again said a lot of strong and rational statements which obviously offended those religious women there. Interesting point is that most of the regressive questions came from very offended Dutch Muslim women, this further proves the point that when women are over fed with religion, they become the gatekeeper of religion and often times even embracing and defending the evil aspects of religion.

*(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPCR9suX3I0&t=1004s>)*

The third video that I absolutely love is that of Ayaan Hirsi Ali being questioned by Christopher Hitchens and the style in which the conversation takes place is quite amusing. Two exceptional and rational thinkers in one frame is something to be watched on repeat play.

*(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQGLoAV5zWM>)*

### **‘Kiski Ladki Adhika Hai’**

This is a very interesting phrase that I came across when I was doing my research on the ways women affect the set up of the patriarchal family, especially amongst the folks of small towns and village who later migrated to big cities. I am mentioning this phrase here because this is something which is not directly related to the thesis as much as it is related to the issues of domestic violence, ‘gender selective avoidance parenthood’, and parasitic parents of the girl. Basically the phrase means a situation where the girl is married off intentionally by the parents of the girl in a family where the groom’s side already has a known reputation of being violent, uncaring and parasitic. It can very easily be associated with the phenomenon of surplus girl child, where the parents try to get rid of the extra girl either through early marriage or through marriage to a undesirable violent man in the marriage market. This is where the over glorified parenthood, their decisions are highlighted and ultimately how the arranged marriage proves

lethal for the girls. Girls all throughout their age are conditioned to agree to their parents and how whatever decisions they take are always right.

And this type of mentality is something which is not just limited to India, it is prevalent even in developed countries that are held ideal in so many respects. And this type of mentality often manifests itself in the form of child marriages. As a matter of fact India is one of the few exceptional countries to have a law against child marriage and it has actually set a minimum prescribed age in which someone can legally marry. The implementation and the reality of child brides and underage marriage is another issue altogether but there is a law unlike some of the strongly Catholic and Islamic belief developed countries, I am guessing making fancy malls and wide four lane roads does not develop common sense and empathy in people.

I came across this phrase when I was listening and observing the conversation of few women and they were talking about a boy who recently got married, and that boy had the reputation of being a short tempered arrogant goon, and upon hearing this news, one of the woman angrily remarked, 'kiski ladki adhika hui hai jo uss lakhaire se byaah kar diya'. Apart from that problematic reputation, even the groom's family had the reputation of being violent and unruly. And the parents of the bride knew almost everything about the boy and his psychotic family and still they decided to marry her off. This is one situation about which I heard on more than quite a few occasions and this mindset to a lot of extent also explains the helplessness of women in the case extreme domestic violence. When natal home betrays the girl, situation turns icy and very difficult for the girl, and thus a lot of adjustments with the in-laws. One very strong and noticeable evidence for this is the wide prevalence of child marriage, and how even till date it is still a menacing part of every society. And it has been difficult to completely eradicate this completely evil practice of child marriage.

This phrase even though a societal reality is not always a conscious decision on the part of the parents of the bride, sometimes they truly are not aware of the true nature of the groom or his family. But apart from this small complex angle of the large marriage system there are other substantial changes as well which is discussed in later chapters when necessary. The reality of 'Surplus Girl Child' and the horrific declining sex ratio are two baffling societal phenomenon for the researchers (atleast for me it is baffling). Because even though the sex ratio is dwindling, the attitude towards girl child still needs massive changes in it, and society should be ready for it. The speed with which girls are progressing and exploring the world and trying to understand the world from their perspective, the same cannot be said about the society and those running the system.

## **The Last Words**

And lastly, although I have ten thousands of regrets, but wasting my precious time on trying to qualify NET exams just tops the list. Different people have different abilities and capacity to do things but the entire Indian education bureaucratic system have way of converting each and every part of education into a mean rat race. I know my capacities and flaws and ability, and being a part of rat race is just not for me. I understand the importance to conduct exams and

evaluate students but after a point they seem more like an obstruction and roadblock. I don't know if only I feel this way or is it a gradual reality that slowly and slowly attempts have been made to make the degrees obtained by students as useless. This is something which I have noticed not only in the field of research but also to those students who are pursuing studies in other fields. I am really very surprised that the academic bureaucrats don't take our 'agnipariksha', why even leave this important task. But one thing which is pretty apparent is that how attempts have been made (both at the school level and also at the university level) to mould students into one shape and one type. The vicious cycle of exams just refuses to end, and not all unemployed people are lazy or free loaders. I got my two serious panic attacks during the NET exam I was giving, till date I am not able to understand why I even attempted the exam.

Once I removed NET Exam from my priority list, a lot of things became clear for me, it gave me an unblocked access to come up with new concepts and work on them. There's more to life and knowledge than just keep on filling up the exam forms and keep appearing for exams entire life. And no those people struggling with their carrier and trying to understand the job market are neither lazy nor undeserving. If I have faults in me so does the system and I shall accept and try to eliminate my share of shortcomings, but at the same I am absolutely aware of the shortcomings of the system. I am not saying that exams are totally useless, infact they are important but only to a point. I don't see why NET exams and other exams like it should be made compulsory. More than anything else these exams are more of a burden and time wastage.

# Chapter 1

## **Introduction: Why Motherhood and Identity.**

Motherhood is a complex topic to take up for research. A simple yet a very complicated phenomenon in any society. In India motherhood assumes altogether a different tone in the sense that even though India worships every form of being a woman (and especially the way every aspect of motherhood is celebrated and worshipped), it goes quite contrary to the maternal health statistics, sex ratio statistics and gender induced violence statistics. So what affects the consciousness of women? How and when do they start thinking to make an identity for themselves? And amidst all these questions where does the motherhood experience fit in for the modern women? Unlike Church and Islamic governed countries, India is quite forward in allowing legal access to reproductive health kits and care facilities. When women don't have to worry about the unplanned and forced pregnancy (and this is not always the case), they can focus on other aspects of life, like getting a proper education, to have an equal opportunity at work and career and to hope for a good marriage and the life thereafter. Globalisation and India's continuous improvement in the performance of girls' education has been instrumental in shaking up the collective consciousness of girls. It is quite another matter if they are able or unable to achieve their goals or not, but there's a constant drive to make a mark for themselves. To be familiar with the works of feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Kamala Markandaya, Maithrayee Krishnaraj, Radha Kumar, Nivedita Menon, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and others opens the doors to think about the sundry inequalities and institutionalization of oppression from a new frame of mind and perspective. In the contemporary times a lot of engaging debates are centered around the issues of gender, sexuality, identity, violence, nationalism, honor and migration. And how all these intriguing and complex concepts intersect, complement and supplement with one another to define the irrational and brutish realities of all the societies and how these ideologies stood the test of time and is still standing tall amidst all the criticism and hullabaloo. At the heart of the big debate regarding motherhood and empowerment is the crucial question of reproductive rights- access to contraceptives and the fast declining rate of sex ratio which is getting out of control. And how this inequality has emerged in a strong corporate sector which is a night mare of women. In the present times motherhood and bareness are two complicated realities; it comes with a lot of conditions of purity and gender choice and cultural baggage of bareness and inauspiciousness. Not only this the subject of motherhood is something which has profited several markets and industries and most importantly the market of religion, people performing expensive religious rituals to get a baby boy is something that funds the economy and propaganda of religious men to get more sons, expensive rituals to cure barrenness and other related things. Despite all the debate surrounding inequalities, violence and gender induced discrimination against women, it cannot be blatantly denied that women have not made a mark for themselves. Even before the introduction of Hindu Code Bills and other reformatory bills, women were acutely aware of their condition and strived to change it for good. It took generations of women making space for themselves in the political and social and familial arena so that ultimately the coming generations of women could have more rights to exercise. Women

are not passive being that they don't understand the changes going on- in fact they understand it and have always strived for themselves. The rich Indian history is a proof to that. But in this thesis we will be discussing that how in the changing environment around women affects their consciousness and later shapes up their identity. Motherhood is closely related to womanhood, and it is bound to affect the conscious and psyche of women even if they choose not to have children. Girls are brought up that way- to be nurturing and caring and sacrificing themselves for the sake of the family. So the big question to be addressed here is how woman view their situation when faced with the question of motherhood, independence and career choices.

Advertising industry are second source that became rich at the expense of women's body and stereotyping it into the old mould of a passive and caring woman. If the contents of advertisements are to be believed then women give birth to only male child and take care and nurture only male child. In the milk products advertisement often the male child and his mother are shown with a tag line of mother's love, according to them only boys drink milk, only boys go to school for studying and playing and only boys feel hungry, and it is always the duty of women to be ready to serve the needs of her husband and her child. Most of the advertisements often use women when they have to convey innovative ways of losing weight. A lot of advertising agencies find it hard to believe that motherhood and slavery are two different things. Most of the time there is a mother trying frantically to make her male 'child' drink milk and feed her some more. Almost all the advertisements give primary importance to the male child on how boys play, study, get their clothes dirty and a 'good mother' cleans the clothes of her son and husband without complaining. Often people especially the advertisement makers confuse the terms child and a male child, for them the term child does not include female child. And that how mothers only take care of their sons thus categorizing women into different shades of passivity, negativity and sacrifice. There are good mother, bad mother, manipulative mother, passive mother, evil and cruel step mother and lastly the ultimate sacrificing mother. In today's time television is a powerful source which influences the choice and thinking of the masses. It is true that the advertisements shows the reality prevalent in society, but to keep on showing the existing prejudices strengthens the stereotypes. There is more to the definition of motherhood than just slaving around husband and son. Advertisements and serial makers go hand in hand when it comes to putting women into one mould of motherhood, because according to them the ambition of all women is to become a mother

'Choice for one woman is coercion for other', this statement holds true for women in matters of reproduction and sexuality. It's not like that there will be an extensive research on the female foeticide and related issues, rather I would be touching upon it because its exclusion from the research would mean an incomplete research, the brutal realities related to whole question of female foeticide and procurement of a male progeny is a reality for a lot of women and how this often shapes the conscious and identity formation of women and sometimes also for the coming next generation as well. The curious yet very tragic cases of millions of girls 'missing' from the womb." The parameter of gender complicates numerous explanations and analyses that may otherwise hold. <sup>4</sup>The conundrum here pertains to the statistics of sex ratio, with 35 million girls

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<sup>4</sup>[http://censusindia.gov.in/Census\\_And\\_You/gender\\_composition.aspx](http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/gender_composition.aspx)

in India falling short of the expected number in the 2001 census or 83 girls aged 0-6 years for every 1000 boys of the corresponding age. It is ironical that in the last two decades the sex-ratio figure had to fall as low as they are now before arriving at a general agreement that sex selective abortions are largely responsible for it. It is widely agreed that sex ratio is a powerful indicator of the social health of any society. It conveys a great deal about the state of gender relations. But for many South and South East Asian countries this relationship has not been so straightforward. Neither education nor affluence has brought about any significant change in attitudes towards women. Since the early 1980s, the southern states of India had relatively favorable sex ratio figures, have also been showing a decline in sex ratio. Is the birth of a son the only way to increase parents status, especially a mother's status in the household as well as in the society? How does one understand the political economy of emotions towards progeny and reproduction? Is sex ratio really an issue of numbers or is it reflective of the social behavior towards the female? Sociological and hypothetical propositions need to be put forth in a comparative and historical perspective. The practice of legitimating pregnancy and birth within the wedlock, and its inverse of abandoning babies born outside wedlock, existed alongside the institution of celibacy" (Tulsi Patel, 2007).

<sup>5</sup>The bride trafficking industry has thrived on this deficit of women, there are already several studies which have presented strong evidence for that and have put forward the complex problem that inhuman trafficking is not just about procuring helpless people for the unorganized sector but it is also about smuggling girls from poor states to girl deficit states so that the misogynist communities and people can still have a son for their family. And this is not it, inhuman trafficking of girls for the marriage market in rich states is a complicated issue in itself. Because initially poor girls and families crossing border in search of a better prospect of life is in itself an issue of illegal migration without proper identity papers. It is after they have crossed the border that it is the case of trafficking in various streams of unorganized and organized sector, forced marriage and flesh market being two of the most important demanding sectors. Activists and advocates of women's rights such as Nandita Baruah and Therese Blanchet have brought to light the fact that how the parents of these poor girls are often unaware of the trafficking trap and end up marrying some distant relatives who they don't know properly. And the real ordeal begins once the girl is married off and is not able to contact her parents in any way (sometimes this non communication gap expands from a few months to several years). And also it is here in these types of cases that theory that, 'India is an anti female society' gets a little betrayed when the desperate and poor parents set out in search of their daughters, who are always in a state of anxiety. If you can imagine a picture of a terrified mother trying to find her daughter very desperately but is not succeeding, and these two vivid images show the two shades of motherhood with a twist of culture and society pressure. Most of the time the debate to save the girl child is often reduced to the rhetoric, 'if girls die than who will the men marry and who will give them sons', and this mindset has helped only in the short term. In the social, economic and

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<https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/list-of-indian-states-on-the-basis-of-sex-ratio-1521445111-1>

<sup>5</sup><https://borgenproject.org/causes-of-human-trafficking-in-india/>

<https://www.cry.org/issues-views/child-trafficking>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/india+law/human-trafficking>

cultural Indian context the main aim of state and community sponsored maternal programmes is to manage the population explosion and male progeny. Economical maternal health care is yet to find its place in the list.

Before going into the intricacies and complexities of motherhood and identity, it is important to take into note the voice, choice and rights of women in the reproduction decision. The purity of a women is decided by two anatomical conditions,1) if the girl has her hymen intact before marriage and 2) the legitimacy of the child after marriage. While discussing the family planning, it is often assumed (both by the government policy makers and the common masses) that they have to tackle the problems of a 'happily married housewife' who wants to enjoy sex but is afraid of conceiving again (this is something that has been observed in some of the advertisements meant for government initiated programs for the welfare of married and pregnant women). But there is more layer to the complex situation than just ensuring the solution for married pregnant women. Some of the issues which in my view comes under this heading are birth control measures, policy related to family planning, married and unmarried mothers, ditched married destitute woman with lots of children, married and unmarried sex workers with their wanted and unwanted children , rituals and rites of child birth, notions of purity and pollution attached to the pregnant women, the important and 'unscientific role' played by dais and mid wives during the time of delivery, family politics regarding the proper care of the pregnant woman in the house, division of labour, matters related to surrogacy, unregulated phenomenon of bride purchasing, marriage and migration, access or non access to safe abortion, access to contraceptives, amniocentesis and the quality of food offered to the woman after the gender of the fetus is known, the deplorable conditions of tribals in some of the most underdeveloped tribal states in the country, mindset of the people, and most important is the fact whether women know they have a choice and rights and whether they can choose to have their choice implemented, gender relations and female foeticide in the country and at the family level, the question if the 'rational science' is anti women or pro women, and lastly some of the big and small initiative taken by the government and NGOs for their maternal welfare and their empowerment by giving them a choice. Also in my research work I choose not to include the caste factor because pregnancy is a complicated chapter in the life of a woman, where on the one hand numerous 'passive' high caste women from Haryana, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh are often subjected to unsafe abortions and cheap contraceptives which is often fatal, on the other hand there are dalits and poor tribal women who don't have access to proper medical facilities (mainly due to poor financial conditions) have to bear severe consequences. Thus caste factor is excluded from my research work.

My research work is not an aggressive attempt to glorify motherhood and the process of begetting a child because both of them are two different aspects. Unlike the popular belief (which blossoms on the fact that the women find their true salvation in the birth of their child), women and girls have different views regarding the motherhood, it can only be a fulfilling experience if it is not forced upon women and the consent of women is also involved.. It would be a crime on the part of research students to not capture the positive changes that have taken place over the years. Study of motherhood in relation to the conscious and identity of women

gives deep insight into other gender and identity related issues. By this research study it is not my intention to down play the serious gender and violence related issues, neither it is my intention to cover up the inequalities and barbarity a lot of women face in real life, but it is rather a small attempt to capture the changing nature of mother daughter relationship and how with the changing times women are being aware of their anatomy, conscious and identity formation and how they are slowly and gradually taking place and is affecting the views of people around. Also there's more to the study of motherhood than just analyzing the periods of conceiving and giving birth to the baby.

Traditional Hindu goddesses such as 'Kaali', 'Ganga Maa', 'Durga' and 'Dharti maa' are evoked from time to time and often their nurturing nature is highlighted and how they are marketed to be ultimate ideals of women, and how every women should only have the ambition of being the mother of a 'son', the chapter of 'Mata Yashoda' taking care of 'Bal Krishna' is something that has been mentioned throughout the Indian culture in the context of motherhood and how 'Mata Yashoda' was the epitome of sacrifice and motherly affection towards a child who was not her own. "Goddess abound in India varied and diverse, they sometimes contradict each other. There are those who are consorts, those who have consorts, and there is the one who is alone. She is bedecked with jewellery or with a garland of skulls; at other times, she is the nude goddess, Many- armed and wielding weapons, she sometimes disarms you with just a lotus in hand, and uses the 'abhaya' and 'varada hastas' to dispel fear and grant boons. Then there are those other goddess- with no arms or arms that end in stumps; repulsive, angry or gracious, or expressionless with no facial features, sometimes not even a head; riding ferocious animal like a lion, tiger, leopard, or seated in tranquil equipoise on the lotus. Portrayed in vivid anthropomorphic detail or expressed symbolically, she could be a pot with eyes scratched on it, a cowrie shell, or a piece of stone smeared with vermilion. Sometimes the goddess is also abstracted into a flash of energy, colour, sound and geometry. The mother goddess can be interpreted as expressing ideas of power, autonomy, and primacy in the widest sense of the term. She conveys not so much the idea of physical motherhood but a world view in which the creative power of femininity is central; the goddess mediated between life and death, and contains in herself the possibility of regeneration. The 'mother' aspect of goddess is open to interpretation, and indeed has been developed in different ways at different points in time for various purposes. The modern iconography of India as mother goddess is a particularly interesting example of the use of the goddess for end goal of nationalism. The Indian mother goddess is more than five hundred years old and there is a continuous tradition of imaging and worship of the goddess as a mother, though there are many diversities in form and material" (Maithreyi Krishnaraj, 2010).

Comparing a woman to that of the greatness of goddess takes away her right to be a humanbeing, it becomes very difficult for women to report the violations. The main question is how do modern women deal with the strong belief 'Aurat maa hoti hain', 'Aurat patni hoti hain' because with changes in the marriage fixing rules and delay in the age of marriage, women have managed to establish themselves as individuals with strong bent towards identity formation. A lot of women have to juggle a lot of responsibilities, the job, the in laws, the husband and the children and each one of these individual can be very demanding and sometimes non cooperative

and sometimes helpful. Radical Feminists such as Kate Millet, Judith Butler, and Shulamith Firestone view pregnancy as a serious and lethal threat to the health and progress of women and how it has undermined their development in every way possible.

While on the one hand we have strong mature financially independent women who take charge of their life after a while, on the other hand we have the widespread phenomenon of child marriage/ forced marriage which later results in forced pregnancy and a painful motherhood period. The child brides and their forced pregnancy is the invisible part of the changing demography of India in the globalised world. A few example of the confusion of the globalised yet traditional states are states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Mumbai and other various states, these states and the Indian society is responding to the question of modernity, and globalization in a very selective way according to the rules of money economy and market play. While they are building hotels, roads, and developing infrastructure to compete at the world level but at the same time these states are witness to a large number of child marriage, sexual assault and a lot of other gender induced violence. The above mentioned problem is not just a specific problem of a few states but is a nationwide phenomenon happening right now. And a lot of victim of social violence don't have a strong presence in the policy making for the betterment of women.

Gradually a lot of factors worked to help me settle for one stream which explores the changing definition of Motherhood and Identity and how it defines motherhood in a patriarchal set up:

1. The Bengali drama 'Mother of 1084' (Hazar Chaurasi ki Maa) by Mahashweta Devi written in 1974 against the backdrop of Naxalite Revolution in the seventies in Bengal. This is an emotionally drenching and heavy reading. In this drama Mahashweta Devi deftly deals with different aspects of society and at same time very sensitively and very strongly brings out the grief of a mother whose son was murdered (in a state directed encounter against the naxalites). The complex journey of a mother who discovers her son after his death and how she views each event and incident as a woman capable of deciding a few things for herself, as someone who crosses the home boundary to get a job for herself, who crosses the boundary again to find the real identity of her son. Mother of 1084 is the story of Sujata (who hailed from one of the elite Bengali family), neglected and taunted by her family, humiliated by her husband and his affairs with other women, and despite all odds decides to go out and work. And again decides to find the whole truth about her son's encounter despite several attempts from her family to save the humiliation by hiding the fact that the son of their house was involved in the Naxalite revolution. A powerful story of a woman as mother and a desperate search for her son's reality. Because the experience of motherhood comes with a lot of complex emotions especially from an aggrieved mother who is trying to find her lost son or daughter, the unsettled quest when the son is murdered at the hands of the state mechanism. The bitter fact being that 'Mother of 1084' is true story for a lot of people who loose their loved ones during the times of conflict and riots. More like shades of a mad women and a desperate mother. It highlights the oppression of a woman that she faces inside the house. More than being a drama about inequality, naxalite uprising, and state violence, it also

exposes the hypocrisy of the elite section of the Bengali society and how divide is sharp along the lines of class and status.

2. The second event that helped me to settle for the research on motherhood are the rituals that surround the celebration of a new mother and her child. It is interesting to note that unlike the popular belief that people only celebrate the birth of a son is false to a certain extent. Because I met quite a lot of families who were overjoyed at the birth of a daughter and celebrated also it. Several papers by the eminent scholar Janet Chawla has put forth the fact that how all these celebrations are an area controlled by women with minimum interference from the men. Also I have noticed that there is significant difference in the way men perform pooja which involves a systematic chant of mantras and performing the acts correctly, and when it comes to women performing pooja, the rituals are not as stringently systematic as in the case of men, the rituals and pooja dominated by women has a lot of singing about the gods and their great deeds and how they bless their family. In all these rituals and step by step ceremonies the mother and the child are the centre of all the events. And often the ceremonies are quite grand and all the kinswomen are personally invited to sing the 'Sohar' for the bright future of the child. Now here what is striking is the fact that the rituals and ceremonies are somewhat similar in different types of communities and ethnicity in the sense that the focus of celebration is the fertility of women, her health and the health of the child. In a culture where men often dominate the process of events and decision making, the rituals of child birth are something that is dominated by the women and men are not allowed to interfere much. Now one point to be noted here is that rituals of child birth not only involves celebrations of a child but it also involves all the rules, taboos, prohibitions and the caste affiliations of the 'Dais' from two particular lower castes who will be taking care of the child, both pre and post delivery.

Regarding the role of 'Dais', Janet Chawla in her paper, 'Hawa, Gola and Mother-in-Laws Big Toe: On Understanding Dais Imagery of the Female Body' thus comments, "Health and body knowledge systems about the female body which are internally coherent, empirical and culturally embedded, exist within indigenously oriented (as opposed to cosmopolitan and globalised) communities. Indian women, generally, and midwives, particularly, have been the inheritors of rich and varied health information and body knowledges. Dais can be seen as indigenous specialist in women's well being and cultural repositories of such body knowledge or practice. These knowledges are decentralized and collectively held; non-textual and orally transmitted; usually acquired by apprenticeship with an older relative and often caste based. 'Dais', in their project of caring for parturient women, also cope with problems of ecological devastations (making access to food, water and healing herbs more difficult) and gender biases (spousal abuse, familial pressures for male offspring, female infanticide, etc). It is absurd to tout safe motherhood and critique dais ignorance when the women whom they serve eat rice and salt for the nine months of their pregnancy. The birth rite is the only wholly female rite where male presence is precluded, yet it is solemn, awesome and throbbing with tension. Birth rites uniquely empower the female assistant and are the only rites where a new life

enters the earthly plane. The ‘Dai’ is symbolic of mother earth. She symbolically splits herself into two: the mother and the dai.”

The reason why I have strongly emphasized on the role ‘Dais’ is because they are a strong source of maternal health care in the rural, interiors and economically marginalized people, even today when the medical science has progressed on a very higher level, some of the basic challenges remains unaddressed, especially the issue of maternal care of the poor women who cannot afford fancy doctors. Today a lot of sophisticated doctors don’t understand and appreciate the anatomy knowledge of the ‘Dais’. Often the ‘Dais’ are illiterate or semiliterate, but whatever knowledge she has is because of her experience. The system of caste based Dai Maa service was a part of the jajmani system which has now crumbled due to various reasons. If a poor woman had to choose between an experienced Dai (who has an impressive success rate) and an expensive and not so much of an expert doctor, what would she choose? When I take a stand in favor of the Dai system I don’t mean to say that medical science is utterly useless, what I mean to say is that availing the proper medical care is quite expensive and with the government withdrawing from its welfarist approach, people often are not left with much choice, and it is here that the service of Dai is sought.

3. The Ankit murder case of 2006 and the Jyoti (or Nirbhaya) rape and murder case 2012. The perspective employed here is the grief of a mother when she sees the dead body of her child who was murdered brutally and painfully. The Ankit murder case is about the kidnapping and brutal murder of Ankit by his friends. The image of a traumatic mother crying over the dead body of her child is a very powerful image. The tragedy here being the fact that the mother cannot be allowed to touch the dead body. So it is this strong image that helped me to the research in this field. Three overwhelming events related to motherhood are: 1) Conceiving the child, 2) Giving the birth and surviving it (if it is not an institutional delivery), 3) Third and the most tragic part is related to death where the mother has to deal with untimely death or murder of her child.
4. The very strong film, ‘The Children of War ’ directed by Mrituanjay Devrat, a powerful film which details the real and horrific truths about the genocide that took place in Bangladesh in the 1971 liberation war. This film brings to the surface the rape of more than 2,50,000 Bangladeshi women by the Pakistani army. This complex story line not only deals with the issue of ethnic discrimination, genocide and the sexual violation of women of the entire country, who were forced to bear the child born out of that violation. Thus it is a film, a real life incident which shows us the plight of those women upon whom the motherhood was forced upon, because in the context of India and other developing countries it is important to take into consideration the physical violence and the pregnancy and motherhood that is forced on a lot of women on a daily basis. Religious propaganda by the army officials is not something new, this tool has been used violently in the past and countries like Bangladesh, Rwanda and Syria are a proof of this.

5. With an unprecedented rise in the right wing political ideology, the age old issue of the notion of women's purity and impurity took a center stage because the comments and views of religious extremists were highlighted by the mainstream media. Interesting point to be noted here is that until and unless a women becomes 'impure' due to her menstruation (also known as the periods problem), she cannot be fertile enough to conceive. Also the delicate and complicated nine months of pregnancy has its own set of rituals and taboos for the lady or the girl to follow. After the child is born the women is 'impure' and 'untouchable' for the next few days mainly because of two reasons, a) the post partum bleeding and b) the second issue is related to caste where a high caste women is often looked after by a women of low caste (often a woman from an untouchable community). Thus the advocates of negative patriarchy<sup>6</sup> highlighting the impurity of women is ironical because if women does not becomes impure, there would be no births.

Religious extremists (for whatever maybe the religion) are often of the view that the ultimate salvation of a woman lies in being a faithful wife and mother of sons (especially those sons who are devoutly dedicated to the cause of religion), for them the real purpose of being women is to be a domesticated creature and look after the household. This requirement of being a faithful wife, mother of sons and dedicating their sons for the religious glory is something that is prescribed by the religious leaders of almost all the religions. In the context of South Asia and Indian Sub Continent religious leaders often use the term nationalism and religious nationalism to mean the same thing, dedication to the cause of the majoritarian religious views and sentiments. Religious rules of domination accompanied by societal approval have always dominated the mobility and rules of motherhood for India. "Most modern religions are patriarchal, defining male authority as supreme. They present a patriarchal order as being supernaturally ordained. The feminine principle of power which existed before the evolution of institutionalized religions has been gradually weakened; goddesses have been replaced by gods. All major religions have been created, interpreted and controlled by upper class and upper caste men; they have defined morality, ethics, behavior, and even law. They have influenced state policy and continue to be a major force in most societies; in South Asia their power and presence are enormous. In India, for instance, inspite of the fact that it is a secular country, a person's legal identity with regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance is determined by his or her religion. There is sufficient analysis now to show how almost every religion considers women to be inferior, impure, sinful; how they have created double standards of morality and behavior; how religious laws often justify the use of violence against deviant women" (Kamala Bhasin 1994)

When the keepers of religion and protectors of society raise questions related to the cultural values of women and honor of this country, each and every answer to these regressive questions always stops at the body of women which often sparks the debate surrounding the honour of a community and the men of that community need to protect their women. The imagery of the nation state of this country heavily relies on the image

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<sup>6</sup>Those who support the negative aspect of patriarchy and how it is misogynist on many levels.

of Mother India who was ravaged by the invaders, and the sons of Mother India have to protect her honour. It is this idealism that is root cause of modeling the image of every woman as mother. This type of strong cultural values affects women from all parts of society and ultimately their body integrity and its protection (or violation) becomes the center of debate, and in this debate patriarchy decides what is right and what is wrong.

The whole debate of protecting the honour of women and ‘Bharat Mata’ in a communal tone not only flares up very strong religious passion but also increases the rate of gender induced violence. In the context of a country like India (which is at the crossroads of modernity and age old cultural values), the honour of a community (or a nation state or a religious group) and gender induced violence and killing to save that honor are two closely linked and highly advocated cultural principle. Building up of the concept of nation on the body and purity of a woman in the disguise of Mother India or designating them the task of motherhood and nurturer makes the women very sacred and thus this principle makes them further vulnerable which can be violated by the men of ‘other community’.

6. The last and the most important reason being my mother and several women like her who gave their daughter a suitable environment to learn and grow. This is another important aspect of the changing definition of motherhood in India, where parents are becoming less and less gender biased especially the mothers of daughters who worked hard to keep their children’s childhood and future free of any sort of abuse. Because in a country like India (or for that matter any other country) it is a luxury to have a normal abuse free (sans any sexual assault) childhood, because all around us we have staggering statistics of child abuse and assault, and often this is done by some known person. And this is where the role of motherhood steps in- to protect the child and to recognize the culprit, and how women resisted and fought the tools of oppression in a patriarchal society. Recounting the painful experience of child abuse by women was an occasional confessional writing by the indigenous feminists, and often the abuser in a lot of cases was the husband who was twice or thrice the age of the women.

But today when the mainstream media has become so bold and has come of age so suddenly that they are unable to properly present the case of child abuse in a proper way within a sensitive framework and tone, especially the cases of those issues where the child is abused by some close relatives or some known person.<sup>7</sup>In the past decade a lot of cases have come forward which had its contents something like this: the child gets abused by some relative or a known person, the mother knows about it but does not take any stern action against the perpetrator. Often the abuser in question is the father or some elder person in the family against whom the mother cannot raise her voice. In the Indian context for a woman to raise voice against the person who violated her child means

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<sup>7</sup><https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2019/07/every-5-minutes-a-rape-incident-was-registered/>  
<https://www.savethechildren.in/resource-centre/articles/recent-statistics-of-child-abuse>  
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-42193533>  
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/topic/child-abuse-cases-in-india>

crossing a lot of oppressive barriers which is not always an easy task and not everybody decides to do it. So the important point to be noted here is that what is role of this mother who does not raise her voice for her child?

No doubt there is more to the responsibility of being mother than just protecting the child from the abusive relatives and other kinds of violence, the other very important responsibility being access to education and access to equal opportunities for growth. Access to education and career are two different realities for men and women, an educated (literate or semi literate) and empowered mother often ensures health, education and proper marriage for her children especially the daughter. Empowered women and children are often involved in the welfare of the community- it is one of the positive changing phenomenon, it is not an overnight process but a gradual and painful transition often. This sort of empowerment often comes after a spate of violent events or after decades of peaceful negotiation and space making. No doubt mothering and nurturing are a 24/7 demanding job and it does not gets over with saving the child from sexual predators, the other two important aspects are equal access to food in the kitchen and equal opportunity to get educated and career formation. It is not hard to find a home or family where food discrimination is not followed, imagine a scene where son has access to nutritious food while the daughter and her mother gets the left overs. For a lot of boys access to education is an unquestionable right, but for girls reaching the level of higher education takes generations. Due to the strict norms related to mobility and distance a lot of girls don't have access to proper education and often they are not allowed to go out to distant places to pursue higher education or anything related to advance her career. The level of education of mother determines the gender sensitivity and elbow space available for the children.

“It is violence when the female foetus is aborted; when there is no celebration with the birth of a girl child; when children (usually girl child) are denied schooling in order to get help in domestic chores or to look after the younger siblings; when young boys are trained to be offensive; when the adolescent boy considers growing as a sanction to harass girls.

It is violence when spaces get gendered, and girls develop psychological fear of darkness and for boys/men it becomes an opportunity to exercise power; when child marriage takes place and one partner pays a greater price due to lack of opportunities to her; when family does not invest in women and women lack property rights. It is violence when married women are not allowed to visit their native family or are not allowed to work outside home.

It is violence when men are made beasts by a system of thought which accepts that they can kill their own sisters and wives in the name of culture, tradition and family honour” (Manjeet Bhatia, 2008)

## **Concluding the Introduction,**

Kamala Bhasin in her important work, ‘What is Patriarchy?’(1994) gives a very precise intertwined relationship of the Patriarchy and Motherhood, when she was asked what

parts of society do men control in a patriarchal system. She explains it in detail that men control the productivity of women, both inside the domestic sphere as well as in the outside world too in the form of the family's patriarch and an employer. In the domestic sphere, she provides free service for the entire household and all the family members. Sylvia Walby termed the free women labor as the "patriarchal mode of production", where the earnings of a woman is extracted by husband and other family members living with her. According to Kamala Bhasin, women are the class that produces labor while men not only take control of the production but also enjoy the fruits of that production. The hard work done by homemakers is not seen as work, despite doing all the heavy work around the house looking after the family members. Her hard work is not taken into consideration because she stays at home and she is financially dependent on her husband. Outside the domestic sphere as well men control the labor and productivity of women by either forcing them to go out and earn or by not allowing them to pursue their jobs or creating hurdles in their current job or work if they are holding the position. Sometimes as employers, they force the women to sell their labor on a very small cost or by denying them even the minimum wage meant for their labor. Several attempts are made to exclude the woman from better paying jobs both at the home and work field level. Thusly often times they are forced to stay within their homes and work from there for a very low wage. This entire system at work to prevent the women from achieving their full potential is not only unfair but also exploitative. Thus men benefit materially and economically by creating hurdles for the women both in the education sector as well as in the job market as well. Coming to the complex question of patriarchy and women's reproduction, Kamala Bhasin explains, that even here as well the interference by patriarchy continues. And by patriarchy it not only means men but the term also includes women who have the same thought process that is insync with the patriarchal system. The reproductive ability of a woman is also controlled by the people around her. In many societies women don't have control or freedom to choose the number of children they have planned on, or whether or not they can have access to contraceptives, or if they can go forward and terminate a pregnancy or other important choices that has to be made regarding her reproductive health. Apart from the control exercised by the family on the body of a woman, the State and religion also plays an important part in controlling the reproduction of a woman. Many Catholic religion based countries are a testimony to the fact that how women are denied even a simple facility of contraceptive so that she could take charge of her body. Not to mention, the strict abortion laws in these countries are lethal to the welfare of the women. This regressive mindset set of western men is something that has been severely criticized by the feminists there and even in the present scenario the reproductive rights if women still stands on shaky grounds. The nonstop struggle by the women for their basic reproductive rights gives an insight into the power of patriarchy and how it is reluctant to change and sees with suspicion the autonomy of women. The state has control over the family planning programmes and policies and directs women to more have children or not. In Indian context, the government has mainly been focused on controlling the wide scale population and also to drastically cut short the family sizes.

In the views of radical feminists, women are oppressed and exploited because of the concept of motherhood, and all the constant tiring responsibilities it brings up. Motherhood goals are achieved by compromising on the dreams and ambition of women, because the main job of nursing and nurturing falls on the woman. And they have to perform the emotional and physical labor not only for the child but also for other members of the family as well. The goal of mothering and motherhood is achieved by withholding the crucial information on contraceptives and other choices that could be availed by women. And sometimes in some countries even if the contraceptive is available, it is mostly unreliable, expensive and lethal to the health of a woman. The access to abortion is denied to women by making severe laws against the practice of abortion but at the same women are often encouraged and often forced to have sexual relations. Furthermore, the non availability of contraception and limit to abortion, motherhood is bound to happen for a lot of women. Forced motherhood creates pathetic and toxic mothers and children often become the victims of child abuse and violence. In the view of radical feminism, motherhood is the bases of the subjugation and exploitation of women. It seriously restricts the growth and mobility of women. And this restriction on mobility creates the concept of 'public woman' and 'private woman' which has not really gone down well for the betterment of women.

Apart from controlling the above mentioned aspects of womanhood and motherhood, the patriarchy also controls the sexuality of women as well. And this is an important where the patriarchy must control the expression of a woman's sexuality. Women are required to fulfill the sexual needs of their men as and when they are asked for. There is a whole encoded system of rules handed down to women explaining the morality and customs of sexually expressing oneself. There's an entire system at work that ensures that women are not allowed to express their sexual affection outside the marriage. Because those women who engage in sexual activities with more than one man, they are 'settled' on the extreme margins of the society. While there is a strictness over woman's sexuality, the male promiscuity is totally ignored or people turn a blind eye to it. A woman's sexuality is controlled by keeping an eye on her dress, behavior, mobility and freedom by the family, society and the religious code of conduct.

In the view of radical feminists, women under the rule of patriarchy not only turn into slave by resorting to motherhood but also are turned into sexual slaves. With the exception of mothers, the male centered culture views women as sexual objects. In the same way rape and sexual assault have always been effective political tool to oppress women and to keep them in line. In order to control all the aspects of women's sexuality and reproduction, their mobility needs to be controlled by women. And the control of mobility is done by severely limiting the women in the domestic sphere of life and thusly this step automatically separates the public and private spheres for the 'public' and 'private' woman. And this control on the mobility of women is gender specific because men are not subjected to the same rules to limit their mobility.

<sup>8</sup>In a short unique gender series titled, 'Man's World' (with just four episodes), sums up the problems of being a woman in this patriarchal society, it shows the world from the perspective of men but with a twist. Twist being that the course of world order gets reversed and now it is the men who are oppressed sex. In this reversed world men are stalked and harassed, men are absent from the public place, men cook and serve the outgoing and service seeking women, men get sexually harassed at their jobs and thus are demoted, men get periods, men are forcefully married off and men get pregnant and the man is raped by his wife, and in this twisted world people felt sad when they heard that a boy is born. So every natural order in the world are reversed. A series that very simply highlights and shows a world where the gender roles are swapped.

## Reference

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQ9li1biG3U>

## Chapter 2

### Approach to Methodology and the Editing Dilemma

This research work is a qualitative inquiry which intends to report multiple realities associated with the social phenomenon under study. The researcher tried to grasp the subjective meaning of social action inductively with proximity between the researcher and the subject, along with qualitative content analysis, to develop the overall theme. Qualitative social research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world; it consists of a set of interpretive practices that make the world visible and transform it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2013). The real world is captured into a variety of forms like interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, videos, and memos using an interpretive, naturalistic framework to understand the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Creswell, 2013).

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change (Creswell, 2013).

The working definition of qualitative research here gives more emphasis on the design of research that incorporates many of the elements proposed by Yin (1991), Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Creswell (2013). Unique and strange things researchers do to understand the concepts at ground level and the motivation to find something new to write, which can be baffling on many levels. It turns out, aspects of motherhood are even more complicated than previously assumed. So, the main question remains on how to put into words all of these strong emotions and desperations of the subjects who are faced with the different aspects of motherhood. Participatory observation (especially with the female subjects selected for the study) opened my eyes to the little details and significant efforts which women as mothers put in for their children and family. However, abusive and indifferent parents and how it affects their children is an entirely different matter altogether. When congregations of women sit down with each other, two critical topics that often recur are the issues of domestic abuse (and violence) and the issue of maternal health (often at the community and societal level).

Before the actual research work started, Simone De Beauvoir's celebrated and 1949 inspiring work, 'The Second Sex' opened a whole new world in understanding the complexities of womanhood and being a mother, and how the patriarchal system is so deeply rigged against women. However, apart from that, her in-depth knowledge and her emphatic take on the abortion viewpoint is very striking. I am yet to come across a book that details the history and horrors of abortion attempts entirely from a feminist point of view. Her chapter on abortion made it clear to me that a thesis on motherhood is incomplete without taking into account the dilemmas of abortion (or no abortion), that women go through-telling the narrative entirely from the perspective of women who are faced with such situations. Of course this not a book review of 'Second Sex' but it does leave a strong impression. When I set out to do groundwork on abortion, many experiences narrated by the subjects were quite similar to what Simone De Beauvoir had penned down in her work, 'The Second Sex'. Especially the life-threatening attempts women make to get rid of the unwanted fetus and the desperation and a strong sense of shame that often pushes them towards unsafe abortion options, often resulting in death. At the heart of the big debate regarding motherhood and empowerment is the crucial question of access to contraceptives and the fast declining rate of sex ratio, which is getting out of control. In the present times, motherhood and bareness are two complicated realities; it comes with a lot of conditions of purity and gender choice and cultural baggage of bareness and inauspiciousness.

In my research ahead, I have tried not to glorify motherhood to epic proportions because there are already a lot of cultural and societal elements to do so. Because when motherhood is glorified, it severely subdues the reality of parasitic parents, especially the mother. The powerful assumption that all mothers are naturally tender-hearted and caring is misleading and harmful. But that is not to disprove the hard work that mothers put into nurturing and taking care of their children, and how a few times their children make a mark for themselves despite all the odds. Before going into the intricacies and complexities of motherhood and identity, it is important to take into note the voice, choice and rights of women in the reproduction decision.

In the major part of the thesis preparation, the area of study has been Lucknow itself. To be more precise they hail from Hindu middle class in Lucknow who had migrated to the city from the Eastern part of Uttar Pradesh in the previous generation. Also, this part of the migrant population is scattered in different parts of Lucknow. I zeroed down to studying my subjects from three parts of the Lucknow sub-urban area. Those areas were Eldeco, South City and Aashiyana. Selectively samples were also selected from the two prominent universities for the chapter five titled, 'Lessons in Reproductive Choices- Negotiating Space and Health in the web of Culture, Society and Patriarchal Medicine', asking the subjects about their views and thoughts on varying questions pertaining to motherhood and woman's anatomy. The precise details of my qualitative sampling technique will be discussed later in this chapter.

Before throwing in the complicated jargons of the complications of qualitative methodology, it is important for me to mention my experience. Because trying to observe and talk about difficult issues like abortion and miscarriage requires a whole different set of communication and tone in asking questions. In delicate scenarios such as the one mentioned above, a good rapport with the subject and empathy is the most required quality so as to get a precise and concrete response.

Before knowing the methods of qualitative research, one needs to understand some of the predisposed humane qualities that one should possess. In my case it was empathy, unlearning and relearning, when in the field when we look beyond someone and not just as a mere subject, it gives a broader perspective and an ability to understand even those words which are not said. Because motherhood is not just about a blissful baby and joyous motherhood (conditions apply), it is also about severe traumatic losses, and as a researcher, we have to be very subtle and very cautious when stepping on those emotional land mines. Sometimes it takes months to pursue a case study in-depth, especially in the case of abortion, miscarriage and violence. Deep observations and case studies made me understand the perspective of the subject, and more often than not, even if they are illiterate or semi-literate, they are wise in their words. In-depth study of familial set up in the postmodern society did throw in surprising changes in the family set up especially the nuclear families who later migrated to towns and cities mainly for the job purpose or the education of their children. That how in the changing times, the family structure changed and woman often had to make sure that they ensured not only their place in the family but also a dignified position for their children as well.

When pursuing case studies for my chapter four and five, it is always to be kept in mind that a line should be drawn when asking difficult questions to the subjects because there is always a difference between a researcher and a TV reporter. No matter how tempting a case study is to pursue, if the person in question does not wish to be questioned or studied, the subject's wish and integrity should be respected. Because there is a difference between case study pursuing and pestering, and that difference should be known and abided by. Ram Ahuja (2011), writes, "Case study is an intensive study of a case which may be an individual, an institution, a system, a community, an organisation, an event, or even the entire culture". Yin (1991) has defined case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used." Kromrey (1986) holds that "case study involves studying individual cases, often in their natural environment and for a long period of time." It is, thus, a kind of research design which usually involves the qualitative method of selecting the source of data. It presents the holistic account that offers insights into the case under study. When attention is focussed on the development of the case, it is called 'case history'. A case study is not a method of data collection; rather, it is a research strategy or an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon by using multiple sources of evidence. Some writers like Bell (1993) and Baxter (1996) have suggested that case studies are suitable for single person research on a limited budget and that the study of one case provides a manageable opportunity for the researcher to study one aspect of the problem in some depth within a limited time. But this is not true. Case studies have been used for various purposes- descriptive, exploratory and explanatory research- and also to generate theory (Yin, 1989; Gummesson, 1991). Case Studies are used not only in social sciences like sociology (community studies), social anthropology (tribal culture), political science (policy research), public administration (management and organisational studies) but also in medicine (clinical research) and social work (helping professions). While a case study can be either quantitative or qualitative, or even a combination of both, but most case studies lie within the realm of qualitative methodology. It is

the preferred strategy when “how, who, why and what” questions are being asked or when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context.” In this thesis, case studies are a vital element of chapters four and five; it gives more justice to the title of the thesis and explains it more clearly. Case studies in this thesis are important in the sense that it explains the heavy philosophical concepts and historical references in the third chapter that deals with the historicity of motherhood in the context of India. Burns (2000) categorised case studies into six types- Historical case studies, Observational case studies, Oral history case studies, Situational case studies, Clinical case studies and Multi-case studies. A historical case study was used in the third chapter to properly elaborate on the connection between nation, women's anatomy and the motherhood. The observational case study method was used extensively throughout the thesis, especially in chapters five and six dealing with reproductive health and the situation of women in the family. The clinical case study method was used but in a very vague, subtle and limited way.

Eckstein (1975) has classified case studies into five groups on the basis of their uses. The first type he talks about is Configurative/Ideographic case study, in this case, study the subject is described in detail to put forth a point more clearly. The second type of case study that Eckstein talks about is Disciplined-comparative case study, in this type of case study, a case is studied and understood in relation to a theory. The third type of case study is Heuristic Case study, is used for stimulating theoretical based thinking and this type of case study is used in theory formation, but the outcome of a solid theory formation is not guaranteed. This type of case study is less concerned with people, places, and locations and more concerned with general relations. The fourth type of case study he discussed was Plausibility probes case study, this type of case study is used in the middle of the development of a theory and the testing of a theory. And last the Crucial case study, which is an attempt to challenge an already pre-existing theory. The sources for the case study data collection are many, but the two main sources of primary data collection are interviews and observation. The interview can be either structured or unstructured and the process. Different aspects of these case studies have been used throughout the thesis, to convey the title of the thesis in a more detailed way.

Another important part of this thesis is the heavy usage of content analysis especially for the chapter four titled, ‘Historicity of Motherhood-Defining the Spirit of Nationalism on the Pure and Pious of Mother India’ and also for the last chapter that is the ‘Conclusion.’ The way the content analysis has been used in this thesis is to convey again and simplify the complexity of the title and its relevance in real society.

For such a complex qualitative study on motherhood and identity against the backdrop of culture is challenging in itself. Of all the important methodology employed, observation, empathy and casual conversations with subjects have been the most heavily used. Quite and prolonged observation, along with some basic knowledge about body language comes handy in breaking down an answer or determining the state of mind of the subject. Moreover, since it is a study on motherhood, it is bound to be heavily philosophical and also narrates emotional states of being a mother or being a daughter. In my thesis the two recurring themes of motherhood (especially in the case studies and content analysis) is the betrayal by the mother (and family) and upliftment

by the mother (and the family), this is one of the most tragic and complicated reality to be ever-present in the society irrespective of caste, race, religion, nationality or class.

Later in the chapter, important aspects of the thesis will be mentioned in detail, especially the issue of validity and reliability in the qualitative research, which is known for its flexibility and freedom it gives to the researcher to pursue a subject, issue or theory. Still, the importance of validity and reliability is always there. Ahuja (2001) explains that “Any research is valid when its conclusions are true. It is reliable when the findings are repeatable. A good research depends on two aspects of its designing: first, specifying what one wants to find out, i.e., properly posing the problem or properly phrasing the issue(s) to be studied or logical structuring of inquiry; and second, determining how to do it, i.e., collecting data through scientific and appropriate methods, using the effective techniques of data analysis and rational and meaningful deduction(s).”

The methodology used for this thesis is to justify the title of the thesis by understanding the changing motherhood values in the modern world yet it's never-ending connection with the culture, and it is narrative and how it has both positive and negative connotations. This chapter will further discuss the approaches to the thesis writing here. Also, there will be a small part on the feminist methodology and how it is unique in panning out the thesis and understanding the complex role culture, society and stereotype play in determining the definition of motherhood. Manheim gave three different types of research, and they are exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research. My thesis has the elements of all the three types of research formulated by the Manheim.

Apart from all the complicated research methodology, motherhood and identity is in itself a complicated yet simple topic to deal with and thus it has to be selected very precisely and with utmost care so that the objectives of the thesis and the content on the thesis are compatible with each other.

### **Breaking down and understanding the title of the thesis**

First of all, focusing on the title and then the emphasis will be laid on the other words used for the title. India as a country is a strong example that explains the title more accurately and as a country that is on it's way to development is experiencing this phenomenon. Whenever a researcher starts pursuing research about any topic, he or she starts seeing the world from the same lens and tries to find something unique that can be added to the research thesis. Needless to say that the maternal health status of India needs a massive improvement and upliftment, but the access to contraceptives and ‘legal and safe abortion’ is something that makes India ahead of a lot of countries. Again India has a rich cultural heritage, especially it is theology on motherhood, women and it's own set of maternal care tips that are passed down to generations orally. Despite all the technology and everything, cultural beliefs are still a strong influence in shaping up the Indian narrative of motherhood. One very simplified example that further explains the title of the thesis, even more, are those women who oscillate between maternal care medicines, doctors and tests and then at home these women and their womb is a centre of the cultural rituals. Further, in third chapter on the culture, I have explained the significance and the role culture plays in

shaping their thinking about motherhood and how to take care of the mother and the womb. But the paradox of modernity and culture is seen with the entry of amniocentesis (or the more common term of ultrasound by the people). In accordance with the title of the thesis, four expectant women were interviewed, and some of the important questions that were asked were, a) what is the domestic atmosphere around them and b) how do they perceive the world with so many hormonal changes? Of all these four women subject 1 and subject 2 were working women while subject 3 and subject 4 were homemakers.

**Subject 1 response:** For the first question, this subject responded by stating that being a working woman as well as expecting mother multiplies the workload in the home, especially if the family is not that much co-operative in the way that they should be. Although when the reports were confirmed that it is positive, the priest was called after a week and some important poojas were concluded to ensure the 'spiritual' as well as 'physical' safety of the mother and the unborn child. But apart from the occasional consultations with the priest, they were always in touch with the doctor. But one point worth noting here is that no amniocentesis (or ultrasound) was forced upon the subject to know the sex of the child in the womb ( it is worth noting here because ultrasound, followed by the recognition of the female embryo and later abortion is a huge problem in the Indian society). She further states that when a woman is expecting, she should stay in her natal home if possible, she had her teaching job at a private school in Lucknow itself and she could not obtain long holidays to be with her mother in such a condition.

Regarding this question, in the end, she states that despite slight friction with her in-laws and the extended family, she was fine with the quality of care she got and especially her husband's care and love. One point to be noted here is that she conceived twice before this, and miscarried both the times, which explains all the anxiety and nervousness running in the family and all the rituals that were done on the instructions of the priest and all the instructions of the doctor was taken seriously for the subject. When she was interviewed for these two questions, she had already completed three successful, uncomplicated months in her pregnancy.

And coming to her response on the second question, that how does she perceive the outside world, with so many hormonal changes. She mentions those mornings are confusing and nauseous. The entire day seems different, like oscillation between moods. Moreover, as a pregnant woman teaching forty kids' chemistry is a headache on a different level. Since this is the third time she was pregnant, she could map out her hormonal moods and early morning nausea. Being a pregnant woman and teaching a group of rowdy kids is a tough task and to top it all, reaching school with the feeling of nausea is something quite another level of difficulty. Talking about dealing with the outside world, she further states that generally the attitude of people is helpful and that of sympathy because if not all, a lot of people knew about her two previous miscarriages so this reality of her's was instrumental in deciding the outlook of people towards her. Also, a few times when she was ignored by the neighbors or distant relative, and she does not get invitations in some of the religious functions- she on her own understands the fact that it is because of the inauspiciousness that is culturally associated with the tragic thing such as two back to back miscarriages. In the end, she says that all in all the things are manageable. In the end, she just says, "There's a lot of hope invested in this pregnancy. Hopefully, the thing will

be good in this pregnancy. We as a family are scared, and there is a lot of pressure on me to leave my job, but I will try to hold on to it."

**Subject 2 response:** Her response for the first question (what is the domestic atmosphere around them), were almost as same as the first subject with few differences, she had her government job in a Lucknow based bank, and thus she could use her maternal leave when needed. And unlike the case of the first subject, this was her first pregnancy. For the time being she lived with her husband who took care of her up until now, but soon her mother was supposed to arrive in a week or two to care of her, and after some time, her mother-in-law will also be there to take care of her and the household. She had the same uncomfortable feeling about morning sickness, nausea and food-related cravings and mood swings. Apparently, this subject is an introvert and was not excited about people coming up and again interfering in her life. After marriage, she lived with her mother-in-law for two years, and those years were very stressful and full of clashes. So the prospect of her mother-in-law coming, later on, did not provide any kind of solace to her.

Further moving on, she is quite happy with the level of care and affection shown by her husband, who gave a good amount of helping hand in the household chores. Moreover, going deeper into the conversations, she goes on to tell that how her mother in law has planned 'Satyanarayan Pooja' for the closed family members after she comes here and how her mother has planned special puja rituals for the chhath puja this year after the baby comes out healthy and mature along with the well being of the mother. Also, before the pregnancy commenced, she fasted every Monday but had to leave it on the advice of her doctor. However going by the recent trends of caring and loving husbands, her husband does fast for her well being in this period of pregnancy.

And now coming to her response for the second question, which was, how does she perceive the world with so many hormonal changes? To this question, she answers that since she is in the bank job, she has to continuously sit for hours and do the needful for the customers and their money deposit. Bank job, domestic chores along with pregnancy is a demanding job, she carries a bag of toffees to keep the taste of her tongue normal and camphor in her bag to keep her mood in the right place when she is working. Just like in the previous case, here as well, she complained that waking up with nausea and getting ready for work is another difficult task altogether. Moreover, in the bank, explaining all the small details to the people, there can often be irritating times. There are strange food cravings along with not being hungry within a span of minutes and this is a great distracter when working in the office. One of the very few advantages is that people in the office do lend a helping hand oftentimes, or when she needs help or a short break. Since the boss is an understanding person, she is granted leave without much fuss when she has her doctor's appointment. So that was quite a boon for the time being, but the problem which again arises here is that she might be transferred in a month or two and maybe she might be transferred in the other city, makes her tensed about her job because if transfer orders come, her family might force her to leave the job because of the ongoing pregnancy. In the end, she just says, "Managing family, marriage and career is very stressing. Don't want to leave my job at any cost. I hope the family will understand."

**Subject 3 response:** Her response to the first question (that is what is the domestic atmosphere around them?) This subject is a homemaker and is expecting her second child. When this conversation happened, she was already four and a half months pregnant. She already had a son who was five years old, and this time she said, she was hoping for a daughter since she already had a son. In her pregnancy phase, she was already living with her mother, who just relieved her of a lot of stressful household chores and gave her proper care and nurture she craved for, which she did not get in her first pregnancy. In her first pregnancy, she was in the 'care' of her in-laws, and the entire nine months experience was unpleasant there. Even in her first nine months of pregnancy, she had to do heavy work and cooking as well in a family of eight members already. Her mother-in-law was very strict to the extent that even her going out to consult the doctor on the progression of the fetus was monitored. In this example, the subject did give subtle hints of her undergoing an ultrasound test to know the gender of the fetus, although she did not say it directly or openly. Also, since her mother-in-law was very orthodox and strict, she had to wake up very early in the morning to take her bath, do the pooja and then enter the kitchen. So that was the drill that Subject 3 was supposed to perform every morning before the actual work even started. Often times in that time period, there was only coldness between her and family members who always had one issue or the other. Thus when subject 3 conceived again, her mother went there and got her here in Lucknow. She says it's a peaceful and loving atmosphere here and likes to be here; it did not give her tension and panic situations as compared to before. Also, she was planning on consulting a doctor on the process of sterilization and how viable it is and getting on with it after the second child is delivered, and everything turns out to be fine.

And her response to the second question, which was how does she perceive the outside world with so many hormonal changes? To this question, she replies that changes that took place are very much the same; they were the previous time when she carried her first fetus. However, more than getting all fussed up about the bodily changes she was going through, she was content to be at her mother's home for the second time. She had fewer worries, no hectic morning schedule to follow, which gave her more time to focus on herself and think about the future. Also, she filled up some college and job application forms to try her hands there.

Moreover, she could go out and meet her friends, and she also joined a yoga class to make sure that the progress is made even spiritually. Even the brighter side is the fact that they could go out and meet her friends and have some relaxing time outside. She aims to pursue her higher education and get a good job herself so that she can have some financial freedom and better mobility

**The response of Subject 4:** her response to the first question (which was what is the domestic atmosphere around them?) This subject again is a home maker and lives with her husband, and widowed mother-in-law. This is her first time conceiving. She used to work in a private IT firm but soon left the work when the test results came positive, and gradually, the work schedule became hectic and too much of a burdensome. This was the only subject amongst these four who had positive relations with her mother-in-law, and things went on smoothly from day one.

Regarding morning sickness, she says that going to work with that type of feeling in the mouth is very disturbing to her. Currently, she is enjoying her homemaker phase and wants to ensure every safety measure for the unborn child. Since she has religious inclinations too, her mother in law often recites 'Sunderkaand' from Ramayan for her which she claims will calm down her mind and ward off evil spirits from home. Since her mother-in-law is a widow, she maintains distance from her owing to the cultural notions of auspiciousness and inauspiciousness associated with widowed women although the subject does not believe in all these but still her mother-in-law maintains a 'distance'. The subject's mother-in-law herself searched a doctor for her and diligently took her to the doctor whenever the next appointment is there. Currently, the subject is searching for jobs that can be done from home, and since she has time in her hands now, she is also preparing for her UPSC exam, for which she had been planning for a long time now.

Now coming to the details of her response to the second question, which was how does she perceive the outside world with all these hormonal changes going on in her body? Regarding this question, she says that after quitting her job, she does not have that much of an interaction with the outside world, apart from her doctor visitations and a few outings with family members and friends. She quit her job when she reached her two and a half months of pregnancy and the hectic work schedule just piled up and caught on her nerves. Every time she has to go out, she is always advised to take care, not walk fast and not to lose temper. Since her mother-in-law lost her husband only a few years ago, it made the precaution all the more necessary thing to be observed. Most of the time, whenever she goes out, she takes her mother-in-law as well with her. So, all in all, she does not have much interaction with the outside world as of now except for a few occasions when she has to. Moreover, both the woman in that household took care of one another, which was quite a sight to see.

All these four subjects were in the initial stages of their motherhood and were trying to understand this new change not only in their body but also in their life and life choices. And apparently, almost all the subjects were overwhelmed by all these changes and intricacies and the never-ending series of medicines and rituals that they have to follow. Another worth noticing point here is that except for the fourth subject, all the rest three subjects, some form of problem or other in the house of their in-laws. Women having adjustment and serious adjustment problems after marriage, especially when they are with their in-laws has a cultural and societal history of its own. Also, these four women are not the only cases that came forth in studying the motherhood. A lot of the details of this complicated relationship has been discussed in the fifth chapter titled, 'Lessons in Reproductive Choices-Negotiating Space and Health in the web of Culture, Society and Patriarchal Medicine', and a lot about this relationship has also been discussed in the fourth chapter titled, 'Making space within the family- The Aspects of Motherhood and the Dilemma with the Secondary and Tertiary Kins'. Conceiving a fetus inside makes women vulnerable and somewhat makes them a combination of both weak and strong human beings. The physical and hormonal changes were almost the same, except for the first subject who had to suffer two miscarriages before her first successful pregnancy. One important point to be noted here is that women are not a homogenous group, and their situation varies from

person to person. The experiences of the subjects mentioned above (both indoors and outside the arena of home), were devoid of dramatic violence, although there were emotional manipulations and abuse to a certain extent it had not manifested into the violence. These structured interviews happened in the year 2016. Moreover, by the year 2019, all of them had given birth to healthy babies, because they have access to institutional deliveries and doctors who can be afforded. These examples of women transitioning between the modern world and the cultural history of motherhood give a better understanding of the thesis title. This part of the chapter tries to understand the working women or even the homemakers in the contemporary society, trying to carve out a well-balanced career, home life and also at the same time trying to fulfil the tasks in the motherhood. Focusing on higher education and trying to be a go-getter.

The above-mentioned subjects who were interviewed were in the initial stages of motherhood, and their journey had just begun in the phase of motherhood. They are trying to understand the changes that are happening and also trying to figure out the new identity and new responsibilities that have to be taken care of. And thus to give this part of the chapter more crux and more validity to the title of the thesis, I did another interview with a subject (Subject A) who was at a very different stage of motherhood, as compared to the previous subjects who were interviewed. She was asked only one question, 'How do you define your journey in the marriage and the motherhood?' She was married at the age of 20 and later on had three children, two daughters and one young son. At the date of this interview, her elder son was married and had an eight months old son, her other two daughters-one was in the last year of her law study and her second daughter had recently cleared the NEET exam. Subject A, who was not able to complete her education herself ensured that the proper education of her daughters is done. Moreover, even though her elder daughter has almost completed her law education, and the Subject is still not thinking about getting her daughter married. Subject A in this conversation, states a very important fact that, for a woman, education is more important than getting married immaturely, she aims to see her daughter independent, both financially and also in mobility. Regarding her marriage and the motherhood journey, she just gives out a few important details that go on to say that journey after marriage was both painful and full of hard work. She was married in a joint family, and her husband was still unemployed so as per the rules of hierarchy in the Indian joint family, she had to do the maximum heavy household works which later took a toll on her health. She also admitted to the fact that domestic violence against her was even there when she was pregnant. She had to go through three successful pregnancy and two miscarriages. A long compromised marital journey with her husband was compensated by her loving children who made a bright future for themselves and at a very young age started to stand up for their mother. Despite all the feminist standpoint and anti-bullying stands and everything, a very strong fact still remains that oftentimes women compromise through a violent marriage and family members for the sake of her children and their future and it may or may not pay off. When the husband of Subject A secured a government job for himself in Lucknow, he 'picked up his son' went to Lucknow, so that the son could have a better future and studies in Lucknow, rather than leaving him at a small village near Gorakhpur. Subject A and her daughters were left behind by him at that village home to take care of the rest of the extended family. It took a lot of effort and manipulation for the Subject A to get her daughters enrolled in a school and to give them a

chance at a better future. And despite all the work, Subject A and her daughters did for the family, the grandmother of the girls never loved them back or advocated for their education and better nutrition. It took the Subject another five years of dialogues, violence and arguments to be able to come to Lucknow to live with her husband. Things were improving for the Subject when her mother-in-law arrived along with the two sons of her husband's brother. So things once again returned to the square one with their arrival. She alone had to take care of five children in the house, along with the constant flow of relatives visiting and going. Needless to say, this constant commotion did disturb the education of the children, but the subject and her children managed to pull it off. The mother-in-law was always trying to create tension in the house, one way or the other and to top it all; she was also responsible for pushing the family into serious financial troubles. But the scenario began to change when the Subject's children started to speak out in favor of her and stood up against the bullying and abuse by their grandmother. And things began to get stable within the next few years.

The responsibilities of motherhood are a complicated web to figure out. It makes women vulnerable, weak and strong all at the same time, and this is not just a clichéd a statement, but a social fact. The extent to which a woman goes for her children can be quite baffling to witness. Women in India, making respectable spaces for themselves and their children in the family amidst all the cultural baggage and the expectations of the society is a phenomenon to be witnessed and appreciated. At one end, we have the amazing science of the modern world, and at the other end, we have struggling women beneath the culture, society craving for a safe space in the modern world. The question of women having autonomy over their bodies is something that rocks up to the foundation of even the most developed states.

### **Deciphering the objectives of this study**

"Research starts with identifying aims and questions, all of which requires three activities: data collection and management tools, an analytic strategy, and interpretation. Our instruction is informed by one practical idea: regardless of skill level, research will be conducted, and not just imagined, when data are actually collected and analyzed. Qualitative research uses written narratives to present findings. Moreover, all research findings are value-laden. The latter is never more present than in the decision to study a specific aim and question; in choosing what to study, we inevitably make a value judgment. What is the difference between an aim and a question? An aim, on the one hand, points to the most abstract conceptualization of a project. Questions, on the other hand, make concrete or empirical connections to the abstract. Queries, therefore, do the work of moving beyond the abstract. Research questions reveal the concrete and empirical (i.e., data) pathways to general research aims" (Longhofer, Floersch and Hoy, 2013). Thus carefully planning out the objectives are an important part of thesis blueprint. It is basically the formulation of important questions that the researcher aims to get the answers to.

Following are the few objectives that I formulated for my thesis:

1. To identify the different aspects of motherhood, which also affects the conscience and identity formation of women.

2. To assess the identity and survival of women as mothers, in the context of subjects selected for the study and observation.
3. To study the experiences during different stages of pregnancy and transition to motherhood.
4. To understand how women cope up with the new identity and transition and the struggle to resist the mechanistic view of the gendered body.
5. To describe the impact of gender sensitization in the socio-cultural background of the universe selected for study and how it impacts the health of women throughout the phase of motherhood.

These are the objectives that were chalked out at the start of the research, and they are very much the same, even until the end of the research work. These objectives were enough to give a proper insight into the planning of the chapters and to work with a better aim. The objectives formulated helped in categorizing and dividing the different parts of the thesis and thus helps in dealing with them in a more detailed and systematic way. The objectives mentioned above very well captures the changing definition of motherhood in modern India. Formulating the objectives on the lines education, anatomy, identity and consciousness for research on motherhood is helpful in chapterisations and detailing of the concepts used. Needless to say, objectives determine the future course of the research work. Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change.

## **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis is a tentative statement which can either be true or false. It is an assumption about relations between two or more variables. Theodorson and Theodorson (1969) define hypothesis as, "a hypothesis is a tentative statement asserting a relationship between certain facts." Kerlinger (1973) describes it as a "conjectural statement of the relationship between two or more variables." A hypothesis is a tentative statement that can either be verified or rejected. Webster (1968) has defined hypothesis as, "a tentative assumption made in order to draw out and test its logical or empirical consequences. 'Test' here means either to prove it wrong or to confirm it." Regarding this Ahuja (2011) goes to write that, "Since statements in hypothesis have to be put to empirical investigation, the definition of hypothesis excludes all statements which are merely opinions, value judgements or normative statement. A normative statement is a statement of what ought to be, not a factual statement that can be shown through investigation to be right or wrong."

In order to realize the above-mentioned objectives, the following hypothesis were formulated:

1. Education, good health care, and co-operative home lead to healthy motherhood and a healthy sense of conscious and identity formation.
2. Allusions to motherhood are necessary to create the spirit of nationalism and patriotism.
3. Women are curious, and they do inquire about their reproductive rights and the well being of their offspring's. In short, despite the patriarchy, they are not passive beings.
4. Not all women as mothers are nurturing and caring; a lot of them are toxic and limit the growth of their children.

Each hypothesis mentioned above have been formulated very carefully, only after revising the rough draft of the thesis and trying to figure those statements which have the quality of the hypothesis, especially making sure that value judgements and normative statements are kept away from it. Efforts were also made to make sure that the hypothesis is not formed in a question like format. There are some important standards that have to be met when formulating the thesis, which includes standards like it should be empirically testable, it should be specific, precise and to the point, the hypothesis formed should not be contradictory of one another, the variables should be mentioned, and their relationship should have been established. Ahuja (2011) goes on to write, "A hypothesis can be formed either in descriptive or relational form. In the former, it describes events, whereas in the latter it establishes relations between variables."

Even though oftentimes, Hypothesis is formed in a quantitative study, where it has been mentioned (and formed) to put forth the argument about different aspects and situations of motherhood. One of the main aims was to formulate the hypothesis in such a way that it reflects the sociological fact or reality, without being contradictory. However, then again, it is a qualitative study on the complex issue of motherhood; thus, the hypothesis formed is only partially a sociological fact. Despite the shortcomings, the hypothesis formed cannot be negated and are valid in their way if not completely true. The variables such as education, health, family care, health are reliable variables when studying maternal health or motherhood.

### **Statement of the problem**

In research work, the problem needs to be recognized and explained. In the thesis, the section of the statement of the problem highlights the problem to be addressed and worked upon. One of the main advantages of writing down the statement of the problem is that it helps the researcher in being focused on the work, and in the long run, it means better results and less time wastage. When writing down the statement of the problem, three important questions to be kept in mind were, who does the problem effects and how specifically it affects them, how does the problem takes the shape of the gender-specific problem, and lastly to see the relation of a woman's body and the cultural aspect to it. The more polished a statement of the problem is, the better-guided research is.

Another important point to be kept in mind is that when the statement of the problem is jotted down for the research, the investigation through data collection should be doable. It had been kept in mind that it should be economical and that the length of the work should not go overboard with it. Also, the problem statement does not give a solution to the problem because

solutions come with research that is done to seek those answers. Unlike in the case of hypothesis, the problem statement can in the form of a question.

1. Non-access of women to basic resources. And severe constraints on the mobility of women which deprives them to realize their full potential as an individual self.
2. Womanhood: Motherhood and identity are very closely related concepts and reality for women. Motherhood is a necessary obligation which women have to obey in a conservative society.
3. Forced stereotyped concepts of motherhood and nurturer. The seed-soil symbolism creates two highly unequal possibilities of male and female contributions in the biological conception and reproduction. The female (field) is inferior and more dispensable than the male (seed). The rooted biased cultural understanding of unequal biological contribution has always been problematic, irrespective of caste, class, religion or ethnic background.

When it comes to writing the statement of the problem in the issues of women especially the issues relating to gender induced violence and motherhood, half the problems are interlinked with the anatomy, cultural beliefs and societal mores. So needless to say, for this research work as well the statements of the problems were formulated on the basis of the women's body and the cultural beliefs of India, though not taken thoroughly word by word seriously by the people. The concept of motherhood is central not only to the identity to India but also at the individual and family level. The statement should be formulated in such a way that it can capture the essence of the title of the thesis and at the same time, it can inspire the researcher to set out and find the answers about it. Moreover, in the context of motherhood, complex concepts like culture, conscious and identity, the importance of education, a women's mobility how they are all interlinked are something that influenced the formation of the problem statement.

### **Area of the Study**

In the major part of the thesis preparation, the area to be studied is Lucknow itself.

To be more precise, the subjects for the research purpose hail from the Hindu middle class and lower-middle-class respondents and family in Lucknow. Those families who migrated to Lucknow from Eastern Uttar Pradesh due to several pull factors- the primary pull factors being education, employment (government jobs mostly) and better living conditions.

Even though this part of the migrant population from Eastern part of Uttar Pradesh is scattered throughout the city of Lucknow, the families to be studied were selected only from three sub-urban colonies of Lucknow. Those colonies were Eldeco, South City and the Aashiyana. This family-based study was done for chapter six titled, 'Making Space Within the Family- the Dilemma with Secondary and Tertiary Kins'. Even in some cases, the individual respondents were selected within this universe using the snowball sampling method. The five respondents mentioned above (who narrated their experience into motherhood) were also selected from this universe as well. This type of universe selection of subjects helped in studying the status of the woman in the family.

Young individual respondents were also selected from one prominent state university as well one prominent Central University in Lucknow. Around seventy respondents were selected to write down their opinions on varying interlinked issues of motherhood, identity, body image and the woman's anatomy, abortion and the autonomy of women over their body. These young respondents were given unstructured questionnaire to be filled, and this detailed and intensive study was done for the chapter five, 'Lessons in Reproductive Choices- Negotiating Space and Health in the web of Culture, Society and Patriarchal Medicine.

Again for Chapter five, two abortion providers were interviewed in an unstructured questionnaire, to give the chapter more shape and authenticity. For Chapter five, a volunteer of an NGO was interviewed regarding her experience and the ground details of the maternal health of women in the marginalized villages near Barabanki Block. This interview was done to enable a comparative study of the women from the different class background and how they cope up with whatever little options they have.

An observational study of a few patients was done in those three clinics that were selected to be observed. This study was done to gauge the expressions, emotions and the way women react to any news related to motherhood. This small research work was also undertaken to properly study the behaviour of family members who accompanied an expecting woman to the clinic. This study was helpful in having an insight into the vulnerability and the care that a woman gets from her family or vice-versa. Again this study was pursued for chapter five and six.

### **Sample size and research methodology**

It is a qualitative study and involves a multidimensional approach. The sample was decided on the basis of the study of different aspects of motherhood.

A few interviews were conducted with expecting mothers and also those women who already have grown-up children.

For the sake of the research work, participant observation was done with several women who were dealing with motherhood and family issues.

There were quite a few case studies pertaining to the issue of miscarriage and abortion that was studied. And lastly, one case study was pertaining to the connection of motherhood and domestic violence where the subject in question succumbed to her injuries and died by the end of 2017.

Interviewed and interacted with young unmarried girls and tried to evaluate their point of view regarding their anatomy, career, and the concept of motherhood and how they view themselves in this role. And also how are they different than their mothers.

Although different techniques of data collection were used for this qualitative study including an unstructured questionnaire to design a suitable interview schedule, ultimately that plan

was shifted backwards to pave the way for more participant observation and face to face communication with the subjects

Of all the chapters, Chapter four (Tradition and Historicity of Motherhood: Defining the Spirit of Nationalism on the Pure and Pious Body of Mother India) draws heavily from the secondary sources mainly from texts on the inter-relation between culture, motherhood and nation.

Content analysis of the TED speeches of Jasvinder Sanghera (who spoke on the issue of forced marriage and honour-based killings in London) and Khadija Gabla (who spoke on the issue of Female Genital Mutilation and how it has reached even those societies that were unaware of this concept) was done for the Chapter four, the aim of this content analysis mainly to give more strength to the title of the chapter and to explain in more detail one of the important hypothesis that not all women are nurturing and caring as mothers and that some can be toxic and tyrannical too. Also, content analysis of the views of Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins was done for last chapter (An attempt at Conclusion.)

The theory, 'The Illigitimate Benefactors of Science', has its premises built up using the deductive reasoning. In deductive reasoning, the premises is built on generalizations and then it is moved to the specifics. Deductive reasoning often begins with a statement or hypothesis and the conclusion can either be true or false; there are no grey areas.

Suitable subjects were selected both from the clinic visits and also individuals from the families to properly study the phenomenon called post-partum depression among women especially after the childbirth and also to know the level of pre and postnatal care they received in the family. It is only recently that post-partum depression has been recognized as a genuine problem which women face today, mostly owing to the self-expectations.

## **Tools and Techniques for data collection**

In the research work carried out, mainly the qualitative technique of data collection was used.

Neutral Participant Observation (both direct and indirect) were used extensively, especially for chapters five, six and seven.

Relying to a large extent on the different approaches of Non-Probability Sampling, which gave the researcher the freedom and flexibility to choose and study the sample size best suited for this type of qualitative study.

The types of Non-Probability Sampling used for this research were purposive sampling (also called judgement sampling), convenience sampling and chain-referral (snowball sampling) because this research work also includes the characteristics of exploratory studies and case studies as well as content analysis of women from a different economic and religious background.

The two types of case study framework in which the research was further probed were Observational case study and Situational Case Study.

Also, there was limited use and reliability on the Stratified Random Sampling (disproportionate) and Cluster Sampling to properly study and understand the maternal health status in the country and to loosely use it in the thesis writing when required.

There was extensive use of secondary sources for the theory formations in Chapters five, six and seven.

Coming to the ‘Theory of Illegitimate Benefactors of Society’, a theory which has its premises built upon deductive reasoning and to a huge extent also on the secondary sources of data collection. There has been a detailed content analysis of the views of Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Ayaan Hirsi Ali on religion and how it affects the physical and mental being of women. Also, there was pretty much a strong influence of the social media, and secondary sources of information gathered from there were helpful in building up this theory. This theory is in its inception, and it may suffer from some severe loopholes, which will be corrected in future where the main focus would be to develop it more. Profoundly and with stronger evidence and more primary sources of data collection.

Coming to the formation of the second theory in the research work, which is ‘Generational Degenerating Patriarchy’, this theory had its premises built upon inductive reasoning. The theory is mentioned in chapter six titled, ‘Making Space Within the family- the Aspects of Motherhood and the Dilemma with Secondary and Tertiary Kins’. This theory relied mainly on primary sources of data collection to establish itself. The few families selected for the case study resulted in this theory formation. Though it is too early to say that this is a phenomenon (because of the lack of quantitative-based scientific study), this change has steadily steeped into the way society functions especially in the perception towards the women and their choice and welfare. Moreover, then there is the concept of ‘Cycle of Honor and Safety’, a sub-part of ‘Generational Degenerating Patriarchy’ and its relation with the concept of honor.

## **Review of Literature**

**Patel, Tulsi, (ed), (2007). ‘Sex Selective Abortions in India; Gender Society and New Reproductive Technologies’, Sage Publications.**

This book addresses the question of imbalanced sex ratio and sex selective abortions in India. This is a collection of 11 essays unravels the reasons for the depleting the child sex ratio in India. It throws light on the hierarchical society and the preference for sons present in Indian society since times immemorial. The book clearly addresses culture, society and new reproductive technologies nexus and opens up enormous possibility of fresh theorization on sex ratio within the fertility family, planning, society and new reproductive technologies framework.

**Beauvoir, Simone De. (1949). ‘The Second Sex’, Classic Vintage.** *The Second Sex* is a 1949 book by the French Feminist Simone De Beauvoir One of her best-known books, it deals with

the treatment of women throughout history and is often regarded as a major work of feminist philosophy and the starting point of second-wave feminism. The book was published in two volumes; the First Volume was *Facts and Myths*, and Second Volume was *Lived Experience*. It is a powerful analysis of the Western notion of "woman" and a groundbreaking exploration of inequality and otherness. In 1946, when Simone de Beauvoir began to write her landmark study of women, "The Second Sex," legislation allowing French women to vote was little more than a year old. Birth control would be legally denied them until 1967.

**Krishnaraj, Maithreyi, (2010). 'Motherhood in India; Glorification without Empowerment', Rutledge Publications:** This book presents an overview of the varied experiences and representations of motherhood in India from ancient to modern times. The articles in this book are chronologically arranged, tracing the different stages that motherhood as a concept has traversed in India – from goddess worship to nationalism, to being a vehicle of reproduction of the sexual division of labour and the inheritance of property via the male-line. This anthology, therefore, attempts to initiate a meaningful and 'sensitive' engagement with issues pertaining to a woman's autonomy over her body and her role also as a mother.

**Bhatia, Manjit. Et al., (eds), (2008). 'Gender Concerns in South Asia, Some Perspectives', Rawat Publication:** This book examines the gender issues of South Asia. The essays contained in this book - written by academics from varied disciplines and by activists in the field of women's studies - address important gender issues such as education, health, violence, law, human rights, and social equity in the complex demography of South Asians). This book has fourteen chapters dealing with different gender dimensions in South Asia ( like education, empowerment, violence, trafficking, reproductive rights, inclusion or exclusion from politics etc.).

**Srakar, Tanika. (2001). 'Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation, Community, Religion and Cultural Nationalism', Permanent Black:** It is a scathing critique of many of the dominant concepts by which Indians generally, and north Indian Hindus more specifically, think and live today. The book deals with varied cultural-historical issues like the age of consent bill, taboos, an autobiography of Ras Sundari Debi and other things.

**'Breast Stories'**, written and compiled by Mahashwete Devi (in Bengali), translated in the English Language by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. This is a compilation of five short stories by Mahashweta Devi where breasts and 'society's definition of femininity and honour' is taken up. As Gayatri Spivak points out in her introduction, the breast is far more than a symbol in these stories. Published in 1997 by Seagull Publications.

**Pandit Nutan. (1991). 'Pregnancy: What the Indian woman always wanted to know but was afraid to ask', Rupa Publications:** This book is written by Nutan Pandit, who is Associate at National Childbirth Trust, London. This is a very useful and handy book for expecting mothers. It has everything related to pregnancy, the food and health details, the exercise which can be done, the complications which may occur and homemade remedies for some of the

pregnancy-related problems. At first, it may seem like just another run of the mill book on pregnancy, but it is not. It has got positive reviews from *The Hindu*, *Femina* and *Manushi*.

**Austin, C.R & Short, R.V. (eds), (1972). 'Reproduction in Mammals: Embryonic and Fetal Development', Cambridge University Press:** A very informative and detailed book about the role of chromosomes and embryo development in the womb and also explaining the changes in the anatomy of a woman when she is with child. Although designed as a basic text for the students of Biology, Zoology, Physiology and Medicine, it is still an interesting read as it is very relevant for my Research work.

**Butler, Judith. (1990). 'Gender Trouble', Routledge Publications:** this book has always been a sensation since its first publication. This book deconstructs the traditional feminine notions and makes way for new theories of feminism. In her words, 'the masculine and the feminine are not biologically fixed but culturally presupposed.

**Ruwanpura, Kanchana N. (2006) 'Matrilineal Communities, Patriarchal Realities: A Feminist Nirvana Uncovered', University of Cambridge:** This book provides an astute analysis of Patriarchal Structures and resistance among Female-headed households in Eastern Sri Lanka, and thus debunking the myth that the country is a feminist nirvana.

**Virani, Pinki. (2016). 'Politics of the Womb- The Perils of IVF, Surrogacy and Modified Babies', Penguin Vikings:** This book is authored by Pinki Virani, who is a celebrated writer of acclaimed books like, 'Bitter Chocolate: Child Sexual Abuse in India', 'Aruna's Story: The True Story Of a Rape And its Aftermath'. *Politics of the Womb* gives a deep insight into the sprout of IVF clinics in Indian society and its promise to deliver beautiful designer babies. Moreover, how infertility is a problem in Indian society and how it forces women to go for several rounds of coercive IVF for a child. This book has been published by Penguin Vikings publications in the year 2016.

**Kabara, S.G. (2013). 'Abortion in India: Myth and Reality', Rawat Publications:** This book authored by S.G. Kabara is a piece on unsafe abortions practised all over India, and how the rules of MTP are flouted by the legal and illegal setups. This book throws a fair light on the repercussions of unsafe abortions (which is often performed in shady establishments) and abortion pills prescribed by the unlicensed doctor are at the cost of women's reproductive health. S.G. Kabara is presently working as Director, Legal Affairs and Medical Audit in a leading private hospital in Jaipur.

**Prof. Tripathi, Madhusoodan. (2011). 'Female Foeticide in India: A harsh Reality', Ancient Publishing House:** It is a work on selective abortions and how the imbalance in the sex ratio is a worrying trend especially in the Northern belt. Female foeticide is an extreme manifestation of violence against women and the effect has been most pronounced in the states of Punjab, Haryana and Delhi. It was in these states that private foetal sex determination clinics were first established and the practice of selective abortion became popular from the late 1970's. This book also lays down the steps that can be taken to stop the female foeticide and law enforcement

regarding female foeticide. Prof. Madhusoodan Tripathi currently is a senior Professor, S.S.V. College (C.C.S. University, Meerut).

**Aravamudan, Gita. (2014). 'Baby Makers: The Story of Indian Surrogacy', Harper Collins:** It is a book about surrogacy in India and how it transformed itself from a marginalized and socially unacceptable procedure into a multimillion-dollar industry. It is a non-judgemental, open-minded enquiry into surrogacy laws (rather, the lack of them) and the many cogs in the process. The couples who supply the genetic material, the embryologists who create test tube babies, the gynecologists who insert embryos into wombs and deliver the babies and, most importantly, the surrogates themselves. Then there are the agents who source the surrogates, organize fertility tourism packages and even arrange for babies to be ordered over the internet using frozen genetic material supplied by the intending parents. Gita Aravamudan is an award-winning author and a journalist from Bangalore. The book has been published by Harper Collins Publications in the year 2014.

**Akram, Mohammad (ed), (2014)'Maternal Health in India: Contemporary Issues and Challenges', Rawat Publications:** It is a book about inequalities prevailing in maternal health care services adversely affect the 'life chances' and 'capabilities' of the mothers as well as their children. The prevalence of high rates of miscarriages, stillbirths, congenital diseases, neonatal mortalities, infant mortalities and maternal mortalities necessitates close scrutiny of the prevailing policies and academic approaches related to the issues. Fourteen papers included in the volume study different states of India including Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Manipur from diverse perspectives. The essays offer an appraisal of the reproductive trajectory from pregnancy to childbirth across religious, regional, economic, occupational, ethnic and educational backgrounds. Mohammad Akram is Associate Professor of Sociology at Department of Sociology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

**Nizar, Smitha. (2016).'The Contradiction in Disability Law: Selective Abortions and Rights', Oxford University Press:** In this book the author analyses the legitimacy of an automatic decision to abort a foetus with disability, this book questions the unproblematic perception towards disability-selective abortions, but without entering the realm of a woman's right to make decisions about her body. The author is also very critical of the modern medicalisation of reproduction and is undoubtedly a pro-life activist. While the Indian Legislation on prenatal tests, the Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, 1994, prohibits the use of prenatal tests for sex-selection, it permits the use of these tests to pick out fetuses with disability. Smitha Nizar teaches law at Alliance School of Law, Alliance University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India. Prior to that, she was a practicing advocate at High Court of Kerala, India.

**Aravamudan Gita. (2007).'Disappearing Daughters: The Tragedy of Female Foeticide', Penguin Random House India Publication, forward by A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.** In this book, the author uses the tools of investigative reporting to express the imperatives that drive this horrific phenomenon. She unravels an appalling story of deeply embedded and destructive patriarchal beliefs, disempowered women who have no claim on their bodies and the active

complicity of a ruthless and callous medical and social system. This book makes it chillingly clear that the macabre practice of eliminating female fetuses spells doom for the sons as well as for the daughters and is bound to have a disastrous impact on future generations. Gita Aravamudan is currently a columnist with the Indian Express Bangalore.

**Debora, L. Spar. (2006). 'The Baby Business: How Money, Science, and Politics Drive the Commerce of Conception', Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation:** In this book the author argues that it is time to acknowledge the commercial truth about reproduction and to begin thinking about ways of governing it. In this remarkable behind-the-scenes account, she combines pioneering research and interviews with the industry's top reproductive scientists and trailblazers to provide a first glimpse at how the industry works. Debora L. Spar is the Spangler Family Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School.

**Hill, Clara E. (ed), (2012). 'Consensual Qualitative Research- A Practical Resource for Investigating Social Science Phenomena', American Psychological Association:** This book provides a detailed approach to the qualitative study. It also gives a better understanding of the Inductive based reasoning and a proper way to form a structured and unstructured questionnaire and how to put forth the sensitive questions to the subjects. Most importantly, it laid emphasis on obtaining the proper consent of the subject selected for the case study or even for an interview. Key aspects of the research were explained in easy terms especially the issues regarding ethical standards, cultural complexities, case analysis, content analysis and related aspects of the qualitative research.

**Channa, Subhadra (ed), (2006). 'Feminist Methodology', Cosmo Publications:.** As the name suggests this book gives detailed perspectives on topics such as feminist epistemology, empowerment, sexuality, cross-cultural feminism, feminist representation in media, and others.

**Patel, Vibhuti. (2007). 'The Political Economy of Missing Girls':** This paper raises several questions regarding the imbalanced sex ratio, and the failure of state to check the rising number of missing girls in the country, which is (directly or indirectly) responsible for gender induced violence against women.

**Willis, Robert J. (1998). 'Economic Analysis of Fertility' (1998):** This paper deals with the issue of high unwanted fertility rate in the developing countries and how socio cultural bias against women is responsible for their non access to the contraceptives. And how this has led to high population growth which neutralizes the GDP of a country.

**Borooah, Vani. (2011). 'Maternal Literacy and Child Malnutrition in India':** This paper explores the relationship between the literacy level of a mother and its relation with the nourishment of mal nourishment of her child. The other two important factors determining the relation of these two factors are the age at marriage and the household income. It highlighted the importance of the role women played in the household.

**Clausen Stephen & Wink Claudia.(2011) 'Gender Bias in Mortality? : An Update on Missing Women':** This paper compares the survival chances of girls in developing countries

(in the context of South Asia). They have compared the gender statistics of India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Sri Lanka has made an excellent progress in various dimensions of gender (especially in the education sector and in reduction of IMR and MMR).

**Rustogi, Preet. (2008) ‘Dimensions of Gender Development in South Asia Based on Human Development Indicators’:** This paper by Preet Rustagi delves into the issues of gender development and the barriers to it. And how are denied basic necessities of life. There are very few significant changes made and the speed to address the problem is very slow. There is a huge bridge gap that has to be filled to make women visible in various fronts especially in political participation.

**Patel, Tulsi. (2007) ‘Female Foeticide, Family Panning and State- Society Intersection in India’:** This important paper by Tulsi Patel highlights the fact on how women are at the centre of family planning, which has resulted in the negligible male participation. And how women are torn between the state’s demand (to produce less children) and the family pressure (to keep on producing until the family gets a male heir. It also raises concerns about the health of women who are exposed to the NRT experimentation and contraceptives.

**Iyer, Sriya. (2009). ‘Gender, Religion and Age at Marriage’ (2009):** This paper brings up the fact that how religion plays a very important role in making marriage and child bearing important for the identity, respect and survival of women. And how religion has advocated early marriage which not only hampers the health and education of women but also their overall development.

**Kumar, Unnithan Maya. (2003) ‘Spirits of the Womb: Migration, Reproductive and Healing Choice in Rajasthan’:** This paper highlights the reproductive choice of women (from marginalized) sections of society, who chose traditional method over allopathy healing. And how even after migrating to urban slums, the dais was an economical source of delivery for them.

## **Rationale for the Study**

This study was necessary for a lot of reasons. Firstly problematic aspect of motherhood are the Cultural mores that shape the outlook towards women and then towards the aspects of motherhood. Especially the glorification of motherhood, the sacrifices they make and raising them up to the stature of a goddess. The overt emphasis on giving birth to a male child is something that has been accompanied by the rampant female foeticide has been an inherent and peculiar part of the Indian culture mores. Moreover, it was the cultural aspect of not wanting a female child that led to the quick popularity and awareness about the ‘ultrasound machines’ and how it gained access to even those communities who did not practice female foeticide. But taking care of the woman who is expecting a child and doing rituals for them so that they are safe and protected is also a part of the Indian culture.

Secondly, this research has tried to capture the human aspects of the motherhood in the sense that not always it is something to be associated with the level of being a goddess, especially

if a woman betrays the basic tenants of being a mother. Mothers who betray or neglect or are emotionally distant from their children-this cold aspect of motherhood, this is something that is not much discussed in the society, and it has been taken up in this research work. This 'distant' aspect of motherhood is something that has been extensively addressed in the work-right from the introduction to the conclusion. And then there is the issue of 'Cultural Religious Mothers' who uphold the honor of the community and the family over the wishes, needs or requests of their children. The content analysis of the Jasvinder Sanghera and Khadija Gabla mentioned and explained in chapter four (The Tradition and Historicity of Motherhood-Defining the Spirit of Nationalism on the Pure and Pious Body of Mother India.)

Thirdly of all the realities running in the society, there are particularly two very interesting aspects of motherhood that co-exist in the society together. One is that some women as mothers are distanced, unloving, non understanding and also even parasitic in some cases. While on the other hand there are also those mothers who are loving, supportive, understanding, and how they go to great lengths to ensure a well-balanced upbringing of their children. I can safely concur that most of the women fall between these two polar realities of motherhood in society.

When doing a research on deeply complex issue like motherhood, it is something that we as members of society witness it almost every hour of our life. Women all around trying to manage their children and shape them up for their lives. This research has tried to capture that essence of 'everybody motherhood' and how in the larger perspective and in the longer run, these everyday mundane doings sometimes do change the life of a mother and sometimes it does not. Chapter six, 'Making Space Within the Family- The Dilemma with the Secondary and Tertiary Kins' has attempted to capture this domestic life of mothers-domestic life and being surrounded by family is often an inherent part of being a mother and raising the child or children.

## **A brief overview of the Feminist Methodology Employed here.**

Feminist Methodology, as an approach to the research work, had been developed to bring the female narrative and standpoint in the mainstream. And gradually in academia, the feminist methodology and feminism have gained momentum and has created a revolution and awareness of sorts not only in academia but also in society as a large. Even those feminists who don't directly speak or write to bring about a change in the condition of women have social change at the foundation of their goals as researchers. For the major part of it, one of the main purposes of feminism and feminist methodology has been to counter not only the mainstream dominant androcentric viewpoint but in the long term to establish a feminist narrative and viewpoint, telling tales and struggles of women by women and from a feminist point of view. The complexity of motherhood as a topic of feminist based research work and as a social reality is a constant contentious sensitive subject between Radical Feminism and Cultural Feminism. The two extreme ends of the school of feminism and this conflict of ideas are all the more evident when the complexity of motherhood is debated and discussed. In a nutshell, Radical Feminism

stands against the idea of motherhood and goes on to claim that it makes women weak and vulnerable and how it is a tool of women's exploitation by the patriarchy the feminist ideals of Cultural Feminism is the reverse of the Radical Feminism. Regarding Feminist perspectives being a research method or not, Shulamit Reinharz in her work, 'Themes in Feminist Methodology' explains in her work that, "Something that sets feminist research apart from other approaches to social enquiry is its ontological claim that the reality depicted by much of social science knowledge is incomplete and fundamentally distorted. The world described by many studies of human and organizational behavior is dominated by an androcentric worldview, that is, it communicates the male experience and is based on male assumptions and perspectives. The androcentric perspective in and of itself is not a problem when the researcher acknowledges that women are missing in the study and, thus, in the interpretation of results (Shakeshaft, 1987). Social Science dominated by theories and concepts emerging solely from a male consciousness may be irrelevant for the female experience and inadequate for explaining female behavior (Shakeshaft, 1987). In examining various feminist social research methodologies, Reinharz (1992) asserts that this focus on perspective is a central theme across the work of many feminist researchers. She also argues that feminist criticism of established research stems from a distrust of the power and perspective of androcentrism in research and society, not from a rejection of traditional methods of inquiry. As such, Reinharz suggests that feminism is a perspective, not a method. What is unique is the diversity of epistemologies represented among feminist researchers. Indeed, there are multiple feminist perspectives on social research methods, due to the sometimes-stark differences in the lives of women and feminist researchers themselves, as individuals and as members of social groups." Hooks defines her feminist perspective broadly as: "Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men. It has the power to transform in a meaningful way all our lives. Most importantly, feminism is neither a lifestyle nor a ready-made identity or role one can step into." (Hooks, 1984).

When I set out to do research on motherhood, I was partially inspired by my relationship with my mother as well as the other women in the family. How she struggled to raise up her children and how because of her me and my family have a home of our own in an expensive city. But as a researcher when I truly open up my perspective to the connection of motherhood, society and progress, I get the real picture-that the existence of women like my mother or grandmother is not something of an isolated event, but it has been happening the world over. When mothers work hard, sacrifice themselves, and nurture their children, they are ensuring the built-up of a better world and better economic opportunities for their offspring. This is best illustrated in a book I came across titled, 'Janani-Mothers, Daughters, Motherhood' edited by Rinki Bhattacharya, where she narrates the viewpoint of some of the famous female academicians, activists and feminists and how they all had a story similar to mine. This book gives closure on the changing definition of motherhood and also tries to capture the relationship between mothers and their daughters, and how despite being at odds with the society, culture or family, we thrive.

"In contrast to much of the mainstream research which generally seeks to attain value neutrality, the feminist researcher will often integrate personal experiences into their research. Personal

experiences are not perceived as tainting the methods and results of research: "Feminist women must deliberately...integrate their repressed, unconscious female subjectivity, i.e. their own experience of oppression and discrimination into the research process." (Maria Mies in Reinharz, 1992). In this regard, Shulamit Reinharz (2006) goes on to write, "Hook's awareness of the feminist struggles was stimulated by social circumstance. Her experience with various degrees of patriarchal tyranny made her angry, which led her to question the politics of male dominance. In other words, it is assumed that black women did not know they were oppressed until white women confirmed that fact. Flores-Ortiz research is based on her own personal experiences, both as a Chicana and in deep interactions with other Chicanas. Her life experience is clearly integral to the origin of her theory-building work and her reflection on what she has learned as a researcher and psychotherapist. Reinharz (1992) notes that feminist researchers may use these experiences to inform their research questions, to guide their involvement in the research process, and to help test and interpret results. In this way, their own personal experiences appear to be an asset in their work. On the other hand, a recognition of the close relationship this establishes between the researcher and the subject of the research has also led to the ongoing discussion in the feminist research community about how to walk that fine line and "work out the tension between objectivity and subjectivity" (1992).

We as women even with all our modernity, freedom and mobility are somewhat tied and bogged down to our 'domestic reality', it is this aspect of us as women that keeps us deeply connected to the women in the family and also the goddesses we worship, ultimately we become the mother we have always resisted. A value judgment is bound to occur in a qualitative study for motherhood and identity.

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## Chapter 3

### Making Space within Family- the Aspects of Motherhood

#### Aspects of Motherhood

In this part of the chapter, different aspects of motherhood have been explained as per the experience in the field. Like any other aspect of being a human, being a mother has its own share of a grey area and complicated emotions. To mother a child and to nurture it comes with its own sets of difficult heavy sacrifices that a woman has to make. Moreover, over time, the different aspects of motherhood come to the forefront. Aspects of motherhood can very simply be defined as those human qualities (or sometimes categorised as womanly quality) that comes out in a woman from situation to situation when raising a child. There maybe one or more than one Aspect of Motherhood in a mother.

1. ***The Biological Aspect of Motherhood:*** The biological aspect of motherhood means the time when a woman conceives and carries out her nine-month pregnancy and successfully delivers the child. Also, the maternal instinct in the woman and the hormonal changes that take place over the years can also be categorised into the biological aspect of the motherhood. This aspect or phase of motherhood is something that is handled by the gynaecologists or the obstetricians.
2. ***Nationalist Aspect of Motherhood:*** This aspect of motherhood is connected to nationalism and patriotism of the people in the country. It is in this aspect of motherhood that the virtues, qualities and sacrifices of a mother are glorified and she is raised to a pedestal. Comparing the nation to a sacrificing mother is something that precedes even the nationalist movement. Every time there was an invasion, there were always those people who compared the nation to a mother who needs to be freed from the brutal forces. This aspect of motherhood is something that has been studied and handled by the cultural feminist, where they not only uphold the values encoded in the connection of nationalism and motherhood but also agree to the cultural definitions of motherhood and that all women have nurturing qualities to them.
3. ***The Gender Aspect of Motherhood:*** This aspect of motherhood deals with how women as mothers raise up their sons and daughters and how the mother affects the values and teachings of both the boy and the girl. In the past few years, especially after the Nirbhaya rape incident in the year 2012, the debate surrounding the upbringing of boys has taken centre stage in the society. In our patriarchal society, women are often the guards of the patriarchal system and the role of women as a mother plays a very important role. In my bid

to understand this part of the chapter, I came across quite a lot of women who had a different set of teachings for their sons and a whole different set of teachings imparted to their daughters. There were quite a lot of women who allowed their sons to roam around the city throughout the night, but when it came to the daughter, the curfew time was set at six or seven. Moreover, this is one of the many discriminations and bias that a girl child has to face. Although there are many other issues pertaining to how boys and girls are raised but the concern relating to the uncontrolled mobility of boys and severely limited mobility of girls is the major among them. And this over the top restriction of girls has negatively affected the education and career growth of women generation after generation. But it would be absolutely wrong and faulty of categorising each and every mother under the label of being biased and discriminating towards their female child or give too much liberty to their sons.

4. ***The Domestic Life Aspect of Motherhood:*** As the name suggests this is that aspect of motherhood which describes homemakers and how they raise up their children and also how they manage their status and place in the family. It is a huge misconception that women who stay at home have it easy, and that a lot of privileges automatically fall into their places- which is wrong assumptions by many people. For women making space and having respect in the family especially after marriage is quite a task in itself. All of the overhyped Indian serials depicting the saas-bahu saga are not false after all. The gender aspect of motherhood partially falls under the domestic aspect of motherhood but not entirely. This a critical aspect not only in the motherhood spectrum but also from the point of women in general. Home can be both a safe and an unsafe place for women, thus making a mother and child vulnerable. The domestic aspect of motherhood if not the most important aspect holds much relevance in defining motherhood as well as the other aspects of being a woman. In a patriarchal society, it is often expected of a woman to be domestic who stays at home and looks after the family and children.
5. ***Work and Home Aspect of Motherhood:*** This aspect of motherhood is the antithesis of the domestic aspect of motherhood. With the changing times, the definition of an ideal mother also changes. Now there are many women who both try to handle the job, home, family, extended family and society. Trying to balance out both family and work increases the physical and mental stress of women many times over as has been mentioned earlier in the thesis that the cooperation of the in-laws is a vital factor in ensuring the well being (physical and mental both) of both the mother and the child. In such times such as now when the aspirations and ambitions of women are being realized and respected, women are aiming to

have it all - a successful career and a healthy family along with other goals if a woman has planned for. But in the long run, this drive to be at the helm of each affair can be lethal to the betterment of women. It is a widely held belief that women should do all the household works, and men are shamed for sharing the household work burden. Thus when women take up jobs and focus on career and also get married and have children, it just increases their work burden eventually, and it ultimately becomes a challenge to balance work and home. This strong conception needs to be fought that men do not or should not do household chores.

6. ***The sacrificing aspect of motherhood:*** This is the most glorified aspect of motherhood, and this spirit is found in almost all women in varying quantity. Unlike maternal instinct, there are no biological explanations for the spirit of sacrifice in any women or more specifically in the mother or for that matter that how in some of the dire consequences they have a greater sense of sacrifice for their children. The sacrificing aspect of mothers is something that has brought about significant societal changes, in the long run, especially the educational attainment of girls and how they build up their careers later on (although exceptions may be there). But this aspect of motherhood is something that is a centre of contention in many subjects, especially gender studies, feminism and literature (where the sacrifices of a mother are exalted to the top).
7. ***The Progressive Aspect of Motherhood:*** This aspect of motherhood is something that is unique to the modern woman. Women with a progressive mindset who sets aside all cultural norms and barriers and makes sure that the child has a healthy and nurturing chance at life and a successful career. The most prominent examples being when women from conservative set up support their daughter and her education, when women support their children and choices when they disclose their gender identity (or sexual preferences), those women who are now empathetic to the choice of other women and their situations, those women who support and understand their children when they decide to do a love marriage, a woman who trusts and believes her children when they report incidents of violence against them, when a woman (who had always led a sheltered life) goes out to work for the sake of her family and children. With the changing times and with more efforts to bring down the toxic patriarchal authorities, this progressive aspect of motherhood (this disregard for the social conventions and expectations) for the sake of their children is something that determines and defines this aspect of motherhood.

8. ***The Manipulating Aspect of Motherhood:*** This is the most conceited and not much talked about aspect of motherhood. Much like the name, it is a very complex thing to understand or to comprehend. Because of no matter the height at which the motherhood is escalated, at the end of the day, women as mothers are humans and are bound to have some of the human qualities. Manipulating the children has been a major part of mothering. The morality of the manipulation is a subjective issue and is open for interpretation. Manipulation may look and sound like a word that carries heavy negative connotations, but that is not always true. A manipulation is a tool often employed in the teen and post-teen period of the children when fear stops working as a way to control or persuade a child. In the Indian scenario, manipulation of children happens mainly to keep the family and community sense of pride intact. The classic repetition and reality of saas-bahu sagas and how the son is bait in between that best depicts the manipulation aspect of motherhood. Another societal aspect that best describes this aspect of motherhood is when a mother tries to 'convince' her daughter to marry a 'proper suitor' and leave her lover or boyfriend. Or the situations where the mother manipulates her son so much that he refuses to believe any other version of truth except for the mother. And this something that is not just a plot point of a lot of serials and movies but also in reality, in the present society.
9. ***The Non Aspect of Motherhood:*** This aspect of motherhood is the missed chance at being a mother. Those women who had to choose abortion (for some reason or the other), those women who had to suffer miscarriages, those women who lost their child or children in some sort of tragedy or accident, or those women who are seeking infertility treatment to have a child, mothers of trafficked children who will never know what happened to their child or in what part of the world they are, those women who had to leave their children at shelter homes because they were not capable enough to take care of their child or children, surrogate mothers who have to rent out their wombs and later are unable to even see their child. So even though these women for varied reasons were not able to become a mother and nurture their child, but the maternal instinct is always there. So this is the 'Non Aspect' of Motherhood, it is both inside and outside the spectrum of motherhood at the same time.
10. ***Toxic and Violent Aspect of Motherhood:*** In this aspect of motherhood, the mother is devoid of any typical aspects that defines the motherhood. In this case, the mother is absolutely parasitic, manipulative, violent and indifferent towards the child or children. Unlike the popular belief and assumptions about motherhood, this aspect is also true, unfortunately. In this aspect of motherhood, violent nature is the main thing to be concerned about. In my

pursuit to study this aspect of motherhood, I came across quite a few women who completely owned this aspect of motherhood. Classic example of abuse and torture and manipulation from the side of the mother to her children. Often times, this aspect is hard to be recognised and confronted with, because of the strong notion that parents beat and thrash their children for their own good. There is a thin line of difference between disciplining a child and being abusive and harsh towards them. This aspect of motherhood also explains the crimes that mothers do against their children, the most prominent example being honor killings or being an accomplice in honour killings. Because women taking part in killing their own children is something that has baffled all the humanities intellectuals. What drives a mother to be vicious towards her own child? This aspect of motherhood is completely at the other side of the motherhood spectrum, and the actions are taken, and the decisions made by the mother can be termed as ruthless, cold and rude.

11. ***The Non-Nurturing Aspect of Motherhood:*** Those mothers who are toxic, neglect the children too often and deliberately, and do not contribute much or bother to take care of their children. As has been repeatedly mentioned in the previous chapters that not everything about motherhood is positive or too bright. This non-nurturing aspect of motherhood is present in many women; it may be present there mildly or in extreme form. Often times, many women who have a strong aspect of non-nurturing motherhood are also the one to be more manipulative and more cunning in the long run to their children. Moreover, needless to mention it takes years and sometimes even decades to understand this toxic aspect of the motherhood because it resembles so many other qualities of motherhood and parenthood.

To elaborate the points of Aspects of Motherhood even more, following are the testimonies of the Subjects that were selected to study and observe Aspects of Motherhood.

### **Studying the Aspects through the Subjects**

**Subject 1:** This subject was observed from a distance, and only very few questions were asked. At the time of the interview, she was 47 years old. Before going into details of her role as a mother and her relationship with her sons, it would be only appropriate to put a light on her past life and how it affected her later in life. She was married at around the age of 18 or 19 (she does not remember the exact age). Her husband was eight years elder to her and was a drunkard. After marriage, he left her at home (to look after the house and to serve his family) and went to Orissa where he was working. According to the subject, because her husband did not value her or

respected her, no one in his family valued her. She had to do all the tasks of the home and sometimes even those works which were supposed to be done by other people. Within a year of the marriage, she was pregnant and gave birth to a male child, and everyone was elated. For another nine years, she struggled to get out of that 'home' and try to live with her husband, who had now started working in Lucknow. After she shifted to Lucknow, she gave birth to another male child after ten years. And thus after a lot of struggle and space-making, she was now in Lucknow with her husband (who was still a drunkard), two children (with a age gap of ten years), and a nagging mother in law who had come there to teach her manners (on how to live properly in a city). And now that she lived with her husband and children in Lucknow, the intensity of domestic violence increased over the years. At the time of the interview, this subject already has two grown-up sons, the elder son is married, and the younger son is completing his education. The relationship of this subject to her sons is complicated and sort of tragic too. The age difference between her two sons is ten years. A clear case of unplanned and forced pregnancy. To put it more mildly and subtly, she was and is still a neglectful mother, who has a major aspect of non-nurturing motherhood and manipulating aspect of motherhood as well and little aspects of a sacrificing or a nurturing mother. Both her children received a regular and harsh beating from her when they were in their childhood. And as for the father, he was a distant man who was not much in his children. There is a list of several abuses and trauma that the children have to go through at the hands of the mother beating and manipulation being the strongest abuses of them all. She often left her children alone for long hours when they were mere toddlers. On several occasions she locked her children up in the bathroom for hours to punish them, did not gave them sufficient and basic money even though she had it and she was financially well off, depriving them of basic necessities. Her manipulation technique was always the same sentence, 'I am your mother', 'you don't need those things', 'I made a lot of sacrifices for you' and a lot of other emotional manipulations which are hard and complicated to explain. So even though she had put in very little effort in her son, she always expected them to do all those things that a son does for her mother. Things became worse when the elder son got a job, and soon after that, he got married. There serious tensions over the dowry issues (probably not enough money given by her daughter in law), the honeymoon of her elder son was cancelled because she also wanted to go with them, the son beat up her wife within the first month of the marriage after he was instigated by the subject. Not only that, after a few months of her elder son's marriage, she wanted her son to give her Rs. 10,000 per month because she was looking after his pregnant wife. She often left her daughter in law alone at home and visited and stayed at

her natal home for weeks at a stretch (and at the same time she did not allow the parents of her daughter in law to come over and take care of her). The elder son of the subject separated from her after the four years of his marriage and since then has been living separately. The subject was interviewed in July 2014, and her elder son moved out in the year 2016. Needless to say, there was a lot of internal turmoil regarding this decision of her son, but he had to take it. She goes on to say:

"I don't understand where was I wrong! His wife not only got away with bringing less dowry but also turned my own son against me. There was a time when he did not question me even after being thrashed, and today, he decided to move out and get separated from the family. I kept him in my womb for nine months and sacrificed so many things for him and yet he did this to me. I should never have married my son to her; she must have cast some spell on her that suddenly he is deciding things for himself without consulting me. I took care of her in her pregnancy, and she turned my own son against me. But there is a lesson in this, for my younger son, I will find a girl who is docile and listens to me and will not provoke my own son against me. Parents scold and thrash their children for the good of their child, to guide them to the correct path, what is wrong in that! I had invested so much in his education and business set up, and this is how I get paid back."

**Subject 2:** This subject was interviewed in September 2015, and she has four children. Two sons and two daughters. And amongst four of her children, only one is educationally qualified and financially very capable and stable. So even though she belonged to a conservative family, there were attempts to educate the two daughters as well so that they can be married to suitable grooms, but that didn't happen the way it was planned by the subject or her husband. Before telling the aspects of motherhood of this subject, a quick summary of her back story is necessary. At the time of the interview, this subject was 68 years old and had already married off all her children, and also her grandchildren were in the 'marriageable age' according to her. She was fifteen years old when she was married and had a difficult life since then. Indifferent and neglectful husband, who lived in the Delhi, while she lived in the village, doing the household chores and taking care of the elders of the family but often times she was sent back to her natal home for months at a stretch. In all of these constant shifting and being treated like a ball

between the natal home and the husband's home, she gave birth to five children, and within one year the eldest son died of some disease. Then came a time when she had to work as a maid in the house of one of her relative's to sustain herself and her children for some time. All this time, when she was struggling to sustain herself and her children, her husband was already earning good money in Delhi yet did not support her much materially. And gradually, after a few years, she arrived in Gorakhpur with her brother and started living with her husband. But again, after a few months, she was sent back to the village home. So throughout her entire life, she had always been shifting places. Coming to her relationship with her children- she can be termed as a complicated woman. There were severe forms of physical child abuse, which included child beatings and extreme forms of indifference towards the child. Systematic manipulation of children and instigating them against their own father. Here it is important to mention that apart from possessing manipulative, non-nurturing and violent aspects of motherhood, she also had sacrifice aspects of motherhood as well. Because despite having an indifferent husband, and in-laws, she always fought for them to have a proper education and a standard marriage. So even though the education of her daughters were severely impacted (which resulted in them getting married to a violent and drunk man). Also, when there was interaction with the children of the subject, they easily recalled several moments when their mother made financial and physical sacrifices for them. The disrespect and distance from her husband and in-laws made her bitter very fast (if not completely). And this presence of polar opposite qualities of aspects of motherhood made her a complex woman to be understood (even to her own children). She valued money so much that more often she started depriving her children of basic necessities, and with each passing year situation got worse. The education of all her children was affected, especially the education of her daughters. After she married off her eldest son (who had secured for himself a good government job and later settled in Lucknow), her 'true intentions and color' came out. She herself agreed to the fact that she did not treat her daughter-in-law good and was always scheming and plotting against her. She scammed her own elder son into giving more money than necessary for the upcoming three marriages of her other three children and adding to all of these she mistreated and humiliated him often at the slightest mistake, all because she was the mother. Again in this case as well the son took more than twelve years to understand her behaviour (that she is parasitic) and begun to maintain a distance from her and gradually, the subject's eldest son cut off all sorts of communication with her. She was interviewed in September 2015, when she had come to visit her son and get her cataract treated, as it was his

duty as the eldest son to take care of his mother. Regarding the whole relationship with her children, especially with her elder son, she goes on to say:

"I was very unfair to all my children, especially my firstborn son. He was an embodiment of *Shrawan* and always listened to me and took care of me even when I was very wrong on several occasions. It was because of my eldest son and my daughter in law that I was able to marry off my other three children without going bankrupt. Despite all the bitterness and distance, when I showed up to him to get my eyes treated, he did it and also looked after the costs of the eye treatment."

**Subject 3:** This subject was interviewed in June 2016, and at the time of the interview, she was 47 years old and she had two sons who had grown up in the sense that the elder son was a software engineer and worked in a firm based in Pune while the younger son was in the last semester of his M.Tech at the time of the interview. But the surprising element of their relationship came weeks later after the interview, and I got to know this useful piece of information from somewhere else. The subject was married at the age of 19, and she had her educational qualifications till the tenth standard. She herself agreed that she had an easy life as compared to some of the other women around her whom she knew. Her mother in law was kind and helpful in her life and helped her immensely in bringing up the two boys and taking care of them. The subject slightly had a few tussles with the extended family on her husband's side but not exactly with the immediate or the primary relatives in the house. The entire household and the family seemed like a happy family and that how they loved and supported each other, especially the efforts and sacrifices put in by the subject for her family and for her sons as well. When the subject's mother in law was asked about her, she said:

"marrying my son to her was the best decision I ever took. She not only looks after me in my old age but has also managed the entire family with her hard work and success. Two sons playing in the backyard of my house, what more could I have asked for."

But the surprising fact about the family came many weeks after the interview when one of the relatives revealed that her elder son is her stepson and not her real son. She did her duty of motherhood so well that no one ever got to know that she had a stepson. She also enabled and financially helped her elder son to purchase a house of his own in the city of Pune. And every time the elder son came to Lucknow, he brought gifts for his mother, and their relationship was very cordial and very much like the mother-son relationship. There might be some underlying

tensions in the family or between the subject and her elder son, but it was invisible to the eyes of a stranger or unknown people who did not know the family. So the family not only seemed like a happy and united entity but in reality as well, it was the truth. When asked about her role as a mother and her relationship with her sons, she says:

"My younger son is an absolute a brat and an irresponsible person. But my elder son is an absolute gem; he is always by my side and helps me in whatever he can. The whole life of hard work pays off when children are settled and are carving their own career paths, what more could parents want for more!"

Unlike the stereotype that surrounds the stepmothers and the treatment they give their children- she was quite the opposite. In her case, the nurturing and the sacrificial aspect of motherhood were very strong which is reflected in the way she managed and brought up her elder stepson and how she must have always been extra cautious of making sure that people don't point fingers at her.

**Subject 4:** This subject was interviewed in August of the year 2016. At the time of the interview, she was fifty years old and had come to live with her daughter in Lucknow. In her own words, she says:

"Ever since my daughter has started earning, she has been a big support for me. I don't have to tolerate the beatings and abuses of my husband anymore. Here, with my daughter and son-in-law, I can live peacefully without any anxiety or violence anticipation. She is more than two sons for me in the way she has handled her responsibilities and works and also taken good care of me. People are wrong to assume that a girl child is a burden and should not be educated. Things at this point in my life are going good and peaceful because of my daughter; she is my support."

When her daughter was asked about her mother and their relationship she states:

"she had to suffer a lot of abuse and hardships because she gave birth to me and also because she supported my choice to study further and have a career in medicines. I am a doctor today because my mother hustled for me and for my future. Things were difficult for both of us, but in the end, we are finally here because of the tremendous sacrifices that she had made. As it is, it was difficult for us to live in that abusive environment where we were

unwanted. To escape that sort of environment and also enable my mother to leave, it had been a major driving force for me."

**Subject 5:** This subject was interviewed in May 2015. At the time of the interview, the subject was forty years old and is a mother to two girls. She got divorced after twelve years of marriage. There were many reasons to get divorced, but the main reason was that the subject had given birth to two girls and the constant scheming and nagging of her mother-in-law regarding this. So this is a tale of three generations of women supporting and nurturing each other in the worst and best of times. The subject's mother was a widow, and she was widowed when the subject was twenty-three years old. When describing her mother, the subject thus says:

"My mother has always been a pillar of strength. After the death of my father, our world got turbulent not only emotionally but also financially. My mother had to do two jobs to sustain herself, my younger brother and me. It was a difficult phase, but our mother shaped us into strong individuals we are today. Also, it was because of the encouragement given by my mother that I thought of further continuing my law studies and my younger brother set up his business of dairy products. We are very fortunate to have a strong woman like her as our mother. She sold off all her jewellery for the sake of us, and to establish and strengthen our careers and life. Even when I was going through the divorce, she was by my side- she supported my decision to end the marriage, which was nothing but chains to my legs and my two daughters. She once again took the mantle of being both a mother and grandmother to my daughters when I was busy in my court cases and also my own divorce ongoing. She is my role model, and it is because of her that I have decided to be strong for the sake of my daughters."

The impact a mother has on her children is important in shaping up their confidence and strength and also determines the way they handle their relationships in the future. Regarding the subject and her relationship with her daughters, her fifteen-year-old elder daughter goes on to say:

"I understand that my mother had to go through the divorce and I also understand that it was a tough decision to make. We, as a family, have been struggling since then. After the school gets over, we spend most of our times with *naani*(maternal grandmother), and taking care of each other. Despite there being a financial crunch and she being not well all the time,

my mother tries her best to provide for the family and tries to fulfil the duties of both father and mother.”

**Subject 6:** At the time of the interview, the subject was 75 years old, and she was interviewed in September 2016. She is the mother of two sons and a daughter; all of them are married and have a family of their own. According to her, at this age, she is blissfully happy and fulfilled with her family and grandchildren. The only thing missing in her life was her husband, who died in a car accident in 2013. In her own words,

"I lived my entire life on a tight budget. Whatever income my husband earned, he sent half the money to his parents who lived in the village of Ballia District. And in that remaining half salary, I had to run the household and also give proper education to my children and manage the fees and other expenses. The entire budget gets disrupted when even a single guest arrived unannounced. And there were often the guests and relatives coming and staying with us. We bought this house with great difficulty by saving even the coins if possible. And I had to cut short some of the even basic necessities drastically. With half the income going in the pockets of my mother in law and there was a house loan to be finished. Those were the times-lots of financial and family troubles. But we sailed through each of the problems. Things were not easy in that amount of money that was at my disposal. And to top it all, the two sons of my brother in law also came here to pursue their education further. Having so many men just multiplied the workload many times over. It was years of struggle, but the hard work finally paid off, and now here I am rejoicing with my grandchildren and my entire family."

When inquired further about the subject in her family, a lot of other qualities about her came to the forefront. Most importantly, how she enabled her daughter to pursue her education further and to have financial stability and freedom to her. Also when he married her elder son, her daughter in law was a graduate, on the subject's insistence and efforts she not only completed her post-graduate study but also completed her B.Ed. and managed to get a decent teaching job in one of the reputed private schools in Lucknow. For her second daughter in law as well she helped to further education and also helped with the small children by babysitting them and looking after them when her daughters-in-law were shaping up their careers. Women supporting

each other is not that difficult to come across. This subject clearly shows the gender aspect, sacrificing aspect and nurturing aspect of motherhood. She showed all these traits not only with her children but also with her daughters-in-law and by helping them in handling their children and career.

**Subject 7:** This subject was interviewed in November 2016. At the time of the interview, she was forty years old, and she had a daughter who was sixteen years old. The subject's daughter is autistic, and she is specially-abled in her own ways. This subject left her job (from a banking organisation) to look after and care for her daughter full time. And in her endeavour to take care and nurture her child she is fully supported by her husband. Regarding the whole fiasco about her being a mother to the autistic child, she goes on to say:

“people may say whatever they want, but our daughter is our whole world. Sometimes it is pretty challenging for her to understand some of the complex things, but she learns eventually. She is different and unique both at the same time in her own time and way. She is a curious girl and aims always to learn something new. While other children manage to understand things quite early, she takes her time, but she learns, and you may not believe it, but she lives a pretty normal life.”

**Subject 8:** This subject was interviewed in October 2014, and at the time of the interview, she was thirty-eight years old. And for a very long time, she had been trying to conceive but failed, and now she has completely given up. She tried conceiving, but she suffered three miscarriages, and eventually, she decided to give up. She, along with her husband, bought a farmhouse a few years back, and both of them look after farm and their pets, that they got later. Regarding her decision, she goes on to say:

"losing the chance at motherhood and suffering three horrible miscarriages back to back is painful in itself. I don't even want to try it again. The entire process is too painful for me. I know there are a bunch of infertility treatment centres and fancy gynaes, but I don't want it done artificially or many any other means which is not natural. Finally, with the support of my husband, farmhouse and my sweet pets, I am finally getting over the pain of losing my own children. Trying to forget a tragedy is a difficult thing to do, but I am trying.”

Women as mothers have different aspects in different scenarios in different stages of life when dealing with their children. Although oftentimes one aspect of motherhood (among the several aspects of motherhood mentioned above), can be dominant in a mother and this shapes up the personality and behaviour of the children. We cannot ignore the fact that motherhood is demanding work and needs heavy sacrifice on the part of both parents, but most of the time, this responsibility of sacrificing falls on the mother. But with the spread of awareness and gender sensitivity, the outlook towards women is changing, and this is a welcoming change. Even though there were several other subjects who had their share of struggles and hardships, these few subjects were selected as they explain the categorisation of Aspects of Motherhood more clearly. Women are not homogeneous groups, there may be a lot of similarities in the problems they face but what sets them apart is the way they tackle these problems. Especially after the marriage and on the way they raise up their children.

### **Generational ‘Degenerating’ Patriarchy**

The Generational ‘Degenerating’ Patriarchy simply means a decrease in the toxic patriarchal values over the course of a generation ( or generations or by the second or third upcoming generation). Here it is important to mention that both men and women can be patriarchs and sometimes can take enough time to change. Unlearning the values that have been fed to us over time is a time taking process, but it happens eventually. Though it is too early to say that this is a phenomenon (because of the lack of quantitative-based scientific study), this change has steadily crept into the way society functions especially the perception towards women and their choice and welfare. In a bid to understand this terminology better a group of women (constituting 11 elderly women in the age group of 62 to 70) were asked only two simple questions, ‘What are your thoughts on the changing scenarios of women's education and women going out to work?’ These two questions were specifically asked because both getting an education and going out to work and make a career is something that runs ‘parallel to being a woman or stay at home mother’, at least this has been the mentality (and it still persists) within the society . Because irrespective of religion, caste or ethnic background, they all have a whole theory on limiting the mobility and education of women. Those two questions that were selected were quite apt to see the mind set up (or to observe the changes in their mind set up). And here are their responses in brief and to the point. Also the subjects selected to study this part of the chapter were completely different from the earlier batch of subjects that were selected.

**Subject 1:**

"Back in my day, we weren't even allowed to come to the verandah when we reached puberty. Women going out and doing all these works and providing for themselves is quite great and everything but they need to take care of their safety as well and ensure that the honor of the family or community is not maligned."

**Subject 2:**

"It really heartwarming and feels very good to see all the girls going out and having their education finished and then aiming to shape up their careers. I wish I could have finished my education. Earlier in my youth, I was only concerned about getting married and taking care of the house, but this view has changed. I was very wrong in not allowing my daughter to pursue that nursing course she wanted to, but then they have to do so much of work at such odd times and at such odd places. Although my granddaughter is highly educated, she not only gifted me mobile but also taught me how to use it."

**Subject 3:**

"Back in my day, I never imagined so much freedom and so many choices available to women. It is both good and bad at the same time. Women and especially young women, need supervision, it's not safe for women to go out for such long hours without guarding them or protecting them. Boys will be boys, but girls need to be more responsible with their actions, at the end of the day they make or break the honor of the family. My daughter became a teacher under the supervision of her father, and she is doing perfectly fine. People can go on arguing about the need for freedom to women, but no one cannot deny that it is really very unsafe there."

**Subject 4:**

"We were taught until class fifth so that we are able to write letters to our family when we are married- this is the education that we got back then. So it is but obvious that over the course of time the restrictions had to be

loosened. I wanted to make my daughter a doctor or lawyer, but her father had found a good match for her, and we had to marry her off. And today both me and my husband are proud of our granddaughter who will complete her law studies in a few months. It is a good time to be a woman. And as for the safety issues, there would always be a concern for women's safety. But that does not mean that we should stop ourselves in obtaining something. At this age I am learning computers from a nearby institute "

**Subject 5:**

"Women always had it in themselves, and we have always proved ourselves. Our rich cultural heritage is filled with strong and knowledgeable women. It is a myth that we don't support the education, career or the growth of a woman's principle. Every civilization faces a dark phase, and we faced it too. But now that the tide has turned, we can again peacefully focus on the education and the job pursuance by women. I have always been in favor of this women's education and empowerment thing. In our period, it was all about arranged early marriage and begetting the male heir for the family, but that perception is changing slowly."

**Subject 6:**

"I don't understand this constant urge to leave your family and children and go out to work and earn. It is a man's job to provide for the family and his wife, also if a woman leaves her baby and goes out to work, who will look after the poor child for those few hours! And you cannot trust the nannies and servants for taking proper care of the child. Women today are too ambitious for their own good; they should learn to be content with what is available or whatever is the present situation. What good is a career or education if the family is not looked after properly. It's not bad to be educated and to work, but family should always come first."

**Subject 7:**

"This is a welcome change and needs to be sustained in the long run. From experience with my husband and his side of the family, I can say that it is

important to have your own money-it gives you confidence. Every girl should be encouraged to study and have an identity for herself. Why depend on someone whom the girl does not even know properly. Education never leaves your side, a man might. So it's always better to have education, career, and money of their own. As for the safety concerns of the women, they can always carry something with themselves for self-defense."

**Subject 8:**

"So what is wrong in it? Women getting an education and deciding to earn for themselves is a good trend. This is good not only for herself and her family in the long run but also for the country as well (I read about it in some newspaper). I educated my daughter, and today, she teaches a difficult subject like maths to the students of class tenth. And why should women always stay at home and have their brains shut out? Venturing out of the home and doing things on their own gives them the confidence to be on their own and also to shape their future."

**Subject 9:**

"Such uncontrolled freedom to girls is problematic, it can lead to serious consequences both for the girl and also for her family. Education and then career afterwards is fine, but there should always be supervision and control. Prevention is always better than cure. With unchecked freedom and mobility, who will take responsibility if something goes wrong?"

**Subject 10:**

"As a woman, I understand the importance of getting school education. If the family is not supportive and understanding, half the things become very hard or nearly impossible to attain. So if you or any other girl has a chance to getting an education, and a life of her choice, it should be used to the maximum. Learning and being well educated is important for each and every woman in the sense that it helps them to stand on their own feet and not rely on their husband or father or brother or son. And today in this age there are so many career choices to women."

**Subject 11:**

"There should be balance with whatever one does. One cannot deny that literacy and to be able to do a job is a game-changer in itself. My daughter completed both her B.ed and M.ed after the death of her husband and her in-laws refused to support her. And today she earns more than her husband used to, and my grandchildren go to English medium school now. Not only that she also manages to take care of me and is also able to afford my diabetes medicine. Life is too long and unpredictable to rely on family members and their support all the time. It is very empowering to have your own money in your own hands. So all those people who have closed minds towards the women going to school, colleges and at work need to review their views again. It took me a tragedy to realize the importance of daughters getting a proper education."

In one of the interesting case studies that I came across, the subject (that was specifically selected for this study) had a peculiar tale to tell, that how in the times of 1982 and 83, he was severely against the higher education of girls, (especially the 'girls of his house') and how the elder patriarchs of his family just favored education till standard third only, but how later in life this perception changed in the upbringing of his daughter who went on to not only get an MBA degree but also did a corporate job in Delhi, while living alone, and also later married the man she loved. She did all of this without getting killed in the name of honor. So with the passage of time and peace in the society, progressive views sure do make their way into society and into the thinking and critical pattern of people.

In a conversation with another subject, the patriarch's same viewpoint history came forward. He goes on to say:

"back in the day it was beyond my tolerance level that women should go out to study after the class sixth, and that there was no need of it. But this mindset of mine started to crumble when I got married, and when I had a daughter three years into my marriage. The world was changing at that time, and my viewpoint also started changing with my daughter growing up. But still education is important but so is supervised mobility of girls outside their home."

In further study about, Generational 'Degenerating' Patriarchy, I came across a few more subjects like the ones discussed above. And how their thoughts are different from their father and grandfather and how they themselves changed over the years. Apart from these two cases mentioned above, there were twenty five more families and their patriarchs who had the similar view, about controlling the life choices of women but with the passage of time, their views changed gradually.

With the increase in the awareness about women and gender sensitivity, the notions of toxic patriarchal values have decreased, and this is in regard to not only women and their choices, but also there's an openness and acceptance of the femininity of men and how they identify themselves.

And then there is the 'Cycle of Honor and Safety', a subpart of Generational 'Degenerating' Patriarchy. The 'Cycle of Honor and Safety' is especially relevant to women who are raising up their daughters. In the previous generations, the women were considered the honor of the house and thus were restricted to protect her. Now the motive has changed from honor to safety because the main concern is to ensure physical safety. In a bid to understand this cycle, nine subjects (who were the matriarchs and had daughter or daughters) were interacted with. And all nine of those subjects were asked just one question, "Between honor and safety of your daughters, what is more, important to you?" And almost all of them replied back that honor is an important part of being in society but the physical and emotional safety of the girls are more important. This was an important change to witness with women taking care of the well being of their daughters. Because as discussed in chapter three and other chapters as well that how the notion of honor and especially the honor that is tied to the mobility of women has always been important to people irrespective of religion. In the interactions with the subject one of the subjects made a very important point worth noting which quite clearly sums up the responses given by all the subjects, she said:

“Honor is important but more than that the safety and physical integrity of my daughter is more important.”

The ways all these incidents happen-the daily reporting in the news and newspaper about rape, murder and trafficking is absolutely scary. As a mother of a small girl, how do we allow absolute freedom to her without teaching her about how to take care of herself and deal with people and also the importance to tell the difference between good and bad people. Like any other mother, I also want what's best for my child, and I want her to have a successful career and travel the

world but not before she has learnt a lesson in being a responsible adult". Another noteworthy response of a subject was:

"No matter how much a girl is aware of her surroundings and people, but bad things do happen to them, but that doesn't mean that we as mothers should stop doing our duty towards our children. The world is changing, and we need to change with them."

When interacting with those nine subjects on these issues, it became very clear that the motive to control the mobility has shifted from in favor of safety. And one advantage of this shift in favor of safety is that in this type of childhood (or growing up) the mother (or the parents) teach their daughter how to be an adult and also how to take care of themselves when they are alone. In short, raising the child from the 'safety' perspective rather than from the 'honor' perspective benefits them in making them independent and functional adults. But the above-mentioned argument in no way defends the restrictive or the cage model of raising up girls but emphasise the importance to take care and to teach them the basics of how to take care of themselves. But as a researcher, it would be absolutely wrong to assume that this sort of the change in thinking pattern is happening everywhere because clearly, it is not. The speed of this change is slow and takes time, and for this to happen, peaceful society is required. It is a refreshing change to witness women supporting each other and contribute to the growth of their daughters.

### **The 'Second Phase' Enforced Motherhood- The Never-Ending Saga of Extended Family.**

The saga and issues with extended family are something that will always continue to have its effect on the families. However, amongst a lot of issues that bother a family (or more specifically the women in the house), the most subtle and often occurring issue is the flow of primary or secondary kins into and outside the household and how it increases the workload of the women. However, a relatively age-old practice came to the notice when studying aspects of motherhood against the set up primary and secondary kins. This sort of tension can be termed as, 'The Second Phase Enforced Motherhood', a sort of practice where a couple in the family has to take care of the kids of the entire family, especially if that couple is living in the city. In this type of scenario, the couple 'takes up the responsibility' or is given the responsibility by the family with or without their consent. Often times this taking care of the children of the family by the 'chosen couple' is done to ensure a proper and quality education for the children in the family and

extended family. To understand it even more clearly and properly, a few subjects (women in the age group of 40 to 55) were interviewed and interacted with. They have explained what the term meant and were requested to describe their experiences based on it. Following are the testimonies of new group of subjects that were specifically chosen for this study.

**Subject 1:** This subject was 50 years old at the time of interview, and she was interviewed in September of 2016. Regarding her ordeal, she goes on to say:

"All women get exquisite gifts when they reveal their face in their husband's home, when I was married, the gifts that I got were the three children of my brother in law in my lap. It's been thirty years into marriage, and I got free of the responsibilities only two years ago. I have two children, and they managed to settle faster and earlier than the children of my brother in law. In a house that had two small rooms, we had seven members to take care of and feed, not to mention the constant coming and going of my mother in law and how she stayed with us for months. It was a constant thirty years of severe financial crunch in the family. Looking after the upbringing and education of five children is a lot of work to do. And on top of that my husband also sent money order back in the village to my mother in law. It was only when my children started earning that I earned respect and relief from the overwhelming tasks I had to do. Half of my suffering was caused by my husband, who did not see me more than a maid who can do work all day and night. Even though my brother in law and his wife later managed to have a decent life for themselves, yet they still left their children on us to look after. God forbid if something bad had happened, me and my husband would have been in great trouble. Finally, after years of trudging and hard work, I can relax now in my old age. Six months back, I married my younger daughter, who is living happily in Pune with her husband. No interference from her in-laws and no useless responsibilities on her. What I suffered, I don't want my daughter to suffer."

**Subject 2:** This subject at the time of the interview was forty years old. She was interviewed in September of the year 2016. On the question of enforced motherhood, she goes on to say:

"When I was married, shortly afterwards, the children of my younger brother in law started visiting us and soon within six months, they were living with us: my two daughters and four sons of my younger brother in law. And to make sure that I take good care of them, my mother in law also started living with us. One of the reasons why I was looked down upon by my in-laws was that I had given birth to two daughters and refused to have produced any more children, while my brother in law's wife had given birth to four sons. Having given birth to four sons automatically lifted the position of his wife in the eyes of my mother in law. So even though I didn't believe in food or study discrimination, my mother-in-law did and practised discrimination in the house. Every time the milkman got milk for the house, she immediately boiled it and gave it to all those four boys first, and after that only half litre milk remained which got finished up when the evening tea was prepared for everyone. So there were several instances like this that happened for years in that house, all because of my mother in law and the silence of my husband and me. But I fought back and started convincing my husband to arrange something else for them. It was a difficult feat to achieve, but it happened gradually, and it took fifteen years to get rid of toxic relatives and children. At that time we used to live in Sultanpur and even though it was a two-room government quarter, it was always crowded-but had it just been a family of four it would have been enough. Today both my daughters, despite all the hardships and neglect are engineers and also look after my husband and me. But those four spoiled brats despite all the tantrums and nurture, are still the same toxic people and have already caused a lot of troubles to their parents. It is important for a lot of women to realize that they are not the maid of the family and need to assert themselves more forcefully. I regret the fact that I asserted myself much later, but I always knew that it is important for me to assert myself. Had I not resisted the family of my husband, both me and my daughters would have been reduced to the level of maids in the house."

**Subject 3:** This subject at the time of the interview was forty-five years old, and she was interviewed in July 2016. In telling the tales her struggle about this, she states:

"my husband married me and soon left me with his mother to look after them and care for them. At that time, I was only eighteen years old. It was a lot of work living in the joint family and to be the youngest of them all. A lot of household chores fell upon me to complete including the care of the children two of my brother in law which meant I was taking care of five children at that young age and I had no children of my own. Right from waking them up early in the morning to getting the children all dressed and prepared for the school- all the work was done by me. Often times I had to wash the clothes of all the family members in the house. My husband at that time had his posting in Dalla, and he always sent the money order in the name of his mother- and here I never received a proper 'sindoor dibbi' from her. I often requested him to take me with him, but he refused, stating that who will take care of his family. It was after six years of constant nagging that I finally arrived to live with my husband, but my mother in law and sister in law too came with me and lived with us. It was as if the difficult phase just refused to end, but this phase of coming out from the village home and going to start a life from a fresh page was quite thrilling. Living with two toxic people is still better than living in a chaotic joint family."

**Subject 4:** At the time of the interview, this subject was 51 years old, and she was interviewed in November 2016. In regard to her ordeal with her relatives, she says:

"for my relatives, my home is not a home but their property where they can come and stay and boss around as much they want. It is only for the namesake that the husband's mother allowed me to live with my husband in Kanpur. She, along with the family of my younger brother-in-law, also lived with us (and they were a family of five people), and me, along with my two daughters were four people. A big family of nine people to feed, and there was only one earning member in the family, and that was my husband. Since my daughters studied in English medium school, my mother in law created a big drama and made sure that the children of my brother in law also went to the same school. With five children going to an expensive school, we surely had a massive financial crunch. To be able to save money was next to impossible for me, and we were unable to fulfil even the basic

desires of my daughters. Both my father in law and my mother in law severely despised my daughters not only because they were my daughters but also because they were good in studies and were rank holders in their class while in comparison the boys were not that bright in studies. It took years of work, drama and nagging to finally have a home of my own to live peacefully with my daughters. Even though we were financially drained of our funds and whatever little savings we had but finally after years of struggle, had peace and tranquility in the house. It gave us more freedom and elbow space in our own home."

**Subject 5:** Regarding this subject, she was interviewed in May 2016, and at the time of the interview, she was 47 years old. And regarding her experience, she says:

"Few years after marriage I had to take care of my sister in law along with her three children, and it was not an easy thing to do. Even till the last day of my own pregnancy, I was cooking food for her and her children. And even though she stayed here for seven long years with us, she was quite dramatic and bossy. And now that her children are of the marriageable age now, she again not only wants financial help from my husband but also wants me to come there to her house in Meerut and help her in the household chores and cooking (which ultimately means that I will have to do almost everything there as well). Even though I was fortunate enough to be able to leave them, the trauma of them living here with us still remains. She did not help me even one bit when I was pregnant with my first child or even when I was severely sick on multiple occasions due to overwork and stress. So even though things now are very much normal to a large extent but I don't feel like staying anywhere near her or her mother."

**Subject 6:** This subject was interviewed in June 2016, and at the time of the interview, she was 50 years old. Regarding her issues with her extended family, she says:

"when I got married I not only had to do most of the housework but also had to tolerate the taunts and temper tantrums of the other members of my family. You see when I was married, my husband was unemployed and remained unemployed for the next four years after marriage. I was the wife of an unemployed man which made me a burden to the family (as if it was a

love marriage, and I had a choice about it). So my mother in law made it very clear to me that if I have to sustain myself in this family, I will need to do all the work that I have been told to do. The situation for me didn't improve even after my husband got a job and even after I had a son. Making space for oneself in the family is a huge task to accomplish, and I had to do it not only for myself but also for my child as well. I spent a major part of my life in a joint family serving the elders, and it isn't so bad, but the responsibility to do work should be shared equally by everyone. Since shifting to Lucknow, things have been hopeful and peaceful for me."

**Subject 7:** This subject was interviewed in May of the year 2016, and at the time of the interview, she was 55 years old. Regarding her experience with her kins, she states: "because of my maternal uncle, who was then a police officer, I did not suffer much the hardships of toxic relatives. It was only for a very short while that I had to work for all the people in my husband's house. My husband is the youngest of the four brothers, which means that a lot of work in the house fell on me to take care of. So when my maternal uncle got to know that I might have to do all the work of the family, he talked out my husband from this type of workload that might come upon me. My uncle made it very clear to my husband that I am the daughter in law of his house and not the family's maid. Although throughout my marriage, there were some intense issues with the extended family, but it got sorted out one way or the other. This is one important step taken by my family at the right time, which saved me many years of drudgery and maid work for the entire family of seventeen members. And when I set out to search a groom for my daughter, I made sure that the family wasn't a joint family and the boy had an open mind. Unfortunately, despite all the changes and modernity in the country, it is difficult to find a decent groom along with a decent family. As a woman and as a mother of a girl, I know what catastrophe it is to tolerate narrow-minded groom and his family. Hopefully, I will be able to find a good modern, open-minded groom for my daughter."

**Subject 8:** This subject was interviewed in July 2016, and at the time of the interview, she was forty-four years old. While discussing her brush with her relatives and extended family, she goes says:

"My marriage was going fine until my in-laws started visiting us here in Lucknow every second month and created tensions every time they visited. And gradually within six months, they shifted with us along with the children of the extended. But in my heart, I know that she came to live with us only to create problems for me. And she succeeded to a great extent. Back then, my small home was like a circus, which was a host to seven children and five adults. Both my mother in law and my elder sister in law had issues with me, especially because I did not bring enough dowry to the house and also managed to break free from the village home. And they spent half their lifetime having this grudge on me. The extent to which women can go against other women is simply astonishing. Even though the other two ladies helped me out in the housework, oftentimes they just increased my workload by messing up the things and room. My house was a constant mess, and a landmine of emotions and I had to always tiptoe around my in-laws and all the children living there. Had it not been for me and my constant dedication to the family, my children wouldn't have been educated and would always have remained illiterate. If the relatives and kins are toxic and parasitic, the mother must step up and ensure the safety and nourishment of children. It is a universal fact that without the care and protection of the mother, children can easily be turned into the servants of the family. A woman, when she becomes a mother, needs to be fierce and strong for the sake of her children. It took a whole lot of time, but I was eventually able to make them move out of the house. And finally, after years, this house feels less problematic and less chaotic."

**The Home Provision:** From the above-mentioned conversations with the subjects, it can safely be concluded that how mothers play an important role in nurturing and growth of their child and how they protect them from the toxic and parasitic people in the guise of relatives and family. And one very important point that came out of these case studies was the fact that how women really strive to have a home for themselves and for their children when they are faced with

problematic family members. In all the interactions with all the above-mentioned subjects, they constantly put emphasis on the fact that how they always saved money and pressured their husbands into owning a home of their own, which was beneficial in the long run. It was mentioned by all the subjects that how having a separate home for themselves elevated their position in the family and how they could exercise some power in the family decisions. All the subjects who were interviewed reported that for as long as they had to stay in the house owned by their In-laws, they had to suffer lots of trouble, manipulation and emotional trauma. Instances of domestic violence were confessed by subject 2, subject, 5, subject 7 and subject 8. While in the other cases of subjects there were threats of violence (sometimes subtle sense of violence and sometimes direct hard threat to violence) if things or work were not done or if they talked back to the elders of the house. So the old saying about women converting a house into a home holds true to a large extent.

Another very important part that came out in conversations was the fact that how they always faced the threat of bankruptcy and fraud at the hands of their own kith and kins. Helping a family member in matters of money and finance is one thing, but it is of utmost importance to be able to tell the difference between helping and getting in a fraud trap. While interacting with subjects, an important fact that came forward was that how on more than one occasion they were duped by both their primary and secondary kins. And a lot of it happened because of the passivity of the husband of the subjects, and there were several occasions where the man turned a blind eye to the scam and fraud done by his side of the family.

Within a family, it is important for a woman to take charge in time before the scamming and oppression goes out of control, but that is not to say that all women are wedded into the abusive household. Interacting with the subjects about their struggle in the family and with family members, it became very clear that a major part of parenthood falls on mothers. It will be quite a while before strong gender role stereotypes break down in favor of women. The role of motherhood demands not only sacrifices as a mother but also adjusting and handling the family members on both sides but here adjusting does not mean suffering in a violent and abusive environment.

## **Reference**

Only primary sources of data

## Chapter 4

### **Defining the Spirit of Nationalism and the Narrative of Mother India.**

To begin with, the definition of ‘pure’ and ‘pious’ in the context of a woman’s body is defined in terms of religious patriarchal scriptures. Religious scriptures and its keepers all over the world have successfully advocated against the anatomy of women’s body. These conflicting ideologies of worshipping a pure woman in her impure body are bound to produce violent repercussions in the long term. All the theories of respect, honor, legitimacy of the child born to a woman and ultimately her character is decided by the heavily biased patriarchy in all fields of life, be it social, political, economic or cultural. So when ever women protest against the institutionalized violence, one of the age old arguments that is always put forward is that religion respects women and how it has always placed women at the highest altar, because they are the potential mothers and how patriarchy protects them because they are the weaker sex and thus they are always in need of protection and proper guidance so that they don’t go astray.

Beneath the shade lies the darkness, beneath the glorification of mothers and women lays the truth about violence and a serious lack of access to reproductive health which has its own limitations and success as per the rules of caste, class and globalization. All the ground realities of reproductive health is even more keenly felt when it is accompanied by the rampant practice of child marriage, forced marriage and early pregnancy. And the stormy debate of reproductive health does not end here, it also includes safe and easy access to contraception and abortion (which is not always the case), with more than half of the world against the idea of safe abortion and contraception, more than seventy countries have made strong legislations especially against the practice of safe abortion, and access to contraception and choice. In this regard the celebrated French Feminist Simone De Beauvoir very rightly points out, “There are few subjects on which bourgeois society exhibits more hypocrisy: abortion is an repugnant crime to which it is indecent to make an allusion. Forced motherhood results in bringing miserable children into the world, children whose parents cannot feed them. It must be pointed out that the same society so determined to defend the rights of the fetus shows no interest in children after they are born.”

The voice and opinions of this French Feminist still holds true all over the world because the structure of power where the female population is always at the bottom is a peculiarity that is shared by a lot of culture and society. But the fact that ‘society prosecutes abortionists’ does not hold true for developing countries like India and China, where abortion is a major part of allopathic crony capitalist ‘reproductive care’. China actually executed its one child policy (where they taxed the couple for the other children that will be born to them), but the two category of capitalists who profited a lot from this were abortionists and the tax collectors. Unlike China, one child policy is not followed in India ( an attempt at this almost brought down a government), but here also sex selective abortion is a powerful and an already established institution to reckon with, especially in the last few decades. Misogyny, female foeticide and infanticide were always present among the selected high caste groups but with the introduction

of amniocentesis, price accommodation and the ease of technology to get rid of a female fetus made it a much sought after service thus making the abortionists rich, powerful and indispensable to the social system of discrimination and institutionalized killing. In India abortion was legalized by the state to manage the multiplying population, thus sidelining the health of women, and thinking along these lines by the policy makers have cost the unborn girls and their mothers dearly. The choice of abortion or to have a child may be a life changing, life saving and independent decision for some women, while for others it is practically a life threatening and life altering decision. To have a choice exercised by a woman is not an easy work to be accomplished. Even though reproductive choices like the availability of abortion does seem like an harsh option to be out there, still it gives hope to a lot of women who are faced with unplanned or unwanted pregnancy. But this was not always the case in the Indian history of motherhood. In this chapter, the focus will be on the way women gained their rights from being passive and submissive child brides to the women of today-who can achieve any feat. This chapter will focus on the evolution of womanhood in the context of motherhood and gaining the rights they always strived for.

Manu and his creation Manusmirti is one of the many religious books that institutionalized many gender induced inequality and atrocities including child marriage. Although there are several other religious scriptures that are biased towards women but manusmirti drew the maximum flak, especially in the period when the oppressed castes were raising to the power and their movements was gaining momentum. Manu in his work laid out several strict rules for women (both married and unmarried). Manusmirti on several occasions praises women for being pure while on various occasions he termed them vicious, scheming, lustful and unfaithful. His take on complex nature of women, progeny, and purity is thus stated, “No man is able to guard women entirely by force, but they can be entirely guarded by using these means: he should keep her busy amassing and spending money, engaging in purification, attending to her duty, cooking food and looking after the furniture. Good looks do not matter to them, nor do they care about youth. Knowing that their very own culture is like this, as it was born at the creation by the Lord of Creatures, a man should make the utmost effort to guard them. In another instance regarding women Manu holds the opinion that women are equivalent to field which can be sowed by the man to beget progeny, and the man is equal to the seed that is planted in the field. The progeny that gets created from the union of seed and field sometimes resembles the seed and sometimes the progeny resembles the field. But when making comparison between the two, Manu considered seed more important than the field or womb. As has always been the history that ‘Prithvi’ has always been the wife of Prthu, and in the similar field belong to the man who sows it.

Sudhir Kakar (1989) goes on to give more detailed view of Manu regarding women. Sudhir explains that how the Brahmin views of femininity has been constructed upon the views and opinions of Manu. Manu goes on to give three bases on which Brahminical idea of femininity rests on. The first being the uncontrolled sexuality of women, the second being that this uncontrolled sexuality needs to be tamed by the man concerned. And lastly men are obligated to honor and respect women. Sudhir Kakar further gives ‘the Indian psychoanalytic explanation’ in

which the view of the man regarding her wife ‘is culturally split by the Freudian syndrome of the mother-whore binary’ a complicated binary in which the qualities of tenderness and sexuality stand against each other.

Patriarchs in their glorification of women as mothers not only stifled the strong protests against inequality but at the same time they brushed away the disturbing and staggering statistics relating to Female Genital Mutilation, Child Marriage, Marital Rape, Women dying every second due to severe complications during child birth. Elevating the honour of ‘Bharat Maata’ at the cost of the body integrity and honour of common women is bound to cause serious complications socially and culturally. Especially in today’s time when different women from different walks of life view motherhood in their own understanding instead of being dictated by the patriarchy. Here the problem arises when the society finds it hard or even refuse to accept the changes in the power structure of the society.

One of the major issues with understanding motherhood in relation nationalism is that it restricts the mobility and reproductive rights of women. Continues glorification of women as the potential mother mentally conditions young girls to aim to be a mother. Religious ideals dominating the political arena is bound to affect the women’s rights especially their decisions regarding reproduction and life choices. And there are ample evidences and reports to strongly suggest that religious fundamentalists are one of the major barriers (out of many reasons) in reproductive rights for women. Even in the modernized world and the even with the availability of planned parenthood kit available in the market and with all the medicines, advertisements and fertility centers, religious fundamentalists refuse to step down or back away from giving unwanted suggestions regarding motherhood, sanctity of marriage and the importance of son in the family. Reproductive rights of women gets snatched away when the motherhood as the topic of Nation’s pride gets into the political arena, this in turn gives religious fundamentalists a chance to sway the public opinion in the favor of stereotypes.

### **Part One: The General Notions.**

Mahatma Gandhi: “At every one of the women’s meetings I have asked for your blessings for the national effort, and I have done so in the belief that you are pure, simple and godly enough to give them with effect. You can ensure the fruitfulness of your blessings by giving up your foreign cloth and during your spare hours ceaselessly spinning for the nation. I am uncompromising in the matter of women’s rights.<sup>9</sup> I do not need to be a girl to be wild over man’s atrocities towards woman. As women begin to realize their strength, as they must in proportion to the education they receive, they will naturally resent the glaring inequalities to which they are subjected.”(1a)

Gandhi’s idea of women having rights was intimately related to the idea and growth of the Indian freedom struggle. Despite all the debates and controversies, no one can deny the fact that Gandhi did managed to bring women out of the domestic sphere and enabled them to take part in the

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<sup>9</sup> And 1a taken from the book ‘Debating Patriarchy: The Hindu Code Bill Controversy in India (1941-1956)’ authored by Chitra Sinha.

nationalist movement. The presence of women in the different chapters of freedom struggle gave it a new meaning. Despite all the struggle by women and despite gaining independence, the true independence for women quite late. To be free from the bondage of societal morality codes, it took quite some time.

And here I will write down the powerful speech delivered by Jasvinder Sanghera in one of the Tedx Talks about 'Fighting forced marriages and honor based abuse'. I could not have thought of any other substantial words to write down which could elaborate the monster of a term honor and how families and communities go to great lengths to make sure that 'honor' remains intact by resorting to violence. Thus here goes her story:<sup>10</sup>

Jasvinder Sanghera was born in England and was always taught to be a docile and a submissive girl. In her own words she went to British school along with her all her sisters, but how later on they were withdrawn early from schools so that they can be married off. Jasvinder was fourteen years old when her mother revealed that she has been promised to someone since the age of eight and eventually she will be married off to this man. But unlike her sisters, Jasvinder rebelled and resisted this attempt at forced marriage. But despite Jasvinder saying no to marrying a stranger, the wedding preparations still took place, and in the last attempt to save herself Jasvinder had to run away from her home, from her family. And it was after her escape that relations between her and her parents became even more strained. When she was found by police, she had to beg them to not return her back to her family, instead she was given a choice that she should call her family and inform them that she is safe and sound. Jasvinder was given a rude shock when her mother announced her decision on Jasvinder that either she comes back and marry the person that has been chosen for her or she will be disowned (which was not at all expected by Jasvinder). After being disowned by her family, she struggled to start her new life all over again, and at the same time she was in touch with one of her sister Rubina. A few years later her sister Rubina commits suicide to escape the daily beatings that she endured at the hands of her husband. Rubina's death was a turning point for Jasvinder- she came out of her hiding and established a charity by the name of 'Karma Nirvana' which still is a support group and help for victims of honor related crimes. Thus 'Karma Nirvana' is a charity that helps girls to escape and reassemble their life after they have been disowned by their family or if they are at a threat. Jasvinder later in life went on to complete her education and got herself a degree. She was later accepted by her father but not by the women in the family.

More than six million years of human evolution and human species still find it hard to understand that child marriage equals to forced marriage, paedophile and child abuse.<sup>11</sup> In yet another ted talks Khadija Gabla talks about her experience of genital mutilation and how it was performed by an old woman, and it was her mother who took her to that old woman, Khadija in her speech goes on to say that how her life and sexuality got scarred because of that. In both of the cases of Khadija and Jasvinder, their mother played an important role in upholding the brutal patriarchy (which is not always the case with a lot of other girls). Forced marriage, forced

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<sup>10</sup>[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h\\_Xh5MXA7yY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_Xh5MXA7yY)

<sup>11</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4n0zcsdoN0>

pregnancy is something which affects women all over the world, it is not just a third world problem. Often times when people migrate to other cities, they also carry with themselves the cultural baggage in the form of their mentality, especially regarding women and ways to control her, as can be seen in the cases of Jasvinder and Khadija (and millions of other women like them who are survivors of gender specific violence and brutality). Women have a major role to play when it comes to implementing the rules of patriarchy. We have the case of Jasvinder, who ran away from her house because she did not want to marry a stranger and get trapped, she was eventually disowned by her family, and her mother was in the forefront to make sure she got disowned. The second case is of her sister Rubina who suffered a horrific marriage and she in her desperation to escape this horrible marriage set herself on fire (because her natal family did not allow her to leave that marriage. All because they loved their 'precious honor' more than their children so much so that their one daughter got disowned and the other died a painful death. The painful description of Sophilya's murder is yet another grim reminder of the horrors, her parents tucked her down, suffocated her and murdered her (not to mention she earlier consumed bleach to avoid a marriage) and her siblings were made to watch. Jasvinder Sanghera was at the age of sixteen when she decided to not go back to her toxic and abusive family, she made that decision not only for herself but also for her future children, which is why her daughter went to college, had an education and married at the right age with the man of her choice. At some point Jasvinder had to take a decision for herself and she did, so did her mother when she picked up the phone and gave her choice between a forced marriage and disownment (she could have for once stood up for her daughter), but she chose to leave her sixteen year old daughter in a big city like London all by herself (and like any other capital city in the world, London is not a safe city for vulnerable teenage girls). It's must be quite another interesting story as to how she survived without anyone by her side in London, because cities are tough to survive in an aggressive money economy.

All over the world, the right of women to her body and reproductive rights is an issue which is gaining momentum. It's baffling to see the type of mothers we have all around the world! What kind of mother would take her daughter to an old woman to be cut, what type of mother would force her daughter into an unhappy marriage and disown her daughter. There are more than ample evidence to prove that women are the victims and also an accomplice in sustaining the violent side of patriarchy. It's the same story everywhere, all over the world, child abuse happening in the form of unmatched paedophile marriage.

Parenting is a huge responsibility and a lot of people don't understand that, a sustained paedophile system in the form of child marriage is testimony to that. Horrible unspeakable things people do to a woman's body (even when she is just an infant). Marriage maybe sacred and an important event but it has been used by parents to dump their unwanted surplus daughters (which they have often times in the hope of getting a son, and yet the theory of 'dumping the daughter has it's own grey areas to contemplate). A lot of people should not be allowed to have children. People neglecting their children is not a prejudiced mythical statement but it is an established fact, it is not a sign of virility to have many children and not care for them. Patriarchs need to realize the difference between being parents and being owners of children who they can dispose

off as they wish. Ignorance, religion and capitalism have further strengthened the regressive structure of society despite all the progress and empowerment, a lot still needs to be done.

## **Part Two: A Brief History of Mother Worship and the Paradox.**

In the Indian context mother worship is an important aspect of the Indian cultural history. It is complicated and difficult to understand and has its own dimension with the changing history of Indian subcontinent. In the Indian context mother worship holds importance in both patriarchal and matriarchal societies. In this sort of worship mother is the central figure and the worship is done with all the ceremonies and rituals that are supposed to be done. In the primitive society there were a lot of reasons for the important position of mother not only in the family but in the society as well. First and the most important reason being the economic factor and the labor that women provided, secondly the power to create life has been a central theme in the mother worship. In the matrilineal society, women had free and unrestricted mobility and more avenues to express their sexuality while on the other hand in the Patrilineal society, this was not the case- the rules got more severe and there were strict control over the mobility and sexual freedom of women. The change of societal pattern from matriarchal to patriarchal rigidly encoded each and every aspect of the life of women. Not to mention the concept of motherhood and mother worship underwent changes in this transition. Marriage was institutionalized and mobility of women was restricted to ensure the 'correctness' of the progeny. And the children born thereafter took the patrilineal identities.

While observing the history of the mother worship I India, the most important goddess seems to be the mother earth goddess in the way she is invoked in almost all the rituals and prayers performed in hindu homes. She has also been hailed as the 'Great Mother' And it was this aspect of mother worship that was invoked not only in the nationalist movement for independence against the British, but it was also a war cry against the Islamic oppression and tyranny, the most prominent example of this is the slogan of 'Jai Shivaji, Jai Bhawani' when Shivaji led his operation against the Aurangzeb forces.

In the Vedas Father Heaven and Mother Earth are invoked to grant blessings on the human race and also to bless their fields, crops and food. Mother Earth is attributed to have the tender qualities of an actual mother, who takes care of her children with the vast resources at her disposal.

Shri Aurobindo came up with four great qualities of the Mother which are as follows:

"Four great Aspects of the Mother, four of her leading Powers and Personalities have stood in front in her guidance of this Universe and in her dealings with the terrestrial play". The first quality of a mother is her ability to be calm in the most desperate of situations and to be able to use her wisdom in the times of need. The second quality which a mother possess is her strength and power to shake the world. The third important quality which a mother has is sweet, gentle and harmonious nature, which makes her a graceful person. The fourth quality of a mother is that she possess a vast ocean of knowledge and has perfection in all her works. And all these four qualities of a mother

have been named thus- Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalaxmi, Mahasaraswati. There are a lot of philosophies attached to the mother worship and its existence in the human as well as the divine world.

The general outlook of Indians towards women and mothers have always been that of deification. Not only as a mother, but as a women also she is considered a goddess or a devi, who should be respected. She is embodiment of Goddess Uma when she conducts and fulfills her religious duty towards home and towards her husband. The strong religious beliefs among the people to a very large extent has been responsible for the evolution of the trend of mother worship in India. In fact mother worship became a strong source of motivation in the nineteenth and twentieth century when there was a call to fight for freedom.

The above mentioned description elevates the status of women as mothers and divine mothers as per the norms of patriarchy. It is quite complicated and ironic to be a mother in a patriarchal society that is so obsessed with the worship of mother goddess. The three important aspects of life that is being a woman, being a mother and being a part of human race are three different realities of being a woman. One of the most complicated requirements of being a good mother is to be married first before conceiving. And to be a good and dutiful wife, there are a lot of requirements to be fulfilled. The above mentioned praises for the mother and her divine qualities ignores the most bitter reality which is structured inequality. Even though the sacred Hindu texts have numerous examples of single mothers who raised up their children in difficult situations yet somehow they don't have a voice, and with translations and interpretation their voice and views are interpreted differently. The experience of goddess motherhood in a patriarchal society with a patriarchal narration is bound to have a 'cultural effect'. The following narration of Mata Hidimba will validate the above said lines.

The play 'Mata Hidimba' by the noted play writer Chetan Datar looks deeply into the sensitive matter of motherhood and how this concept operates differently in patriarchal society and matrilineal society. Chetan Datar has explained the motherhood of both these societies via the dialogue and position between Hidimba (the 'rakshahi') wife of Bhim and Kunti- the mother of Bhim. Also with the help of this play questions about race, caste and religion are also raised and how patriarchal society is closely linked to the concept of war. The play is reference to some of the early references to the events that happened between 'Pandavas' and 'Kauravas'. The time when 'Pandavas' were not only exiled by the 'Kauravs' but a murder attempt was also made on the 'Pandavas' by the 'Kauravas'. It is here that 'Pandavas' had to leave their palace to save themselves and came to the forest and settled here for sometime. One night when Bhima had gone to fetch water for his family, he trespassed the territory of 'Rakshasa' Hidimb and he was challenged by Hidimb for a duel. A fierce fight took place between the two and Hidimb lost the duel to Bhima. Hidimba (sister of Hidimba) fell in love with Bhima, after seeing him fight his brother. And it is here that the theme of the play develops- the love between Hidimba and Bhima and the interference by the patriarchal society. The play Mata Hidimba plays on many themes- the first being the difference between patriarchal and matriarchal societies and how they bring up there children. The second theme of the play being that how the cry for war resonates more in the

patriarchal society. The third dominating theme of the play is the claim over Ghatotkach (who is not only the first born Pandava son but he is the first born of Bhim and Hidimba as well), and how Ghatotkach is dragged into the war and killed in the battle by the 'eldest discarded Pandava' Karna. The play is also a commentary about the family structure and the power play in the family structure, and how Kunti arm twists Hidimba into patriarchal norms and later how Lord Krishna manipulates Ghatotkach to take part in war as it was his duty as a son. In the war Ghatotkach dies and Bhima survives, Hidimba goes mad with rage after that. The play is also a commentary about two single mothers in two different types of communities, Hidimba in a matriarchal community and Kunti in a patriarchal community. On the one hand where Kunti was bound by the rules and regulations of a patriarchal society, Hidimba was a confident woman from matrilineal society who was not afraid to assert herself or express her sexuality. And this difference between the two women has very well been depicted in this play.

Progressive bills and acts like Sarada Act, Age of Consent Bill, Hindu Code and Uniform Code Bill faced stiff opposition from the orthodox section of the society. Strong revolutionary acts like Abolition of Sati in 1829, The Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act (1856), and the Age of Consent Act (1891) were trouble some for the entire Indian orthodox patriarchs. Most of all widow remarriage- even the suggestion of widow's remarriage (whose marriage with her first husband has been consummated and had children) shook the conscious of keepers of religion. Reformers who challenged the writing of scriptures and sacred texts faced severe death threats including reformers like Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, who championed the cause of women's rights, he made the keepers of religion realize that rules of living and status quo in the society were sharply different and that different rules applied to men and women for the same crime. In this regard Tanika Sarkar (2001) explains that rules regarding the conduct of women were formed by the powerful upper caste men. The powerful and the sacred position of the upper caste men encouraged the lower caste folks to follow the same rigorous code of conduct and also made their women too to follow it. This plan to follow the rigorous code of conduct gave them hope that they will move up in the social and caste hierarchy. And one of the most important rules of moving up in the caste hierarchy is to marry the girl at a very early age and if she is widowed, then again she has to follow a strict rules and regulations laid down for her in the scriptures. A strict and severe rules regarding food and mobility has to be followed by the widows, as well as by the married girls. All the rules laid down in the scriptures have to be followed irrespective of whatever is the character of the husband or even if he has died. Manusmirti prescribes harsh, deprived life for the widows that has to regulated by the elders of the family. And with the passing times the rules got more and more stricter.

Tarabai Sinde can labeled as the radical feminist in the nineteenth century. She ferociously questioned each and every patriarchal inequality faced by woman at that time. Her father Bapuji Hari Shinde was one of the founders of the Satyashodhak Samaj, and this had a profounding impact on Tarabai Shinde. She is much better known for her book, 'Stri Purush Tulana' which was published in 1882, and this book in itself is a landmark in the history of Indian feminism. Through this book she criticized the cruel patriarchal practices that women had to endure. And not only that she did not shy away from critising some of the powerful in the society who used

religious force to oppress women. More than anything else she strongly condemned the 'pativrata' code of conduct that was forced on women by the religious and patriarchal powers.

Ultimately the reformers and the social activists realized that in the society there is large number of presence of widows especially the child widows. It did not took much long for them to realize that child marriage it the root cause of all the problems and in the long run, it was a problem even for education of girls in society. And hence with this realization among the reformers, the education of girls was promoted and efforts were being made to curb the child marriage practices. Even though the preferred age of marriage was between eight to ten years old, yet some parents disposed off their daughters even when they were one or two years old. The social reformers and activists very fiercely argued in favor of having their rights. Women too deserve to have a childhood that is normal and they should not be forced into marriage at an immature age. Even though this sort of thinking was severely limited with few people in the elite group, yet it manage to have a positive impact in the long run, and enabled women to have a chance at normal damage free childhood.

Ensuring body integrity for a woman is a tough battle which is being fought even today. Things we do for purity, religion and ensuring a virgin girl to the groom. Child marriage according to the 'Shastras' to make sure that the rites have been followed, consummating the marriage, conceiving and a child bringing a child into this world. Managing the body and mobility of young widows to make sure that the 'ground does not slip', a widow and an infant bride, the two extreme realities of the Indian society.

### **Part Three: The Bills and the Big Debate on Menstruation, Marriage and Purity.**

Bringing the changes in the law regarding marriage, consent and consummation of marriage was one of the very complicated tasks for the Indian law makers because the issues that had to be dealt with had religious sentimentalities. The case of early marriage and early pregnancy had always been a heated topic to be discussed. But it was only later in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century that women's issues were taken up by religious reformers and social activists along with the aid of British administrators. Here the discussion of the changes in the law for women is important because it was related to women's education and the debate to raise the age of marriage. Because it has already been a established fact that delay in marriage and education (even if it is a basic education) goes a long way in empowering not only the women but also the future generations. Delayed marriage and an education also plays a major role in ensuring a dignified position in the family for the woman and her children. The main problem arises when the human rights of women is interrupted by the conflicting citations of the religious scriptures. So whenever there is discussion on the violations of a woman's body and seeking justice for her, one thing that religious people and (masses) in general do is to open a religious book, and try to make sense of justice from there. Rajaram Mohan Roy and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar both faced challenges from the keepers of society and religion when they started the argument in favor of women to abolish the Sati practice and to practice widow remarriage. To begin with, it was not about women's rights but whether religious scriptures left any space for women to even breathe. All

the arguments that were made were always quoted from the religious scriptures which were written by men. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries wide spread child marriage not only led to increase in the number of child widows (some were widowed in their infancy) but also to complicated pregnancies to child brides, child widows, pregnancy of widows (which was always followed by the harrowing ordeal for abortion and often led to honour killing which no one questioned). The problem of child marriage, and widow pregnancy are two complicated social reality which happens on a daily basis even today. In this regard Tanika Sarkar (2001) writes, “Child Marriage- widespread among all castes-had produced a very large range of child widows. According to the 1891 census, widows under the age of 10 formed 6% of the total population of married girls. Widowhood required brutal dietary, dress, and ritual deprivations. The nineteenth century saw numerous debates on ritual niceties: since a sip of holy Ganga water was deemed compulsory before death, what were widows dying on Ekadasi day supposed to do? A late nineteenth century orthodox manual admitted that the lack of water drove many child widows to their death, especially in the hot summer months. The scant diet was made more restricted by the apparently aphrodisiacal properties of certain kinds of food. The widow was denied a number of pulses and vegetables that might overheat her body and stimulate unseemly desire. She was debarred from ritual ceremonies and all collective female rites that lit up the lives of other women. Most child widows would go back to their parental homes, and here a bitter irony vitiated the natal household. Married mothers would eat fish and other Bengali delicacies, would wear colourful clothes and jewellery, and would share their husband’s beds in the presence of their widowed children-who were strangers to all such pleasures. In fact, on Ekadasi days the wife was ritually commanded to have a meal with fish in order to demarcate her absolute difference from the widows. Widows were, thus, doomed to a suspect existence.” Caste councils since time immemorial decided rewards and punishments for people in accordance with their works, and this was true even in extreme cases of widow pregnancy. In this regard Tanika Sarkar further goes on to write, “Since the normative order was so fraught with tension between its own discipline and the certainty of transgression, it prescribed very severe penalties for defiance. There were ritual penalties, often sanctioned by formal caste councils, that punished the entire family with loss of caste status for such shameful things. This, in turn, made familial, policing of the widow’s conduct and punishments more stringent. Secret abortions or infanticide were staggeringly numerous among widows.”

Ranjit Guha has studied the death of a young untouchable widow who died of a botched abortion in 1849. Ironically, this widow belonged to a caste that was not only exempted from the ban but even infamous for its supposed sexual permissiveness. Murders were quite a common penalty. One of the late- nineteenth- century reformers, Dwarkanath Ganguly, became involved in the remarriage movement when his childhood friend, a Brahmin widow, died under suspicious circumstances and he discovered that her family had punished her illicit pregnancy with poisoning. His investigations in the same village exposed scores of such deaths over the previous ten years. A Calcutta coroner reported in 1886 on the death of a young widow who had been married at 10 and widowed at 13. She had been thrown out of her natal and matrimonial homes and, somewhere during her search for shelter, had become pregnant. She found no one to help her as she went from door to door among relatives and kinsmen, men and women. Eventually,

she came to her old and abandoned ancestral home to die alone at night of a miscarriage or a self induced abortion. The act, obviously, had not disrupted the penal regime of social ostracism. It is important to underline these secret killings, the terror and the violence that were the consequences of the normative order which colonial law feebly tried to counteract. Far too often, violence in colonial times is located entirely within the state, with tradition and custom taken as signs of resistance, or as subaltern opposition to the politics of the state.”

Child marriage and very early pregnancy is not just a matter of public health but it is also a very deeply rooted social and cultural problem very much strongly present in a major part of the world; child marriage is not just an Indian Sub Continent concentrated problem but a part of our daily harsh reality which often times goes invisible in the name of modernity and ‘liberation of some women’. But when the peace is disturbed, the safety of women and children is the first thing that is threatened. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya (1982) goes on to bluntly argue in favor of birth control and how it will give freedom to women and also the much needed by herself on her body, she goes on to write, “All imperialistic minded rulers encourage large families...The other reason is because women freed from the penalty of undesired motherhood will deal a death blow to man’s vested interest in her. He can no more chain and enslave her through children.” And therefore this war which woman is waging today against man, against society, against nature itself, is against her sexual dependence. For as long as woman cannot control her body and escape the sentence that nature seems to have decreed upon her, her social and economic freedom would be innocuous. It is for the same reason that man strives desperately to thwart her efforts through religious cannons, legal statues, and social codes.

Although several laws were enacted to uplift the status of women, here I will only briefly discuss the debates and struggles around the Age of Consent Bill Controversy in Bengal (1890-92) and the enactment of the Hindu Code Bill, and how both of these were important landmarks in the debate relating to the emancipation of women and how Dr Ambedkar played an important role in the framing of the human rights for women and how he debated the conservative and orthodox law makers in the parliament.

Laxmibai Rajwade (2007) writes, “Motherhood might have inspired poets to sublime flights of fancy or led theorists to philosophies but to the human race, it means existence and growth, and individually to the mother the cries in her life- her greatest sacrifice for the family.” Rajwade questioned the myth of motherhood and challenged its representation as a “natural” phenomenon highlighting instead what historians have identified as maternal fears among women, especially during times when maternal mortality was high and birthing was a near- death experience for women”

‘I saw my daughter lying on the cot, weltering in blood...’

-Evidence given in court by Radhamonee, mother of eleven-year-old Phulmonee.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Phulmonee who died of marital rape by her husband in 1890. Her death caused an outrage and debate among the reformers and social activists.

A huge controversy was sparked off in the press over the issue of child marriage and over the custom that enabled cohabitation with a child-wife. Child-marriage was not only customary, it was far too strongly recommended by authoritative religious codes. The state, therefore, was not ready to intervene. The only intervention that could expediently occur was over the age of consent within marriage. The Phulmonee episode which triggered the onslaught of the debate on the age of consent opened up new possibilities in ensuring more rights to women. It added fuel to the reformist camp and temporarily embarrassed and silenced revivalists. The government misread the silence to assume that there was a favourable climate of opinion for reformist legislation. An excerpt from *Bangabashi*, the newspaper that played a leading role anti-state campaign, provides a fairly typical example of the rhetoric which was fundamentalist as well as a powerful challenge to the state. 'The day has at length arrived when dogs and jackals...will have it all their way. India is going to be converted to a most unholy hell, swarming with hell worms and hell insects...The Hindu family is ruined. Significantly, lawmaking in the domestic realm gave short shrift to the divide between private and public. Conjugal connections, the woman's concrete mode of being, her body, indeed the vagina itself, were now matters of lawmaking. A whole range of newspapers was started to report on laws relating to sati and widow remarriage. The fortunes of the *Bangabashi* were made out of its stand on the age of consent. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* turned itself from a weekly newspaper into a daily one during the campaign. A newspaper leading the campaign said even if a hundred Phulmonees died, the custom must be retained. Another ideologue said that Hindu custom was painful and did extract a severe price from its women. But its glory lay in its severity: 'This discipline is the pride and glory of chaste women and it prevails only in the Hindu society', said another stalwart anti-bill newspaper. If difference were seen to lie in greater discipline than in love, then this discipline had to be exalted as the sign of cultural authenticity.

Young wives were sometimes killed by enraged husbands when they refused to go to bed with them. Newspaper reports of these events record something of the strength of revulsion. In several court cases of forced intercourse that resulted in physical damage, the girl herself, as well as her mother, would very forcefully and elaborately depose in the courtroom, even though it was considered grossly improper for women to appear in court at all, or refer to things like menstruation and intercourse in public. Phulmonee's mother, aunt and grandmother gave graphic and angry descriptions of her suffering, her husband's culpability. In his charge to the jury, Justice Wilson dwelt only on the man's action: whether he had previous intercourse with Phulmonee, whether he knew that vigorous penetration could be fatal, whether he knew she had not yet started menstruating. He also made it a point of criticizing neither Hari Maiti's nature (which inclined him to enjoy a child), nor the domestic-conjugal custom that allowed him to do so. 'Under no system of law...whether Hindu or Mohammedan ...has it ever been the law that a husband had the absolute right to enjoy the person of his wife without regard to the question of safety to her.' The judge's focus was on a man's actions on a specific night, and he bent over backwards to give him every benefit of doubt. At the same time, the very nature of their evidence compelled them to focus their gaze on the corpse of the 'unhappy child Phulmonee Dasee' who

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had died after thirteen hours of profuse bleeding. They had to record the precise traces of a brutal and fatal penetration, they had to agree that even at eleven, that is over the statutory age of ten, Phulmonee's body was sexually immature. More, they had to generalize beyond the individual body. They admitted that even menarche did not prepare the body for safe intercourse, and that premature maternity was extremely dangerous. They talked of difficult and delayed labour, of the laceration of genital passages, of extreme exhaustion and the frequent death of child-mothers- when they had agreed that there should be no legislative interference with either child-marriage or the custom of early cohabitation. While medical opinion focused on damaged infantile bodies, administrators reported on the ubiquity of the custom, in all places, among all castes and communities. On the whole, it was more common among lower castes. Among upper castes, due to the growing pressure of dowry demands, the age of marriage for girls was going up slowly because parents needed more time to put together an adequate dowry. Now, we find deconstructive descriptions of both these iconic images: instead of a nubile, youthful body, the broken body of a mere child; instead of the sacred, lustrous maternal body, the emaciated, exhausted body of a child-mother. The materiality of pain and damage peeled away the iconic layers. So the deliberations over the age of consent struck more than a jarring note. They brought the glowing edifice down, they relentlessly refocused the complacent male gaze upon a broken young female body. Feminists have noted that the entire domain of interactive relationships-of love, nurture and care-are usually excluded from moral and political considerations, ensuring a split between the male sphere of public justice, ethics and morality, and the female sphere of affect, emotions, nurture. The word consent was used in peculiar ways in all these discourses. Medical, legal, reformist and nationalist opinion agreed to attach to it a certain physical capacity when a girl could sustain intercourse without much damage. Differences arose over subsidiary issues: when was this capacity achieved; did menarche signify full puberty and did either menarche or puberty indicate sexual maturity? What happened if the girl began menstruating before twelve, and could not perform garbhadhan due to the new law? Above all, there were differences over whether a statutory age of consent was necessary, and whether it ought to be made mandatory that the wife be allowed to visit her husband only after first she menstruated. The age of consent debates were a single, exceptional moment when such people were forced to say that the community discipline was more important.

Meera Kosambi (2015) goes on to describe in detail the scenario and the extent of patriarchy that went into debating and resisting the enactment of the Age of Consent Bill. She goes on to write, "A poignant incident in Kashibai Kanitkar's biography of Anandibai Joshee (1889) finds the just-married girl and her much older widower and 'reformer' husband spending a few months in her parent's house. The women of her extended family, overly preoccupied with matters of the body in their constricted world and especially so in the sexually charged atmosphere of the wedding, would push her into her husband's bedroom at night ( a couple of years before her coming of age was celebrated with the usual ceremonies). The terrified little girl would struggle to get free and was once beaten black and blue by her husband. Kashibai apologized in a footnote for mentioning such an embarrassing subject, and omitted the episode from the abridged second edition of the book (1912). But she obviously felt compelled to strike a blow for the protection of the girl child, just as the 'age of consent' controversy was heating up. Much more recently, the

International Year of the Girl Child was celebrated in 1991 in seeming unawareness that it, coincidentally, marked the hundredth anniversary of what was, in retrospect, India's uncelebrated, but by no means unnoticed, Year of the Girl Bride. Its epicenter was the Age of Consent Bill, whose introduction ushered in the calendar year 1891, and whose rapid enactment concluded the first quarter of that year. Now, a hundred year later, the bill might seem neither radical nor revolutionary enough to have provoked such a disproportionate reaction, because it only proposed to extend the minimum age limit from 10 to 12 years for girls with regard to cohabitation within and without marriage, affording girl bride a protected childhood. But the proposed had struck at the very heart of the orthodox Hindu marriage system by possibly preventing the mandatory performance of the 'garbhadhan' (impregnation or conception) ceremony within six teen days of the girl reaching puberty. The girl bride's right to protection was pitted squarely against the husband's marital right and even his sacred duty. The concept of 'consent' had been irrelevant in a Hindu marriage because the scriptures 'entitled' a girl not to freedom of choice, but to be given away to her husband as a sacred gift through 'Kanyadan'. The person who gifted her away also bestowed on her husband permanent consent on her behalf. This coincided with the British view that the wife's 'consent' was implicit in marriage. The only difference between the two was the fixing of an appropriate minimum age limit for cohabitation, and for marriage itself, because the British did not share the then prevalent Hindu belief that the onset of puberty in a girl was nature's clear signal for the commencement of marital-sexual life, irrespective of her age.

The Age of Consent controversy was pioneered by the Bombay Presidency along with the tradition of nationwide networking, as Charles Heimsath has shown, and soon swept across all parts of the subcontinent, making incursions even into Britain. In the meanwhile, the demand for legislation was considerably reinforced by the eruption on the national scene of two well-publicized court cases. The first was the Rakhmabai case in Mumbai for the restitution of conjugal rights: this exposed the dysfunctional nature of child marriage (dealt with in the previous essay). The second incident, the 'Calcutta child-wife murder case' of 1889, involved ten-year-old Phulmony, who allegedly died in agony on her wedding night, and her thirty-year-old husband Hari Mohan Maitee, who was charged with murder. The highly publicized case led to the coining of the term 'harimaitism' to refer to 'the noxious practice of early consummation'. On 9 January 1891 the Age of Consent Bill, drafted by Sir Andrew Scoble to amend Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, was introduced by the Viceroy of India, Lord Lansdowne, into the Supreme Legislative Council. The age of consent was raised to 12 years in the case of both married and unmarried girls (though in the case of married girls the offence by the husband was made non – cognizable) ; and the law was to apply to all religious communities.

'Religion- in- danger', The living presence of sacred Hindu texts in the upper-caste Indian mindset made itself felt through opposing interpretations of the same liberally cited Sanskrit texts. The orthodox champion Ram Shastri Apte relied on evidence from fourteen 'shastras' to prove that 'the girl who sees her menses in her father's house (before marriage) is impure', and that by restricting her reproductive capacity her father incurs the charge bhrunahatya, or killing the embryo. The same sin of foeticide was visited upon the husband who failed to consummate

marriage immediately after the first monthly period and to have intercourse after every subsequent period. Besides, a child conceived prior to the garbhadhan ceremony was, like a child born out of wedlock, illegitimate. Paradoxically, it was Manu who aided reform through his oft-cited verse instructing a girl to wait three years after puberty for her father to find her a husband, and then choose a suitable husband herself. Thus, the instruction for the husband to have intercourse with his wife after every monthly course was understood to be 'permissible' and not 'mandatory'. Bhandarkar concluded, in an article in *Sudhakar*, that 'the consummation of marriage only when the girl has fully developed is quite in keeping with the spirit of the Rishi legislators, as the begetting of a son able to do credit to the father is their sole object, and early consummation is entirely opposed to their spirit as the result of it is barrenness or weak and sickly children.' But in a long controversy with Bhandarkar, Tilak maintained, *inter alia*, that the *prajapatya* and the *garbhadhan* ceremonies were to be performed in immediate succession (i.e. within twenty-four hours) on the conclusion of the girl's first menstruation. The acrimonious overtones of the debate prompted Bhandarkar to comment: 'I have been carrying on literary controversies since 1864; but never did I hitherto meet with an opponent who treated me with such studied discourtesy as Mr Tilak has been doing'.

A change in the custom of child marriage itself was thus not regarded as a precondition for a possible postponement of consummation. According to Tilak, the domestic supervision of elders was sufficient to prevent early contact between the couple. Furthermore, the evils of early consummation could hardly be laid at the door of boy husbands; such atrocities were usually committed by older remarried widowers (the bride being always, by definition, a pre pubertal girl). He therefore suggested that an upper age limit for the remarriage of widowers should be fixed at 40 or 45 years. Conceding the argument, reformers incorporated into one of the resolutions of the Fourth Social Conference (December 1890) 'the necessity of actively discouraging all marriages, where the difference of age between the parties exceeds 30 years.'

Western medicine entered the fray most strongly through British doctors who favored reform. Dr Edith Pechy-Phipson's talk in Mumbai on 'The Physiological Effects of Early Marriage' emphasized the distinction between puberty and nobility. Perhaps the most sensational and shocking revelation in this regard came from a group of fifty-five British women doctors through a disclosure of the brutality to which girl wives were subjected. In an appeal sent to the government, they adduced as evidence thirteen cases that they had received for medical treatment. With the exception of one older girl, all the others were between 7 and 12 years of age, and all were examined within a day or two of the consummation of marriage. The common physical injuries included severe haemorrhage, lacerated flesh, crushed pelvic bones, and temporary or permanent paralysis of the lower limbs. In the case of a 7-year-old girl, the result was death. One of these girls, 10 years old, was unable to stand or walk, and had crawled to the hospital on her hands and knees. In three of these cases, information was added about their husbands: one was 'about forty years of age, weighing not less than eleven stone', another demanded custody of his wife after one day in hospital 'for his lawful use', and the third 'had two other wives and spoke very fine English'.

The eugenic argument had been deployed effectively by Pandita Ramabai in her *Stri Dharma Niti* (when women ‘acquire an energetic and vigorous disposition ...their progeny will acquire their virtues and disposition’) and developed subsequently in *The High-Caste Hindu Woman* (‘How could imprisoned mothers be expected to bring forth children better than themselves?’). But it had gone unnoticed.

At the height of the controversy it was reported that an eminent Hindu public man had asked his wife, a mother of several children, for her opinion on early consummation of marriage. She replied that: “It was the most outrageous thing to allow; that women, as a sex, were subject to and underwent far more numerous and far more excruciating pains and miseries and risks of the worst kind happening in child-bearing and child-birth, than man, the opposite sex, had ever conception of; that any means whereby this could be sensibly diminished would be most welcome and eagerly sought; that he who devised and brought about such a result was entitled to be almost deified; that men might talk as they pleased, without the veriest notion of how women regarded what pertained to them most intimately...”

The Age of Consent Bill invited sharply opposed perspectives on its legal status: the orthodox insisted it was a new British law causing unwarranted intervention in Indian family matters; reformers viewed it as a British amendment to an existing but flawed British law that had already been imposed on Indian society. The concept of ‘consent’ in the discourse was entirely notional and euphemistic, because even a bride old enough to give ‘intelligent consent’ to her marriage was not allowed the right to withhold her consent from an arrangement settled by her parents and elders. Indian Penal Code was framed on the model of British Law with just sufficient alteration to suit Indian society- by setting ten years as the minimum age for cohabitation, in view of the prevalence of child marriage. A challenge to the husband’s total rights over his wife was perceived by conservatives as a loss of individual –i.e. male-freedom. Another objection was that the bill placed husbands and seducers in the same category.

The salient orthodox objections were presented by Mitter during the debate in the legislative council: that the existing law was adequate for protecting girl brides; that puberty was a far more reliable criterion of physical maturity than a numerical age limit; that the husband whose wife reached puberty before the age of 12 was faced with the dilemma as to whether to go to prison (for breaking the British law) or go to hell (for violating Hindu sacred law); that if the husband was sentenced for breaking the British law and sent to prison, or transported for life, it would lead to ‘the almost civil death of a Hindu Wife’, so that ‘there is the hardship of the law punishing the wife for the guilt of her husband’; that the law would enable the police to terrorize the people; and that hostile relatives or neighbours would exploit the law and lodge false complaints. On the contrary, marriage often led to incidents which called for legal protection because ‘harm, unjust harm,...most fatal harm is occasionally done to Hindu child-wives by their husbands prematurely claiming to exercise so-called “marital rights” upon their persons’. Sir Andrew Scoble, in introducing the Age of Consent Bill which was to raise the protected age for married as well as unmarried girls, hastened to state at the outset that the bill created no new offence. He also discussed the argument that the nature of marital relations rendered it impossible for a man to commit a rape upon his own wife, since carnal knowledge of the wife

could not be unlawful in view of the matrimonial consent that she had given. But he stressed that marital intercourse could, in fact, be unlawful under certain circumstances, and the Penal Code had therefore made provisions because ‘the check of the law may be necessary to restrain men from taking advantage of their marital right prematurely’.

The actual enforcement of the Consent Act was another thorny issue. It was argued that it was difficult to ascertain a girl’s age, given the faulty system of registration of births, and the fact that not all parents maintained their children’s horoscopes; besides, a physical examination of girls by medical doctors was considered distasteful. Additionally, a wife (at any age) was highly unlikely to lodge a complaint or testify against her husband. A nightmarish scenario was also painted in which the police had the power to invade bedrooms. Finally, it was claimed that hostile relatives or neighbors might use this as an opportunity to make false allegations and settle personal scores. The last two objections were disposed of by the reformers by stressing the possibility of enacting certain provisions, such as making the offence non-cognizable (as was finally done), and permitting bail in cases where the offence did not result in serious crimes. The socio-political climate of the closing decades of the nineteenth century facilitated the marginalization of women’s issues by publicizing them as ‘social issues’. Social reformers by contrast separated the two issues and advised their ‘educated countrymen’ not to be swayed by such misleading appeals. The passage of the Act would be a crime and a blunder of the first magnitude and...would give a sharper blow to the stability of our Indian Empire that can be dealt by a dozen small wars’ and a hundred petty uprisings.

On the one hand, anti-reformers claimed that the government had introduced the act under pressure from British pro-reform opinion, which had been misled by Indian reformers. This party wanted social issues to be kept in abeyance while promoting political reform. On the other hand, reformers expressed an equal and opposite reaction, making political reform contingent upon social reform. A.O. Hume, the ‘Father of the Indian National Congress’, declared that he assumed that the large majority of the Congress Party supported the bill: ‘were it otherwise, he would wash his hands off the Congress’, and advised opponents to desist from such discreditable conduct. While the day was won by the social reformers, who rejoiced in the passage of the ‘Age of Consent Act in 1891, the days and years to come were claimed by the champions of political reform, who succeeded in stalling further social change. The Consent Act ensured legal protection for girl brides, and the related controversy introduced a more humane perspective on their condition; but the cause of women’s emancipation was nevertheless relegated to the background over the next few decades.

In controversies about widow-immolation and the age of consent, her physical survival was the issue, and in the widow remarriage debate her sexual death was at stake. The Age of Consent debates in 1891, and the many meanings that were attached to the woman’s consent, convey the intricacies of the transition. The autonomy of the Hindu man having been irrevocably colonized by alien culture and education, the Hindu woman’s body became a deeply politicized matter-it alone could signify past freedom and future autonomy. As we saw it, this body became tied to a shastric and custom-based regimen of non-consenting and indissoluble infant marriage. The woman needed to be strictly faithful even if her husband abandoned her, remarried many times,

and even if the marriage was not consummated, and even if he died. The great reform campaigns of the nineteenth century revolved, one way or the other, around the question of the woman's death; sati and the age of consent both related to the violent destruction of her physical body, while the widow remarriage issue was centered on her sexual death. The question was not really whether the community or the state should have the power to inflict death on the woman, though quite often this is how it was posed. The question was also whether she was, in fact, legally and politically, a person at all, a person whose claim to life would be self-authenticating because of her personhood. It criminalized cohabitation with a wife under the age of twelve, arguing that this would ensure that consummation occurred after puberty: girls rarely started their menarche before that age. The garbhadhan ceremony would then be enacted at the right time and pre-pubertal girls would also be made safe from premature intercourse. The law therefore still exposed girls to brutal damage and death. What is striking is that the government neither asked for the opinion of women nor requested Indian correspondents to consult the opinion of women of the family on the matter. In the absence of women's organization, it was far too delicate a matter for individual women to express her opinion. Women's writings, especially autobiographical ones, portray the initiation into married life as a time of great fear. At least one early woman writer, Basantakumari Dasi, was quite explicit. Non-consensual child marriage makes chastity both mechanical and difficult, she said, for physical intimacy is a form of horrible coercion for the child wife, especially in the total absence of familiarity and compatibility.

**Hindu Code Bills** were a set of bills that were passed in the 1950's with the aim to reform the Hindu religion and bring down the inequality aspect of the religion. It also came to be known as the Hindu Personal Laws. It was tough goal to achieve but it was accomplished despite all the opposition and protest against the bill and against Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. Due to national movement activities and protests, it led to several men being jailed, this resulted in women coming out of their home and taking active part in the movement.

In this regard Chitra Sinha (2012) explains how this was one of the important watershed moment in the history of India's women's movement. This move encouraged to demand further rights of women to improve their status in the family as well as in the society.

Needless to mention when the Hindu Code Bill was being discussed, it flared up the passions of the orthodox forces in the parliament, and it was claimed by them that this bill has been drafted to hurt the sentiments of Hindus. It was vehemently criticised by some of the affluent orthodox powerful patriarchs like The Shankaracharya of Puri, Shankaracharya of Puri Govardhan Matha, Shankaracharya of Kashi and other powerful orthodox personalities as well. Several hindu organizations opposed the bill, claiming that it goes against Hindu religious scriptures and the Sanatana Dharm as well.

By 1945, the Rau Committee had drafted the Hindu Code Bill to be discussed with the important stakeholders. A few individuals and a few organizations did stood up in support of the bill, but the main opposition came from the Sanatanists who objected to a lot of parts of the bill, especially the part where divorce provision was mentioned and they also objected to the removal of the polygamy. Nonetheless in the debate, the women's viewpoint and the orthodox viewpoint

both were strong. Nehru did support the Hindu Code Bill and he hoped that this legislative step would help to consolidate and empower women more. In his widely acclaimed book 'The Discovery of India' he explains that "Hindu law was largely custom", and that it could be changed. The arrival of Britishers ensured this change by introducing important legislations in the country, but this change and legislations were based on old Hindu texts and scriptures. Nehru further goes on to narrate that how the bill was so severely opposed that it became very difficult to pass it. Even a broken or manipulated passage of the bill could be considered a progress to be reckoned with

Discussion on Hindu Code Bill would be incomplete without mentioning the efforts of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, whose firm stand and views on women's right and legitimacy of Hindu code bill was a turning point in ensuring human rights for women. The ferocious energy with which Ambedkar stood up in favor of the bill was considered as a propaganda against upper caste men. Even after numerous threats and heavy criticism and pressure, he carried on his works to criticize the several shortcomings of the Hindu religion and its ill practices that needs to be discarded. He publicaly burned Manusmirti in 1927, which offended the orthodox Hindus even more, especially the upper caste bastion. The more Ambedkar tried to pass the bill, the more passionately he was resisted.

. In the words of B.R. Ambedkar (1955):

"The Hindu society has always believed that law making was the function either of god or the smirti and the Hindu society had no right to change the law. That being so, the law in Hindu society has remained what it was for generations to come. It is for the first time we are persuading Hindu society to take this big step. We are building a new society here and we are doing it by justice and law."

It can be clearly seen that both Ambedkar and Nehru held different perspectives on the topic of Hindu Code Bill. The basic argument of Ambedkar lay on the premises that Hindu society and its archaic laws were static and unchanged and were exploitative in nature to the 'Sudras' and women as well. And Hindu law towards 'Sudras' and women needs to change. While on the other hand Nehru still believed in the religious sense of Hindu justice, and which was dynamic and broad enough to accept the change. He was of the belief that even though the bill has been passed in bits and pieces, it will have its positive impact on the Hindu society in the long run. And Nehru was right in his view that Hindu code bill will have positive effect in the long run. It gave women encouragement to strive more for their rights and exercise their rights. It was a small start but nevertheless a start at some point. Hindu Code Bill are n important chapter in giving women more dignity and rights which later influenced their collective consciousness and shaped up their identity as a modern women as well. The modern women of today who strive to make an identity for themselves are the result of previous generations fighting for their rights and dignity.

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## CHAPTER - 5

### **Lessons in Reproductive Choices- Negotiating Space and Health in the web of Culture, Society and Patriarchal 'Medicines'**

Periods, Pregnancy and infertility are Nature's way of saying, 'No hard feelings babe' Things we do to get rid of an untimely or unwanted foetus. All around the globe, the desperation story is the same. Women trying to have access to safe abortion and contraception- some die and some survive. Also, a lot of people in this country should not be allowed to have children- they cannot tell the difference between children and slaves.

Before we delve into the depth of the discussion, here is the excerpt of Jyotiba Phule's work, 'Opinion from Jotterao Govindrao Phulay on Note No. 11 by Mr B.M. Malabari on Enforced Widowhood'. Different times, but same desperation and the same story. So here it goes, "Moreover, the Aryan Institution enjoins Brahmin males to marry even the lower class girls during the life-time of his first wife: but his own real sister is prohibited from remarrying, after the demise of her first husband. Such partial and unjust prohibitions necessarily lead the helpless Aryan widow to commit horrible and heartrending acts of atrocity. To prove the above assertion, I insert the following instance. One of my Brahmin friends named Rao Saheb Sudashive Bullal Gowndey, who was an officer in the Inam Commission, employed in his house a Brahmin widow as a cook, whose name was Kashibai. The poor Kashibai was a well-behaved and beautiful young woman of a respectable family. She was a chaste woman. She served several months in his house. But in his neighborhood there lived a shrewd and cunning Shashtriboova of Brahmin caste, who tried his utmost to mislead this ignorant woman. Kashibai at first resisted his inducement, but at last, she fell victim to his desire and immediately became pregnant. Afterwards, by the persuasion of her paramour, she tried several poisonous drugs to commit abortion, but all her attempts failed. After nine months were completed, Kashibai gave birth to a beautiful son and for the sake of her disgrace she murdered the innocent infant with a knife and the corpse was thrown into the well behind the house of her master. Two days after she was arrested by the police on suspicion, tried before the session court in Poona and was sentenced to transportation for life. This crime Kashibai committed that her character may not be spoilt among the Brahmin community. Her case brought to the notice of the public the unjust and partial character of the Aryan Institution, and so the people were struck with horror. Although my means were not sufficient to defray my expense, yet I was compelled to establish a foundling house, in my own compound in Poona, for the Brahmin community immediately after Kashibai's trial was over. The enclosed copy of printed notices were then pasted on the walls of the corners of streets, where Brahmins reside. From its commencement up to the present time, thirty-five pregnant widows came to this house and were delivered of children, of whom five are living and thirty died by the injuries done to them while in the womb by the poisonous drugs which the mothers must have taken with a view to conceal their pregnancy. Many of the beautiful and helpless ignorant young widows of the respectable Brahmin families have turned out private and

public prostitutes on account of this wretched system. How abominable and degrading is the system of Aryan Institution, which compels Brahmin widows to drag their lives in such miserable and shameless ways, that even modesty shrinks back to enter into particular details.

In conclusion, I most respectfully crave the favour of your enlightened English Government to remove the tyranny of enforced widowhood, exercised upon the helpless women, by the relentless system of Aryan religious institutions. I, therefore, propose that no barbers should be allowed to shave the unfortunate Brahmin widows." Jyotiba Phule's write up about the fecundity of the widows at that time raised important questions about fertility, morals and patriarchy. But the above write up expressing his views is problematic and flawed for many reasons. The obsession of patriarchy with the hair and womb of women, widows with a belly, is a nightmare and thus has to be kept under vigilance always. More than two centuries of Patriarchs invested their energy in managing the body and baby of widows- feeding them scraps, turning them into cook in the family and a Guardian always above their head. And the way he keeps on using the term 'beautiful and helpless ignorant young widows', is also a reflection of his thinking, the way we reduce women to their womb and vagina at the end objectifies them.

The choices we make as women (despite the odds of choices we have at our disposal in a patriarchal society), to have children or to not have them, the number of children to be reproduced, to be a supporting mother or not, to be a sane mother in law or not. In my fieldwork to find a perspective I came across Kanti, who is a domestic help by profession who had eight children and I had to ask her thrice, 'are you sure these children are yours?', and all of them were non-institutional births, seven daughters and one son. At the age of fifteen she was married to a man of around twenty-five (she was not sure about his birth date), and now at the age of 47, she is the mother of her eight surviving children. One stillbirth, two painful miscarriages, eight children and now, after so many years she still has the responsibility to marry her two youngest children. As a woman who was denied proper care, food, nutrition and hospital check-up, she survived a lot of abuse and violence by her in-laws and especially her mother in law who played a major role in denying her proper care, institutionalized delivery and even access to contraceptives to limit the size of the family. Kanti's mother in law died back in 2009 due to tract infection, and her illness caused a huge financial loss to Kanti and her family who had saved the money for the education and marriage of her daughters. From what I could observe (from the few meetings) I had with Kanti, I realized that how her mother in law controlled each and every aspect of her life, including her intimate coitus session with her husband. In her words,

"what to do now, she was the mother of my husband, how could I have defied her, they would have either killed me or abandoned me! As a mother, I took so much pain to give birth to them; all those cries at the time of labor! If my husband had left me, then where would I go with all my daughters. But I tried to give education to my daughters so that they won't face my fate, but I had the capacity to educate them only till 12<sup>th</sup>, it is a back-breaking work, trying to give a decent education to your children and survive the world. Here in the city, you need money for almost everything. But nevertheless I educated six of my daughters, found suitable grooms and married them off, but the string of responsibility just refuses to end. I still have a daughter to marry, a son to take care of and educate, now I don't understand how the boat will sail to the other end. A

huge debt to pay back and continuous worrying on how to run the household now. If only we had fewer daughters! Hopefully, this too shall pass, the way we passed other hurdles."

But that's not all, the story gets better afterwards, her daughters taking up the charge of their bodies and ultimately managing their fertility and fecundity. Her first daughter has two sons (born at a government hospital), and since then she has been on the daily contraceptive; also there is a two-year gap between both her sons. Her second daughter who has three kids (one daughter and two sons, again an institutional delivery), with a gap of one year and one and a half year, and she has now resorted to Mala D, last I heard she was contemplating between IUD and sterilization. Kanti's third daughter is rumoured to be barren by her in-laws (since this was a sensitive subject I did not prod much on the question). Kanti's fourth daughter has one son and one daughter; again, she is on the daily intake of contraceptives. The fifth daughter of Kanti is three months pregnant, and the sixth daughter was married around two months back. Women in the next generation taking charge of their body. Needless to say, family (both at the natal home and the in-laws) play an important role in the access of woman to the essentials of fecundity control. Like the two eldest daughters of Kanti often get a big stock of Mala D when they are in their natal home. Women are making space for themselves and their children to enable their growth, education and reproductive. It took two generations to take charge of the body and resist control by others. This is not a lonely story of Kanti; my other five case studies were more or less similar to the struggle of Kanti who negotiate space for their daughters in a patriarchal setup. It is a very wrong assumption on the part of health providers and middle-class people that women from marginalized sections of society don't try to limit their family size or that they just believe in producing children. Often times, there are a lot of hurdles when they try to understand the modern means of contraception and laws relating to access to abortion. Some of the serious obstacles are limited mobility of women, non cooperation from husband and in-laws, apathy and mistreatment from the government health officials, lack of awareness about contraceptives and how they are to be consumed and lastly the controversial nature of sterilization in this country, especially in the context of marginalized women and women from lower-income groups.

Originally the title of this chapter was supposed to be, 'Lessons on Abortion and Choice', but from the field study, I came to realize that abortion is often a last painful resort. Now how to put the entire dilemma and complexity in words! When I set out to do fieldwork for this chapter, I came to realize that it was more easy to find fertility centres, or the IVF hubs, who are an expert in creating designer babies, those big hoardings in bright pink and blue color, giving a hope to couples that they can have a healthy baby as well, and then the airbrushed sweet and breezy picture of a mother and child smiling and in all bliss. On the other hand trying to find a safe abortion center is a next level distressing challenge all together, yes abortion is legal in India, but the taboos and religious stereotypes continue, also for the married women, and in the context of India abortion, unfortunately, is allegedly linked with the poor sex ratio in the country, and thus there have been demands made that abortion should be banned altogether, which is a dangerous proposition (about which it will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter). The reproductive choice for one is coercion for another. For this chapter, I interviewed an abortion provider, and this is what he had to say about the 'abortion trend', "abortion is not only a tough decision for

women and their families but also for us, after all, we are taking a life. But the alternate picture is quite painful. Because when the woman or her in-laws try the abortion at home, the complications often takes a serious turn, if here in this shanty makeshift 'clinic' we don't do it, somebody else will. And people think that we make a lot of money doing this sort of work, but it is not always true. Do you know the effort it takes to calm down the consciousness and perform a 'safe abortion' in this insufficient place? Can't say if this is a worrisome trend or not, but here we come across a lot of women who are seeking abortion services, and they come from a difficult background (oftentimes). Need I mention that a lot of them are carrying child outside the wedlock and sometimes (even when they are married) they are not emotionally and financially ready for a child. When someone asks me about my profession, I just say that I work in a clinic. Because explaining the actual job requirement, and the necessity of an abortion provider in society is something that people don't always understand. And yes, it is not always about getting rid of a female foetus. Although sex-selective abortion is problematic in the society and the solution does not lie in banning abortion" Access to reproductive choices has a political angle in the sense that serious attempts have been made all around the world to deny reproductive rights to women, especially the heated debate on banning abortion or not. And once again, religious beliefs are a big impediment in the access to reproductive choices.

When it comes to reproductive choices, at the other end of the fertility and fecundity spectrum lies the trauma of infertility and the social stigma that comes with it. Either way, the market makes a profit off them, especially the market that has opened up new and hassle-free ways to cure 'female infertility' and give the blessings of 'children in the house's backyard' (preferably a baby boy). These fancy clinics with colorful hoardings and a strong promise of an offspring is what pulls people towards them despite it being an expensive affair, and such a feat is often accomplished at the bodily autonomy of the woman concerned and not to mention that each cycle is exhaustive and takes a physical toll on the woman concerned, not to mention the way cure for infertility affects the hormones and the functionality of woman. The amount of familial pressure and the societal pressure that married woman has to face to conceive and to deliver a healthy child is quite enormous. Even though the population of this country has multiplied at a rapid rate, yet there still remains a lot of couples who are childless, and these fancy clinics come to the rescue. Moreover, oftentimes the families are overzealous to have a baby in the family as soon as possible, no matter whatever the cost. Infertility and IVF related clinics are a recent phenomenon to happen and have still managed to hold a strong position in the market. These types of clinics are what happens when patriarchy, religion and capitalism step together into the modern world, and the amount of profit they earn should not be surprising. But at another side of the argument also lays the fact that these doctors and clinics provide a beacon of hope to the childless couples, interacting with the couples gives an overview of the desperation they are going through to conceive. One very important point to be noted is that these fancy clinics claiming on curing infertility and providing designer babies via IVF are a boutique of services in modern-day maternal care and reproductive choices. They were a feature of metropolitan cities once, but gradually they have seeped into the small towns and cities, and very quickly they caught the attention of the audience they were targeting.

It is often a stereotypical assumption that transition to marriage and motherhood is a smooth process and everybody around the woman just expects her to go with the flow, but the subjects who narrate their story of motherhood transitions say a different tale. Not only is the transition and hormonal changes difficult to handle, but what comes after is even more chaotic and confusing and full of anxiety. And in the modern world of proper wording, that type of hormonal and spiritual change in a woman after childbirth is now defined and recognized as postpartum depression. Period, adolescents, adulthood, marriage, motherhood, pregnancy, postpartum bleeding and postpartum depression-one life and so many bodily changes to deal with. Especially after the childbirth, responsibilities, mood swings, anxiety and sleeplessness just multiply by double. Things are bound to go downhill real fast if the husband and family members are not co-operative enough. With having interactions with the subjects (on the issue of postpartum depression), they revealed that oftentimes the overbearing family members and the constant flow of relatives and guests in the house, just adds to the anxiety and the feeling of being irritated in the woman. Sometimes the family members don't realize that the mother, along with her child need some private time alone. Things escalate quickly if the woman and the child live with violent/manipulative family-for these situations the subject describes them as stepping onto emotional time bombs, and they are tensed every moment.

More than three million years of human evolution and the other half of the human population still finds it hard to understand the basic biology of a woman's body and conception<sup>13</sup>This point is proved by the recent ruling on the abortion by the lawmakers of Alabama, Georgia, and Texas. The interesting fact that comes on the surface is that the Governor of Alabama is a woman and she is reportedly ready to sign the 'heartbeat bill'. The elite lawmakers of all these Bible belt states cannot think beyond their religious book. Had they read even the basic books on anatomy or even biology, they would know that there's a difference between a six-week fetus and a 20<sup>th</sup>-week fetus that begins to have the features of a human baby. And the problem is not just with the Christian countries but also with the Muslim countries as well as in a Hindu country like Nepal, which legalized abortion only in 2002. It would be correct to state that all over the world there's a war on women's body by limiting their access to contraceptives, planned pregnancy and even abortion and just reducing them to a passive vessel to carry a fetus to life. All around the world, systematic attempts have been made to snatch away the agency of women and their control over their body. This chapter has made an attempt to revise some of the basic facts about the anatomy of women and try to make sense of all the restrictions put on the choice a woman has. India is a developing country, and yet the law on abortion and the availability of the contraceptives (except for the state of Tamil Nadu) have been quite a relief for women in giving them choice and freedom yet a lot needs to be done.

## **Anatomy of a Female Body**

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<sup>13</sup> (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48275795>  
<https://time.com/5591166/state-abortion-laws-explained/>  
<http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/05/alabama-abortion-law-legal-fight-begins.html>).

So there is more to the debate and narrative of female anatomy than what meets the eye. The dominant ones being, 1) the patriarchal ‘biological female’ anatomy, 2) the political perspective (attempts to control it) and lastly, 3) the social construct, which ultimately defines gender. But here’s an interesting fact that I learnt because I did research for this chapter. Apparently, the name of the Father of Modern Gynaecology is James. Marion Sims and I could not find the mother of gynaecology, which is very ironic and tragic. Now the problem with this father of gynaecology is that he was racist to the extent that he did horrible experiments on black women without anaesthesia. So he is not only the father of modern gynaecology but also the initiator of patriarchal medicines that will be administered to the women for decades. Undoubtedly he gave valuable contributions in perfecting the gynaecological treatment, but his cruelty on his black slaves cannot be overlooked. This chapter was necessary because, in recent years, the debate about body positivity and the need of women to accept their body has taken centre stage. And nothing makes a woman physically more vulnerable the way pregnancy does- the way belly pops out and the difficult hormones that are released into the body. The debate on the anatomy of women and the right of women to her body is important, especially when the developed countries of this earth are bent on making regressive laws restricting the reproductive choices.

In my brief attempt to study this part of the chapter one of the volunteers was interviewed who had worked with Care India (in 2015) in one of the projects in the few small villages of Barabanki goes on to say about her experience, “even today with all the modernity and changes in the law, women are unaware of their bodies and their rights. The villages I have been to, women I met there have very less or not much knowledge about the reproductive choices women have there. Violence is a common occurrence and women there have less and controlled mobility. So when they were told or ‘educated’ about condoms, contraceptives, sterilizations and abortion, the village women were very curious to know more about the reproductive choices available to them. It would be patronizing to say that they were totally naïve or unaware about it- they did know a thing or two, but the major problem was the restrictive mobility and the fear of the family. We as volunteers working there had a hard time bonding up with women there and communicated with them better only after the bond of trust was established. There are still a lot of people in those villages where they firmly believed that a woman should at least give birth to three sons and needless to say a lot of women had to suffer because of this stereotype being strongly upheld by the village folks.”

Now comparing this observation to the small study that was done in 2015 where 30 girls were selected (in the age group of 17-23) and were asked just one question, ‘what did they think about abortion?’, And 27 girls out 30 responded that it was a sin or murder (using the word interchangeably), while the subjects responded by saying that it should be done only when the life of the mother is in danger, while only one subject responded by saying that it should be the choice of the woman concerned. These two small scale studies in the different spectrum of society and class say a lot about the extent of awareness women have about their bodies and the choices they want to have.

**The basics of pregnancy.**

Nutan Pandit in her book, 'Pregnancy- What the Indian woman always wanted to know but was afraid to ask' (chapter 2, 'Your Anatomy') while giving the basics of conceiving and pregnancy goes on to write, "It is important for every woman to understand the anatomy of her body. To do so, a woman should freely feel and examine her body. Do not be shy of your body. Most women are not familiar with the appearance of their sexual organs as compared to the other parts of their body.. It is you. Get familiar with yourself. You are unique in your ability to reproduce. Each month your periods reaffirm your fertility. Your vagina is the opening through which the menstrual flow passes, and through which your baby will be born. It is made up of folds which afford it elasticity. These unfold when the vagina expands during intercourse or childbirth. The uterus is the organ that is going to carry your baby when you get pregnant. It has thick walls and lies between the bladder and the rectum. It may be folded backwards or forwards slightly, in which case it is called retroverted or anteverted respectively. The top part of the uterus has two openings on either side that lead to a fine tube on either side, called fallopian tubes. The other end of the tube is funnel-shaped and leads to the ovaries on either side. The ovaries are two in number and the size of an unshelled almond. The ovaries have two functions. They produce the female sex hormones oestrogen and progesterone. They also produce the ovum or egg which is wafted into the fallopian tube on being released. It is then fertilized by the sperm, which travels from the vagina, into the uterus, and from the uterus to the fallopian tube. The fertilized egg then journeys back to the uterus from the fallopian tube and houses itself in the body of the uterus, where it begins to grow. As the fertilized egg grows, the thick walls of the uterus thin out as it enlarges and balloons up with the pregnancy. In rare instances, the fertilized ovum implants itself not in the wall of the uterus, but in the fallopian tube, and very rarely in the abdominal cavity, on the ovary, or the cervix. Such a pregnancy is know as ectopic pregnancy and surgery is normally required to end it. Signs of ectopic pregnancy are sharp abdominal pain. Pain due to ectopic pregnancy is aggravated by body motion, such as bending over, rising or travelling in a car. Discomfort connected with ectopic pregnancy usually occurs in the first three months of pregnancy.

### **The Development of the Baby**

It can be divided into three trimesters of three months each, in total making nine months

**The first trimester** is basically, one to three months period. By the time three months gets over, the size of the fetus is about 3.5 inches long. The vital organs have begun to be formed but not fully developed. It is in this stage that the heart is formed, the eyes are there, but they are closed.

Also, the sex organs have developed, so it can easily be determined whether it is a boy or a girl. As the baby is not breathing, it does not choke. It gets its oxygen from the mother's bloodstream through the umbilical cord.

**The second trimester** is basically comprised of four to six months. By the time the second trimester ends, the baby is now 14 inches long. It is in the second trimester that the mother begins to feel the movement and kicks in the womb.

At the ends of the fingers and toes, ridges develop, giving the baby a unique identity of fingerprints. The skin begins to grow a coat of fine, downy hair called lanugo, which is shed before or shortly after birth

**The third trimester** is the last three months of the pregnancy. During these three months, the baby gains weight and slowly grows to reach right up to the mother's breastbone. As the fetus becomes large, it can no longer move freely as before, since it gets cramped for space. So now, instead of movements of the fetus, the mother feels its kicks and pokes.

By the end of the seventh month, the fetus' brain matures to be able to cope with breathing and swallowing. Thumb sucking is now resorted to more frequently. If born at this stage, the baby has a 90% chance of survival. By the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> month, the fetus looks quite like what it will at birth. Although the lungs are not yet fully operational, the baby has a 95% chance of surviving if born at this stage.

It is during the last trimester that the fetus' eyes open. The senses undergo their greatest development at this stage. Sometime during the 9<sup>th</sup> month, the fetus generally turns head down in the womb. About two weeks before birth, it descends about two inches, settling in the mother's pelvic bones. This is called, lightening, engagement, fixing, or, dropping of the head. Mild contractions of the muscles of the womb may be felt in the 9<sup>th</sup> month as the womb changes the baby into the head-down position or as the womb prepares its muscles for delivery. Sometimes babies are born feet first. Such babies are called breech babies.

### **Finding out the Pregnancy.**

Dr Miriam Stoppard, in her book, 'Pregnancy and birth handbook' goes on to give some of the basic and very evident physical signs of being pregnant, which goes as follows:

"There are two quite separate aspects to finding out you're pregnant. The first is about confirming your pregnancy; this can be picked up in signs from your body like nausea, having to empty your bladder more often, and dilated veins on the surface of your breasts. The other involves intellectual and emotional acceptance of your pregnancy. The first may be tinged with excitement; the second coloured by feelings of ambivalence. No matter how much you've wanted to be pregnant, you may well have a mixed response to the news that you are. A mixture of positive and negative feelings about the pregnancy is normal. Uppermost in your mind will be your feelings about yourself, and your partner." Moreover today there are many pregnancy testing kit is available in the market and the pregnancy tests can now be done at the privacy of the home. The subjects that were selected for the study of this chapter had used the pregnancy test kits to know the results of their pregnancy.

**“Early signs of pregnancy** for many women is the feeling that they are pregnant—a definite consciousness of pregnancy that I believe has as much to do with the first secretion of pregnancy hormones as anything else. Another early sign is fatigue, although some women feel energized, the majority would confess to feeling tired. Apart from fatigue, missed periods are also a major symptom of pregnancy, which is called amenorrhoea. Morning sickness that is the feeling of

nausea accompanied by vomiting occurs about after four of five weeks of pregnancy, it is one of the major telltale signs of pregnancy. It's caused by the increasing levels of hormones circulating in the blood. Changes in the taste and food cravings are another very noteworthy symptoms of pregnancy.”

### **Dealing With the Dilemma of Abortion and Miscarriage.**

S.G. Kabra, in his book, 'Abortion in India-Myth and Reality' goes on to give relevant definition and the related important facts and terms about it. Here are some of the important points he wrote about abortion-

1. Abortion, criminal abortion, medical termination of pregnancy, foeticide, female foeticide, foetal loss and female foetal loss are frequently used interchangeably creating confusion.
2. Common definitions of Abortions-
  - a) Abortion is the termination of pregnancy by any method (spontaneous or induced) before the foetus is sufficiently developed to survive independently (foetus less than 20 weeks of pregnancy.)
  - b) Another definition is the delivery of the baby/foetus that is less than 500 grams.
  - c) Another (clinical) definition is the expulsion of the product of conceptus, spontaneous or induced, before viability.

Before considering the subject of abortion in detail, one should understand the terminology that is used in this context:

- a) **Conceptus:** Is the product of conception itself.
- b) **Embryo:** Is a conceptus less than 12 weeks old.
- c) **Foetus:** Is the conceptus in the later period of gestation (greater than 12 weeks of pregnancy).
- d) **Viability:** Refers to the chance for survival of a foetus outside the womb. However, it is theoretically viable after 28 weeks and when even if born after this period it may survive with expert neonatal intensive care.
- e) **Miscarriage:** Is the spontaneous expulsion of a foetus before viability. This is also called spontaneous abortion.
- f) **Medical termination of pregnancy (MTP):** Is the termination of pregnancy on medical grounds, and is commonly referred to as induced abortion.

- g) **Foeticide:** Means willfully and illegally causing the death of an unborn conceptus (embryo, foetus or full-grown baby).
- h) **Abortion in India:** It is incorrect to say that causing abortion was illegal in India till the MTP Act came into force. Therapeutic abortion to save the life of the mother was always legal. In India induced abortion or medical termination of pregnancy is permitted under Section 312 of the IPC and the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP Act). Yet, of the 4 to 5 million abortions that take place annually in India, more than two-thirds of them are illegal and performed outside the statutory provisions of the MTP Act.
- i) **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act** was enacted by the Indian Parliament in 1971 and came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1972. The Act was revised in 1975 and amended in 2002. The Act lays down the conditions under which a pregnancy can be terminated, the persons who can perform it and the place where it can be performed. The provisions of the MTP Act are to be implemented, monitored and supervised by the Chief Medical Officer of the district. The MTP Act has enlarged the scope of legal abortion and made safe abortion available to women up to 20 weeks of pregnancy under strict regulations and rules to ensure safety and to prevent its misuse.
- j) **Criminal Abortions and Professional Ethics:** All cases of maternal mortality due to unsafe and unlicensed abortions are cases of double homicide and are required under law (Criminal Procedure Code Sections 39 and 174 read with Indian Penal Code Sections 201, 299, 312 and 314) to be reported to the police.

**Types of Abortions:** Abortion generally evokes an image of 'induced abortion'. Here are the two distinct types of abortion. Abortions can be classified as either of the following:

- a) **Spontaneous:** the process of expulsion of the product of conception (embryo, foetus, baby) occurs by itself (spontaneously).
- b) **Induced:** some form of external intervention or interference (medicinal, physical or surgical) starts and completes the process of expulsion/extraction of the product of conception (embryo, foetus, baby).

### **Types of Spontaneous Abortion**

- a) **Threatened:** When a pregnant woman develops bleeding, but the embryo/foetus is found on examination to be living.
- b) **Inevitable:** When a pregnant woman, vaginal bleeding and the embryo/foetus on examination is found to be already dead.
- c) **Missed abortion:** When the dead products of conception are retained in the uterus for several weeks.

- d) **Complete:** When the products of conception (embryo/foetus, membranes and placenta) are all expelled from the uterus.
- e) **Incomplete:** When part of the product of conception remains inside the uterus (usually placenta), and the woman continues to bleed.
- f) **Septic:** When infection of the uterine cavity occurs during an abortion.

### **Types of Induced Abortion**

- a) **Therapeutic abortion:** When the continuation of pregnancy poses a threat to the life of the mother, and the abortion is done (induced) to save the life of the mother (Section 312 IPC).
- b) **Non-therapeutic abortion:** When the abortion is done for causes other than to save the life of the mother.

### **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971<sup>14</sup>**

[Act 34 of 1971]

An act to provide for the termination of certain pregnancies by registered medical practitioners and for the matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. It extends to the whole of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir. In this act, unless the context otherwise requires, -

“guardian” means a person having the care of the person of a minor or a [mentally ill person];

[“mentally ill person” means a person who is in need of treatment by reason of any mental disorder other than mental retardation;]

“minor” means a person who, under the provisions of the Indian Majority Act, 1875 (9 of 1875), is to be deemed not to have attained his majority;

“registered medical practitioner” means a medical practitioner who possess any recognised medical qualification as defined in clause (h) of Section 2 of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 (102 of 1956), whose name has been entered in a State Medical Register and who has such experience or training in gynaecology and obstetrics as may be prescribes by rules made under this Act.

#### **Place where pregnancy may be terminated-**

No termination of pregnancy shall be made in accordance with this Act at any place other than-

A hospital established or maintained by Government, or

A place for the time being approved for the purpose of this Act by Government or a District Level Committee constituted by that Government with the Chief Medical Officer or District Health Officer as the Chairperson of the said committee:

<sup>14</sup>EBC's, 'The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971', published in 2017.

## **The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Rules, 2003**

**Definitions-**In these rules, unless the context otherwise requires,

1. “Act” means the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 (34 of 1971);
2. “Form” means a form appended to these Rules;
3. “owner” in relation to a place means any person who is the administrative head or otherwise responsible for the working or maintenance of a hospital or place.
4. “Committee” means a committee constituted at the district level

**Explanation:** In the case of termination of early pregnancy up to seven weeks using RU-486 with Misoprostol, the same may be prescribed by a Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP) as defined under clause (d) of Section 2 of the Act and Rule 4 of MTP Rules, at his clinic, provided such a Registered Medical Practitioner has access to a place approved under Section 4 of the MTP Act, 1971 read with MTP Amendment Act, 2002 and Rule 5 of the MTP Rules. For the purpose of access, the RMP should display a certificate to this effect from the owner of the approved place.

**Form of certifying opinion or opinions-** (1) Where one registered medical practitioner forms or not less than two registered medical practitioners form such opinion as is referred to in sub-section (2) of Section 3 or 5, he or she shall certify such opinion in Form 1.

(3) Every registered medical practitioner who terminates any pregnancy shall, within three hours from the termination of the pregnancy certify such termination in Form 1.

**Admission Register not to be open to inspection-**The Admission Register shall be kept in the safe custody of the head of the hospital or owner of the approved place, or by any person authorized by such head or owner and save as otherwise provided in sub-regulation (5) of Regulation 4 shall not be open for inspection by any person except under the authority of law:

Provided that the registered medical practitioner on the application of an employed woman whose pregnancy has been terminated, grant a certificate for the purpose of enabling her to obtain leave for her employer:

**Entries in registers maintained in hospitals or approved place.-**No entry shall be made in any case-sheet, operation theatre register, follow-up card or any other document or register other than the Admission Register maintained at any hospital or approved place.

### **Narrating the trauma and the complication**

When the abortion legislation of the state of Alabama, Georgia and Texas hit the international headlines, it moved the consciousness of women all around the world. The male legislators there are making access to abortion even more difficult and also at the same time, making it severely punishable for those doctors who do abortion. And Georgia's heartbeat bill is even more controversial in the sense that it made provisions where a woman seeking abortion in as early as six weeks of pregnancy will not be able to do so. According to this heartbeat bill, when the

heartbeat of the baby is detectable within the six weeks of pregnancy, and thus a woman cannot abort the child if she (for whatever reason) does not/cannot carry the fetus. Patriarch law makers are trying to understand the reproductive rights of woman as if it's the toughest equation of the maths or physics. Interestingly enough, two weeks before these legislations were international headlines, I had interviewed a subject who sought access to safe abortion and co-incidentally she was six weeks pregnant, and she had access to safe abortion, and now her health is fine. Her answer was simply that it was unplanned, and she already had two children, economically she cannot sustain the third child. And she agrees that she should have been more careful about this. No power on this earth can ever ban abortions; on the contrary, what gets banned is safe abortion- women have always sought the services of abortion. With religious men in the power and trying to govern the bodies of women will ban access to safe abortion, but the back way alleys of unsafe abortion are always there. Women risking their lives to either have a baby or to get rid of the fetus has always been a harsh reality for women because unplanned pregnancy is real, a pregnancy outside marriage is real, pregnancy threatening the life of women is a real phenomenon, abstinence does not work. People without uterus making laws to restrict access to contraception and abortion is like waging war on women for being women. So even though the abortion laws in India have been liberal and more understanding of the conditions of women, yet the anti-abortion cry is still strong owing to the increase in the female foeticide. Female foeticide is a serious problem that needs to be tackled but banning abortion is not the answer. It's such a taboo subject that it took me quite a very long time to seek out those women who have sought out abortion services. Despite all the openness and modernity, people still shy away from this important topic. Which explains why it was difficult to locate subjects who had availed the abortion services. The subjects mentioned below are in the age group of 20-47, who had availed the abortion services due to varying reasons. The subjects were asked only one basic question, and that was, 'Why did you avail the abortion services?'

**Subject 1-** She was interviewed on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2016, and she had to resort to abortion in the year 2013. At that time she was 24 years old and was not married when she discovered that she had conceived. She was six weeks pregnant at the time she sorts out the abortion option. She did not say much about the man involved neither did the question was raised regarding this. Regarding her brief pregnancy, and her face off with the abortion, she says,

"It is quite a scary and overwhelming feeling to be pregnant before marriage, all those taboos and societal restrictions are too much. Getting to the gynae and requesting to get an abortion is a different struggle altogether. I did not want to do it, but it had to be done anyway. A timely approach to abortion did give me a new shot at life, while still maintaining the integrity of my body. Otherwise, I know an incident about a woman who had a really painful abortion because she had gone to an unskilled and illegal establishment. It happened because of some defective injection that was given to her. Hopefully this type of mistake will not be repeated again."

**Subject 2-** She was interviewed on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2014, and it was only two months back that she had to resort to abortion. And according to her, her body was still in the process of recovery, and her menstruations were still untimely, but gradually that was coming around too. She was of the

age of 45 when she had to go through an abortion. She already had three children, and she could not afford the fourth child. Stating her reason to seek an abortion, she goes on to state,

"I already had three adolescents' children, both physically and financially, I could not have been able to afford a fourth child. At first, I approached the same missionary hospital, where I had previously given birth to my three children, expecting that I will get an abortion there, but they turned me down stating their religious beliefs and advised me to carry it to the term. And what would I have done, I ultimately had to resort to the private and more expensive clinic to get the abortion done. You see, at this age, it is a deadly stigma to be pregnant, I already have a complete and fulfilling family, a new addition to the family would have just been a burden. I was around four weeks, three days pregnant, when I had gone to the clinic and got the ultrasound done to know the exact time period of the lump inside. And I have to say this that things have changed, I was heavily relieved to realize that it could be done medically, without any big, painful machines going inside me. The doctor gave me two medicines in two doses over a period of two days, and after the last dose, I started bleeding within an hour or two, and the lump came out. Be it the decision to abort or to have that child was an equally harrowing and a tough decision. And amidst all this, I had the support of my husband who was present in every step of the procedure. Although the same understanding could not have been expected from other family members. Contrary to the perception of the people, this is not one bit a pleasant experience. But what is gone is gone, and I feel very light now."

**Subject 3-** This subject was interviewed on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015, and she was 32 years old when she sought abortion in the year 2011. Regarding her pregnancy experience, she says that,

"I was already breastfeeding my few months old daughter when I realized that I was pregnant again and rushed to the gynae and explained her the entire situation. It was beyond my capacity to bring up a toddler and also, at the same time, manage my pregnancy. So even though I tried to tackle the situation as fast as I could, yet the fetus grew up to be seven weeks old. This was scarier than the first time pregnancy. Because post-pregnancy, I was suffering from mental health issues, and adding to it this second unplanned pregnancy just added to the anxiety. As it is taking care of a baby takes a toll on me, and going through an abortion, added to the woes. I feel very light and relieved now".

**Subject 4-** A couple was interviewed in 2017, and they had together decided to get an abortion because the fetus was diagnosed with a serious chromosomal defect. The decision to plunge into the later stage of abortion was bound to be chaotic. Regarding this decision, the subject says that "at that time, this seemed to be one viable solution. Painful and traumatic yet necessary. We were planning on welcoming our second child when this news about chromosomal defect came through."

**Subject 5-** This subject was a rape victim. I Was able to interview her through a third person. Her mother simply said, "She did not want the child of her rapist inside of her."

**Subject 6-** Of all the responses from the subjects, this was very accurate and to the point. In reference to her abortion of five weeks, she says, "Don't want children ever. They are irritating and always crying. This was unplanned, and hopefully, this will be the last."

## **A brief discussion of the Post Partum Depression**

“One of the attractions of motherhood is its normative quality. Motherhood is an expected and normal role for all women . To become a mother is to do what women and those around them expect and want them to do. It is to be the same as other women and not stand out as different.. The mandate of motherhood, as it has been called, means that women opt out of motherhood rather than opting into it.”

(Woollett,1987)

Paula Nicolson in her work, ‘Post-Natal Depression-Psychology, Science and the Transition to Motherhood’, goes on to write, “Patterns of fertility and the decision to become a mother have a complicated connection with women's lives overall. Better educated, middle-class women, appear to have ensured greater control over when, if, and how many children they have than have those women from less privileged backgrounds.

Further, control over fertility means more scope for education and employment for women, which in turn provides opportunities for independence and autonomy. However, what women do and social beliefs about what women should do are sometimes at odds with each other. Motherhood and womanhood stand in a complex and contradictory relationship, despite the fact that this relationship appears to be changing”.

Yet despite all the choices available to the women, they still work towards having a holistic life and this plan also involves having a child as well. Despite all the contentions and hurdles motherhood poses, it is still a dominant part of a woman’s identity, “While motherhood is still central to women’s identity, recent demographic changes appear to suggest that motherhood alone no longer dictates the pattern of women’s lives, and may not be such a popular choice for women as it once was” (Church and Sommerfield, 1995).

Postpartum or postnatal depression often engulfs women after the child is born. To be very precise, postpartum depression is the intense feeling of emptiness and incompetents that women feel strongly. Also in the present times having a child cuts off a woman from her career growth (this may not hold true for some exceptional cases). Postpartum depression can especially be severe if the woman in question has a record of mental health issues or has previously suffered from depression. In the Indian context, this feeling of anxiety and chaos can take a completely different form owing to the fact that there are a lot of rituals related to the birth of the child and her mother, celebrating motherhood-which means a constant flow of relatives and neighbors and friends coming and going. Also, a lot of people don't give importance to the well being of the mental health of women, which oftentimes leaves the postpartum depression untreated. Also, the fact that for a long time it was believed that motherhood is the ultimate aim of being a woman and thus motherhood should come naturally to a woman, and this makes it even more difficult to

explain the enormity of the postpartum depression. Deciding to be a mother comes with a lot of sacrifices which a woman has to do, and almost always have to put their careers, bodies and lives at stake. So much precious things of life at stake that depression is bound to happen. If that much sacrifices weren't enough, a baby needs constant attention and care for the next six or seven years. It is only recently that postpartum depression has been recognized and talked about, and there is an attempt to come to a solution.

Some of the symptoms of postpartum depression are mentioned below and these symptoms were drawn from the experience and narration of the subjects that were selected for the study on post partum depression.

1. A strong feeling of emptiness, sadness, and being an incompetent person and a constant feeling of depression.
2. Always worried about something and a constant urge to cry without much reason.
3. Consistent loss of weight and decrease in the appetite which results in the loss of energy and enthusiasm about anything.
4. There is a decreased level of concentration on the part of the woman suffering from postpartum depression, and the woman is question sometimes finds it hard to come at a decision.
5. Often times, there is a feeling of guilt among woman because they think that they are not able to properly take care of the child as they had earlier intended to do.
6. And then there is the feeling of 'baby blues' among the women. Baby blues refers to the mood swings that women experience a day or two after the birth of the child. They may feel happy one moment, and the next moment they will start feeling sad.
7. There are major behavioral and lifestyle changes in the lives of the couple, especially the mother after the child is born. Most importantly, the feeding and sleeping time of the baby also disturbs the sleeping schedule of the mother.
8. The woman in question starts losing interest in things and people surrounding her and sometimes she even loses interest in taking care of herself. This is mostly owing to the fact that taking care of the baby exhausts her and leaves less energy for other creative works.
9. In a lot of cases, the self-confidence and self-esteem of the woman come down; this has a lot to do with the changes in the physical appearance after the childbirth. Also, less concentration and indecisiveness also leads to low self-esteem.
10. Also, there is this feeling of being overwhelmed by all the sudden surge of emotions and responsibilities that surround a woman. More often than not, the woman finds it hard to cope with so much changes around her.

<sup>15</sup>The above-mentioned symptoms of postpartum depression were determined after interviewing the subjects who had recently given birth to their children. Adding to the typical symptoms of the depression and postpartum depression, the constant high expectations of family and the extended

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<sup>15</sup>Nine more subjects were interviewed on the issue of postpartum depression, but they had almost the same response and answers on the question of postpartum depression.

family is something that bothered almost all the subjects that I interacted with regarding this issue of postpartum depression. Also, the constant blaming to the mother if anything lapses in the care of the newborn baby. Often in a lot of cases, even after the delivery, the major task of taking care of the newborn child falls on the mother (despite help from the other members of the society.) This overwhelming sense of 'mother-blaming' and too many responsibilities suddenly on the mother can be a crushing feeling.

**Subject 1:** This subject was interviewed in May of the year 2017, she had given birth to a baby boy three months back, and this is her response when asked about it. Also, she is a working woman who works at a big IT firm in Lucknow.

“This is not what I imagined motherhood to be. Getting a child is a blessing and everything, but all the responsibilities that come with it are sometimes too much. I always wanted to be a mother, but motherhood has really impacted my life and career. And there is this feeling of being an incompetent mother and a daughter-in-law. I feel really guilty all day, leaving my child alone at home and going to work. This is the period where I used up my leaves to take care of my child. But hopefully, this time too shall pass away. Although my mother-in-law and husband do take care of the child, they often complain about me being an ignoring mother and giving all the attention and effort to the office, which is not true. I try my best to cope but often lack in some important duties towards both being a mother as well as career-oriented women.”

**Subject 2:** This subject was interviewed in July 2017, and five months back, she had given birth to her second child (a girl child). Her first child (a boy ) was four years old, still, a toddler that needed a lot of attention. Regarding her experience, after the birth of the child, she says,

"It is quite a blessing and a good luck to have two healthy children. But the responsibilities and the sleeplessness just increased. Looking after both of them exhaust me so much that I barely have time or energy to do anything else. Adding to that even after five months, the guests are still coming to bless and see the baby. It is chaotic oftentimes-looking after both the children, guests and the family members. I feel tired and moody and get easily irritated at small things or work. I was once a skilled and reputed English teacher in a private school, but after the birth of my son, I had to quit it and stay at home and look after the family and my child. Even though the family feels complete with both these kids, but I had to pay a heavy price for it. But sacrifices are a big part of being a mother I guess..."

**Subject 3:** This subject was interviewed in September 2017. At the time when she was interviewed, ten months back, she had given birth to her third child (a son). The subject lives in a joint family, and she is also a homemaker, taking care and nurturing the family and the children. Regarding her experience and emotions post the birth of her third son, she says,

"With three sons playing in my backyard what more could I have asked for more than anything else, my in-laws are very happy and overwhelmed with three grandsons, although they wanted a girl the third time. The entire family is happy and celebrating the completeness of the family, but something very odd is bothering me. I don't feel happy to the extent to which I want to. This confusing feeling engulfed me in the previous two pregnancies as well. The responsibility to

look after three over enthusiastic boys are stress at another level. They are still kids and always up to something, and because of that, I am always anxious and panicked lest they hurt themselves. Adding to that the constant taunts of my mother-in-law always makes me feel incompetent. But I am trying to cope up. Hopefully, this feeling of hopelessness and anxiety goes away soon."

Several other subjects were also interviewed regarding the phenomenon of post partum depression, but out of 40 subjects, 35 subjects straight away denied feeling any sort of depression because of their baby, although they did reported to being stressed out because of the constant workload that they had to face. The remaining five subjects did open up about them feeling low but not in a detailed way. Post Partum Depression has always been there present, it is only in the recent times that it has been recognized and defined. Women in the modern era trying hard to have the best of both worlds, battling the depression as well that comes post the birth of the baby.

## **The Big Debate on the Body Autonomy of Woman.**

"You're pro-life until your wife is told by the doctor that her pregnancy is non-viable, her baby has no kidneys or a brain, and will most likely die before birth. You get to watch the fallout of her having to tell family, friends, co-workers, over and over what is going to happen when they ask her when she's due.

You're pro-life until your wife has a partial miscarriage, and doctors refuse to remove the rest of the fetus citing the new abortion laws. Your wife dies of septic. You get to arrange her funeral.

You're pro-life until your daughter is raped, and you're forced to watch her suffer through her pregnancy, only to have her die in a failed attempt to abort at home.

These are all real events that happened to someone, somewhere in the world. I'm pro-choice, my mind will never change on the matter, a life that already exists will always prioritize life that doesn't exist 'yet'. No, it shouldn't be used as birth control, no it's not murder, and the government should never touch something such as this, and what the states are doing is disgusting."<sup>16</sup>

The above-said statement is something that is always present in the subconscious mind of all women irrespective of nationality, class, religion or political beliefs. It would not be wrong to say that woman do put their lives at risk when they give birth to their child. In a brief conversation with another subject, she said how she almost died after the birth of her first child and that how she was in a coma for three days and in a critical situation. Regarding her experience, she goes on to say that, "After the birth of my first child, my entire family was stressed out, because the doctors said that I was in a coma, and the condition was critical. I was in a coma, and my newborn son was without his mother, and you know how mother's milk is so

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<sup>16</sup>(This rant was written by Monte Hawkins on Facebook, and it was shared on Instagram by the Feministstalk page. This rant was written after the Georgia and Alabama abortion verdict and making it more strict and more difficult both for the women desperately seeking an abortion and also for the doctors as well.)

much important for the newborn child. It was the three most difficult days for my family. Seldom people come out of the coma alive, and I was the lucky one. It is because of this incident that I decided not to have any more kids after this. I always wanted at least two children, and my son also oftentimes feels the need to have a sibling, but the risk is too high. Who will look after my son if something happens to me? To be honest, I was not fully prepared for my first pregnancy as well when it happened, I was physically weak, and later it showed when the delivery was done. Because of this falling into coma incident, I was again pregnant one and half years later and this time I had to abort it. Our ancestors were right when they said that it is difficult being a woman, and a lot of blame goes to our body and its capacity to reproduce.”

The choice to a woman to abort, produce or not produce offspring has always been a matter of sensitivity both culturally as well as in the societal aspect. The choice for one woman is coercion for another- some women may opt for many pregnancies while some women opt not to have children-but either ways they are bound to face stereotyping and are often judged in the society. Abortion and reproduction are the two extremes of the spectrum of motherhood. Abortion laws in some of the religious countries are still an ideological threat to the abortion laws of those countries which are liberal, or where the laws are relaxed. Womanhood is often haunted by the dilemma of the Motherhood-irrespective of the feminist or non feminist view of the womanhood and their rights; motherhood is a complex web in its own way. Women are either resisting unplanned pregnancy, or trying desperately to conceive, or trying very hard to locate a safe abortion space or trying to locate a safe and economic birthing space. In the context of India, despite all the modernity and changes in the social outlook towards women and motherhood, a lot still needs to be done to change the narrative.

Fertility and infertility in women are still a major problematic issue in this country despite the growing population. Doing an in-depth study of this issue of reproduction, I came across a woman who had a weak cervix, and in her desire to have a child, she had to endure back to back three miscarriages. The woman in question hailed from a financially sound family and had access to modern medicine and therapy but could never complete any of her pregnancies to term. Co-incidentally a few days after interacting with her I came across a female beggar who had one child in her arms, and she was around six to seven months pregnant. A woman on the margins of the society who cannot sustain herself will have two kids in a month or two while on the other hand a woman (like a lot of other women) who lives in the mainstream society, has economically sane family is struggling with medical complication and is not able to carry out her pregnancy after a first few weeks. Sometimes all the modern technology and money fail to alter the course of nature.

The debate about the autonomy of women over their bodies is not a new one; it has always been there, since the inception of the patriarchy. But the right of the woman to her body is not just in the context of sexual violations but also against forced and unplanned pregnancy as well. Invasive medical procedures to treat infertility and to enable the fertilization and gradually to conceive is something which is physically, emotionally and financially a demanding process. Regarding the infertility market, Pinki Virani in the foreword of her work, ‘Politics of the Womb-The Perils of IVF, Surrogacy & Modified Babies’ writes, “A riot, in very slow motion, is

being engineered on the woman inside her body. In vitro fertilization is birthing a baby bazaar catalysed by medical science and empowered, ironically, by those at their weakest-the women-who every culture, be it in the developed or developing world presses into producing. And this, interestingly, is where some world religions have begun parting with science. If the remaining embryos are not used, religion questions that which Ivf is keen on campaigning-that they are the ones creating life, the human cells being the beginning of a baby in that petri dish. Religion ignores their take on creationism, but it swears by that speck of all specks in a tiny of the tiniest cell which starts to become an embryo when egg and sperm successfully mate. More often than for religion's comfort [the woman's discomfort is of consequence only to other women and a few good men] Ivf also puts in more than one, or two, or three embryos. For desperate-for-pregnancy women, the world over, on every continent which permits unchecked, aggressive Ivf, multiple embryos being manufactured in a lab is not the first thing on their minds. It need not be a top-of-line concern when compared with the havoc being wrought within their bodies, not just by the Ivf process itself but also because of its outcomes. What Mrs Brown went through to produce her daughter as the world's first IVF baby in 1978, in contrast, was a picnic. IVF was pioneered by British doctors Patrick Steptoe and Robert Edwards, though not in a test tube."

The Ivf treatment to cure infertility takes its toll not only physically on the woman but also disturbs the hormones in her body. Regarding this Ivf treatment, a subject and her family were interviewed who had come all the way from Gorakhpur to seek infertility treatment for her daughter in law and had also requested for a male son. They belonged to financially well off family. When I had the chance to talk to daughter in law as well, she seemed quite lost and confused about everything. She was interviewed two days after her ovum was collected to be tested and sampled. She looked fatigued and tired; only three questions were asked to her,

"What do you think about the whole process? And do you as well desire a child like they do? Also, what is the condition of your health?" To all of these questions, she replied, "I had been trying to conceive since the past three years but could not. Everyone, including me, desired a child in the family. The purpose of marriage is to beget a child. I very desperately hope that this treatment works and leads to a successful pregnancy. My in-laws are hoping for a son, but I am fine with daughter as well. My entire family has been restless these past years since I was not able to conceive-this treatment is our very strong hope. Although my husband and my family did some investigation about this IVF center and got positive reviews about it. And as for the health, it feels heavy inside me, feels like weakness and fainting. The doctor here says that if the ovum does not turn out to be healthy, they will take another sample to examine it. However, I do hope that it does not come to that and everything turns out to be fine. As of now, I can't wait to start my pregnancy cycle."

IVF is a choice for a lot of barren couples desiring a child in their life, but it comes at the cost of the health of women. Again regarding the health perils of women seeking fertility treatment Pinki Virani in her book, 'Politics of the Womb- The Perils of IVF, Surrogacy & Modified Babies', writes down, "The creation and promotion of 'female sexual dysfunction' as a textbook case of disease mongering by pharma and others in the 'medicalization industry'. She adds, 'The original definition of disease-mongering is trying to convince essentially well people that they

are sick, or slightly sick people that they are very ill. Sexual life has become vulnerable to disease-mongering for two main reasons. First, a long history of control of sexual expression created reservoirs of shame and ignorance that make it difficult for many people to understand sexual satisfaction or cope with sexual problems in rational ways."

Apart from the subject mentioned above, I had interactions with more patients in one of the prominent infertility treatment centre in Ashiyana, Lucknow, eleven subjects were interacted with, they narrated a similar tale and health effects and the over the top pressure from the family to have child, and thus they were there to seek treatment and conceive (be it by natural ways or be it by artificial insemination.)

Whatever interactions I had with all these female subjects there, they all confessed to being under a lot of family pressure to have a child. Things can get difficult if the couple is married for several years and they don't have a child, that's when the family pressure boils down on the couple. In one of the major clinics of Lucknow, a junior intern was briefly interviewed about the whole thing of infertility to which he replied, "To tell you the truth, more than female infertility, male infertility is the problem. And when the woman is not able to conceive, everyone assumes that she is infertile, but when the tests are run, the reports shocked everyone. I have come across quite a lot of women who started crying after hearing the report that they were fertile and quite fine. Actually, the thing is that these women were not only under immense pressure but were also harassed by the family because they assumed that she was infertile or barren. In our society, it is promptly assumed that men cannot be infertile, which is a very false and misleading assumption." Those eleven subjects who were interviewed regarding this, their reports surprised their family members. Out of those women who were tested, reports of the seven women were negative on the infertility scale. So the whole debate about fertility and infertility at the end of the discussion gets twisted and complicated.

Giving birth to a child is a difficult and painful process, even if it is an institutional delivery. In the context of India, maternal health status is a topic of heated debate and needless to say that despite a wide and liberal abortion law and despite the government floating several policies and plans for the betterment and improvement in the maternal health status of women in the country, desirable results are yet to come. However, on the brighter side, the maternal mortality rate has come down in India by 22% mainly owing to more and more institutional deliveries and also awareness among people about some of the basic things. With time we as a nation will catch up on the necessary improvements that are desired, but apart from that it also needs to be ensured that no women are forced into or out of her pregnancy and in the long run, India's abortion law should not go regressive.

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## Chapter 6

### **An Attempt at Conclusion...**

“The myth of overpopulation is destructive because it prevents constructive thinking and action on reproductive issues. Instead of clarifying our understanding of these issues, it obfuscates our vision and limits our ability to see the real problems and find workable solutions. Worst of all it breeds racism and turns women’s bodies into a political battlefield. It is a philosophy based on fear, not on understanding.”

-Betsy Hartmann (1987)

Before we go any further into the intricacies of Nationalism and how it gained a center stage in the current political scenario, it is important to look back on the independence struggle and reformist agitations that were taking place on Indian soil. With the intervention and leadership of Gandhi, it enabled more mobility of women coming out to protest against the British Rule and contribute to the freedom struggle of the country as mothers, daughters, wives and sisters. The imagery of ‘our motherland held captive by the white supremists’ reiterated to move the

consciousness of people and lots of genuine attempts were made to include in the nation's struggle, but within the fold of honour and patriarchy. Because as women they have duty towards their country as potential mothers, who would give healthy boys to the nation for its growth.

Sanjam Ahluwalia (2008) writes, "Feminist demand for wider dissemination of contraceptive information in colonial India was intertwined with other strands of thoughts, such as eugenics, Malthusianism, nationalism, and bourgeois ideals of domesticity. The demand for birth control displayed at once the underlying hegemonic and oppositional thinking among Indian feminists, allowing us to recognize that this politics was divided against itself. In charting feminist agency, it is important not to elude or bracket off questions of agency when Indian middle-class, upper caste women leaders act as accomplices of bourgeois nationalist politics. In that instance, these self appointed women leaders extended the vigilant reach of middle-class nationalism into the domestic sphere as much as they resist it. Middle class women projected themselves as leaders and spokespersons for Indian womanhood, carefully integrating within the images of "Swaraj," images of the new modern Indian woman. Elite Indian women had access to the media through the numerous women's journals such as *Stri-Darpan*, *Stri-Dharma*, and *Roshni*. Middle-class feminist politics needs to be understood as much as a quest for power as it was a battle for rights. Since organized feminism emerged in the context of Indian Nationalism, the feminist leaders during the 1930s and 1940s were intermeshed with middle class politics of building a nation-state. Despite disagreeing with Gandhian politics at times, these women were careful never to advocate a complete break from mainstream politics. They were careful not to represent their gender concerns as overriding national concerns. The relationship between feminism and nationalism was at best brittle and unresolved. Middle-class women leaders anxious to reiterate the significance of national consciousness in shaping feminism while also asserting that feminism worked as a catalyst for national progress."

In the recent times as well debate surrounding the issues such as viewing and upholding the idea of nation as a mother, mother cow, and religious 'political correctness and incorrectness', the most recent being upholding the honor of 'Mata Padmavati' and lastly the rhetorics of the honor of Bharat Mata. Sumit Sarkar (2004), discussed in depth the impact of nationalist movement on the identity of women and how there were comparisons between the homely domestic women and the women who ventures outside to do her work.

Partha Chatterjee's very well known work about the 'nationalist resolution of the women's question' is quite in agreement to what had been quoted above of Sumit Sarkar. He starts his argument by assuming that there is a 'sudden disappearance' of those subjects that concerns women 'from the agendas of public debate from towards the close of the nineteenth century', he further explains the exclusion of 'women's question' from the domain of public discourse and the nationalist struggle for freedom. There were a lot of major changes that took place in the daily lives of women especially the middle class women who had taken part in the nation's struggle for freedom. Also within this time period a dominant ideology emerged up about the contrast between the ghar and bahir women, and this stark difference later on started and also developed important differences that highlighted the approach of Indian and Western women's movements for the independence and also for their rights. In regard to the Indian scenario,

Chatterjee states that almost all the changes took place inside the four walls of homes and not outside in the political field. The legal reforms which provided marriage rights, property rights, and the right to vote came into existence only after the independence had been gained.

Not to mention the classical clichéd attempt to compare the ‘impure and modern’ western women and the ‘pure and obedient’ Indian women, who now have come under the influence of westernization and are forgetting their ‘Indian culture’. The great Indian Women, submissive to her husband and a factory of children production, who does all her household chores despite their physical or emotional circumstances. Comparing the women from the two parts of the world, Rabindranath Tagore in his work *Nababarsha* (1902)<sup>17</sup> writes, “In Europe a band of modern women feel ashamed even of being women. They are embarrassed about giving birth and serving their husband and children.... Sweeping floors, bringing in water, grinding spices, serving food to relatives and guests and eating only afterwards- in Europe all this is considered oppressive and shameful, but for us it indicates the high status of the grihlakshmi [bounteous goddess of the home], their sanctity, the respect that is shown towards them...the more women look upon even husbands without any striking qualities as divine, the more they are invested with purity and true beauty...Europe claims that all human being have the right to have or become everything. But in reality everyone doesn’t have the same right.” And this stereotyped role is something which a lot of people take seriously even today.

Even in the current political situation, motherhood is very much a part of political and cultural debate, the dangerous concept of honor goes along with it. It is a matter of constant discussions even in the western part of the world, which has several laws and hurdles to have access to contraception, abortion and a safe institutional delivery and care, it’s a ferocious debate between pro-lifers and abortion activists. Doing a deep research into this, one can clearly see the connection between honor, sometimes honor killings, a woman’s body and national pride are intricately related realities in the Indian Sub Continent. And this cultural baggage is something which people from this side of the world often take with themselves (sometimes through out their life) even when they are a student of science or travelling abroad to another country. It later poses a huge problem in the adjustment and integration into the western society and ‘it’s free thinking atmosphere’. Carrying the cultural baggage and adjusting in a totally different environment is not just an intra national issue but also an issue within the country itself. The heart wrenching cases of honor killings and how children (especially the girls) are betrayed by their own parents. It’s even hard to understand when the mother turns against their own children for the sake of honor, pride and culture. Doing deep research into the concepts and social perception of motherhood, I stumbled upon a lot of documentaries about honor killings not only in Indian subcontinent but also in the Indian Diaspora settled abroad, and how often times the patriarchal women (often the mother) are heavily responsible for executing the murders for the sake of family honor. Christopher Hitchens was right when he said that religion is evil and a poison. So poisonous that it corrupts even the maternal love and care of a mother. Religion and toxic patriarchy along with the aid and upgradation of technological capitalist is evil and regressive for the society. The way religion has used technology to put forth their agenda is

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<sup>17</sup>which was recited at Shantinikatan on the occasion of Bengali New Year in 1902

worrisome, and often times women are the first casualty in the religious regression, and it often starts with cloth appropriation and preaching on the benefits of prayers, and this outlook needs to be checked.

**The ‘Phenomenon of Illegitimate Benefactors’:** The ‘Phenomenon of Illegitimate’ benefactors of science, technology and modernity. That part of human race which does not contribute anything substantial to the science and modernity or for the betterment of society, yet they enjoy the fruits of modern inventions and technology. On the contrary, their religious and orthodox ostrich beliefs not only threaten the peaceful evolution and modernization of the nation but also they take the society a few steps backwards. When religion failed to defeat science and rationality, it tried to infuse itself into science. The most lethal myth often justified is that religion and science are the two side of the same coin, and that how some of the religious practices are actually scientific and how each and every religion claim this (often with ‘proven facts’ and manipulated historical facts). It is Irony when religious leaders (for whatever maybe the religion), try to defend even the evil aspect of religion using science. I got this idea of ‘Illegitimate Benefactors’ one evening when I was watching documentaries on honor killing and how the families especially from the middle east who were settled in Europe and how these families from Middle East and South Asian take the concept of honor seriously, who take great steps to ensure that if the ‘honor’ has been compromised it must be restored even if it comes at the cost of killing their own family members. In one of the documentary about honor killing, the parents of the girl’s used every aspect of technology they could to track down their daughter and kill her!<sup>18</sup>

In the post modern society the new innovations everyday in the smart phone, and cheap smart phone in the hands of almost every person has turned out to be quite baffling, the cheap provision of internet services in the ‘smart phones’ especially the feature of camera and video recording in the contemporary times. This phenomenon holds true not only in the context of India but also at the global scale. The major problem in the post modern society is cheap ‘smart phone’ in the hands of common stupid masses, who cannot tell when to stop recording and start acting. While there is a revolution in the communication industry, but at the same time the human brains did not upgrade to that level.

The traditional forces that have sustained these benefactors are, 1) Religion, and 2) Family. The post modern forces that have supported it are, 1) Schools and the 2) Mainstream Media. The four important forces that have constantly supported and sustained these ‘benefactors’ (for many centuries) are 1) Patriarchal Toxic Proud Women, 2) Biased Patriarchal Writers (they can be further categorized into Sexist and Nationalist writers), 3) Unemployment, and 4) Rich Elites. One prominent example of this would be the way child marriage is still a struggle to remove even in developed countries. This concept will have it mentioned only once in the thesis, because it’s not that much central to the theme of my thesis topic. I will later develop this concept more and might write a paper on it.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qn-VhFHkUoY>

Had it not been for the conservative forces all over the world, we would have been in more advanced age. Now it is quite complicated to define or decide as to who exactly fits the definition of, 'Illegitimate Benefactors'. But religion and their advocates have done more harm than good especially undermining the growth of rational and scientific temper. In this scientific age as well, we have a large amount of people who believe in the theory of flat earth. Despite all the technologies, changes and 'modernisation', a lot of people have chosen not to be updated on the change and empathy level, rather there is a selective acceptance of modernization and change. 'Selective acceptance of Modernization', one prime example is the rampant misuse of amniocentesis to know the sex of the child (and if it is a female fetus, it is aborted). The problem with science education (and this is a severe problem even in developed countries), is that the theories and mathematical equations are taught but somehow, the rationality part is left out. So the science (physics, chemistry and biology) are taught only to make doctors and engineers out of students, at the end of the day things just get broken down to the fact that science education is provided only to get a job in MNC or be recruited in a corporate fancy hospital as a doctor. The classic school level science did not do much to challenge the power of religion or to fuel up the energy of scientific inquiry, or to broaden the horizon of students.

So even though there are three parts of science (Physics, Chemistry and Biology with their sub parts), in the 'post modern era' it can again be classified into threeparts. Firstly science can be broadly put into the category of classical science, which includes the mainstream theories and the 'school level jargons of science' which the students are made to mug up and remember. This tendency often carries up in the hierarchy of academics right into the college and university levels. There is this constant emphasis on mugging up everything and still in the long run, the brain fails to retain the true purpose of science.

The second category of science is the 'science of convenience' which in my words has enabled and advanced the comforts and ease of human race (for those who can afford it, the promise of glittering capitalism) but also at the same time it has caused a lot of chaos (has enabled wars, riots, and manipulative political campaigns and win). This aspect of science of convenience includes inventions, innovations and improvement on the existing innovations or in modern times, the term used is 'software update', both metaphorically and in the sense of smart phones and devices and the new improvements that take place every day. The science of convenience is something which often fits true on a mass hysteria scale for instance in India millions of goddesses are worshipped and yet the statistics on the gender induced violence is appalling, a country like Iran is a nuclear power and the moral police there still enforce the hijab laws and other modesty laws with all the force they can, both USA and Australia are developed countries of first order yet both these countries have a harrowing number of domestic violence cases, and classic example of rich and powerful Saudi Arabia still finding it hard to get rid of gender biased laws, similarly the regressive abortions laws in some of the developed catholic religion based countries. The science of convenience can further be subdivided into three parts, first is, 'The Corporate Science', the second is, 'The Selective Acceptance of Science', and the third part is the 'Rebel Science'

As the name, 'The Corporate Science' suggests, that whatever new 'inventions' and 'innovations' are made, it is made for the market (it is made for the profits). The profits generated from these sales not only revolutionized the IT sector (and other sectors as well) but also led to the dawn of innovations in the Artificial Intelligence sector. A constant improvement and a major market for cell phones is one of the many impacts we can see of the corporate science. The revolution in communication which has been enabled by the internet and cell phones (like any other aspect of science and consumerism) comes with its own sets of advantages and disadvantages. But the more surprising part is the merging of corporate science with religion, orthodox culture and media. It is this part of science that enabled and strengthened the roots of patriarchy and religion. All those fancy markets outside big and famous mosques and temples, it would be more correct to state that with the passing of time, and science gaining more acceptance in the society, religion re-invented and repackaged itself. And thus we see a huge market campaign around festival times, telling about the greatness of gods, the holiday packages to sacred places for pilgrimage, economical flight tickets. And classic case of stating that religion has a scientific angle and that how some aspects of religion even backed by showing that it is 'science approved.' A very valid and a very tragic global phenomenon that proves my point right is the practice of child genital mutilation for religious purpose and how there are medical doctors trained for this task. When religious leaders use science to promote their notions of 'defective morality', a godman comes to a congregation in his secure car, gets to the stage takes hold of mice and goes on to make controversial statements that like how women today are corrupted and are under the influence of western culture, and that how they should produce more than four or five children so that their religion can be saved. In the second stage of controversy this statement will get played and debated in each and every news channel via satellites, and thus using the inventions of science to undermine rationality and critical thinking. Zero contribution to science yet enjoying its benefits and in the process of doing so they also undermine the progress done by society (if they are in a powerful position and talk like this.)

The second part, 'The Selective Acceptance of Science' - Human beings and followers of religious rules (that blocks our rational thinking part of the brain), accept science in bits and pieces. The moment it begins to threaten religion and culture part, it is shut out from the society and often times this shutting down of 'true science' comes with its own set of violence and human massacres. When in 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1600 Giordano Bruno was charged with heresy and was burned alive by the catholic church at the stakes, his fault being his discoveries of cosmology that stars are actually distant suns, and that these suns could have a solar system of their own. Giordano Bruno was not the only rational thinker sacrificed at the altar of religion, the names list just goes on. This tendency of selective acceptance of science is something which can be easily spotted even among the educated people, irrespective of caste, class or ethnicity.

The selective acceptance of science is something that can be witnessed effortlessly, the prime examples which can be put forth are the severe epidemic of honor based violence and deaths in the South Asian communities abroad, practicing caste based discriminations even after their education of being a doctor, engineer, or those who qualified for administrative service but the cultural brainwashing does not go away so easily. But also at the same time they enjoy the

fruits of modern medicine, modern transport and infrastructure and society, but the rational aspect of science is discarded. This is something which is not just limited to Lucknow or India or even South Asia. A huge time period between 1600 and 2019, and religion still continues to have its grip over us.

The third part is ‘The Rebel Science’ this part of science is really unique in the sense that it observes and questions everything and sometimes even rebels. This part of classification not only includes exceptional and out of the box thinkers and scientists like Albert Einstein, Nikola Tesla, Aryabhata, Madam Curie, the most recent scientist being Stephen Hawking, and those women scientists involved in the ISRO’s mission to Mars, but also all the big and small discoveries that were made by known and unknown people. The Cosmological discoveries and the theory of evolution are two very important chapters in the development of science and also for the development of reluctant human race. When Richard Dawkins came face to face with the head of that Leicester Madarssa, Dawkins states that learning about the theory of evolution is something that is important in the life of a scientist<sup>19</sup>. The discovery of fire and the invention of wheels were revolution in the history of human kind inventions, the two very important base on which the structure and superstructure of human civilization exists. But the Theory of Evolution and the truths and accurate calculations of cosmology was a horrific and revolutionary chapters in their own way. The rationality in science part also includes the empathy for fellow human beings and it is in this part of the science classification that concepts of social justice and gender justice seeps in. Because the amount of gender induced violence and discrimination which women have to deal with especially all the hush-hush and rituals surrounding the menstruation, age of marriage, consent, pregnancy and child birth. Science and rationality should be involved in the matters of the anatomy of a lactating woman, and not religion. When religion gets involved, women are the first casualties, they start getting killed even if they are suffering from curable disease. The theory of evolution and the cosmological discoveries were ample proof that there is no god and that this universe is something that is not made by him. It was something that paved the way for less interference and less control by the bigoted religious forces not only in the matters of women’s anatomy but also in the other aspects of the lives of human beings. To ensure more growth of scientific temper and mind, school should have less and less of religion and more and more of science and scientific theories which should be taught in an interesting way by the teachers concerned. And if possible the religious schools and institutions should not be taken seriously at all. Because not only have they been known to undermine the scientific progress but there are several reports from all around the world where reports have surfaced that how children are punished and sexually exploited in these religious institutions (be it the churches, or the madarssa or the ashram schools). Because when it comes to exploiting children, every religion on this planet give each other tough competition.

## **A thought on the Padmavat Controversy**

The recent controversy surrounding the film ‘Padmavat’ rigorously disturbed the hornet’s nest, and brought into limelight the intricate debate surrounding honour, *womanhood*, the ‘lustful

<sup>19</sup>[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbQv-YSA\\_rl&t=74s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbQv-YSA_rl&t=74s)

invaders' and the keepers of culture. Four women at the four corners of this film's debate, First Rani Padmini and her act of valor in jumping into the fire when the Khiljis were at the door, Second a silent Vasundhara Raje Scindia who did not take stern action against the '*Keepers of Culture*' who created a chaos all over Rajasthan, Third Deepika Padukone who portrayed the role of Rani Padmini, she did a ghoomar song which enraged the right wing so much so that there was a bounty on the nose of Deepika, and fourth woman is Swara Bhaskar who in her open letter to Sanjay Leela Bhansali and the message it sends across to the Indian audience and how the film 'reduced the women into a *vagina*'. Women jumping into fire for the cause of honour is a touchy issue not only in the Indian history but also in the consciousness of women in India. Now fire does not give an easy death, a person dies a painful and *screaming death* in fire and this is why it is very hard to believe that women jumped into it willingly. And this is where the practice of 'Jauhar' is glorified. Hundred years ago when Rani Padmini entered fire (or maybe not) she became Mata Padmini, and then in 1985 when Roop Kanwar was 'forced' into Sati she became Sati Mata.

It is still a highly heated debate issue whether the story of Queen Padmavati was or just an over-dramatized saga penned down by the Sufi poet Malik Muhammad Jayasi. Moreover it is very hard for to believe that more than two hundred women jumped into the fire willingly. Even when the film was being shot at various locations in Rajasthan, there were violent protests against the film maker. But, one major point where both Karni Sena (representative of the right wing) and the Director agrees is the glorification of the burning of women especially the tradition of 'Jauhar' to keep the Rajput pride intact and to hold up the integrity of Rajputs.

Before discussing the Padmavat controversy and how it was a defining moment in determining the extent of mobility and freedom of expression of women, and how Rani Padmavati (an outsider completely) rose to the pedestal of being a revered and sacrificing mother who chose her dignity over being a slave. But first a brief look at the story, the story of Padmavati back then and even now is problematic from all the angles, an overprotective father who does not allow his daughter to talk to anyone. Women in India have had touchy and sensitive issues with fire, honour and getting burned. Be in instances where Jauhar was performed by the Rajput women (especially in Rajasthan), or the numerous Sati burning that took place throughout North India until activism was started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy with the aid of the British Government, domestic violence and dowry related deaths by burning the woman, or the cases of honour killing where the girl is burned alive by her own family, when dalit women are set on fire by the high caste men when they defy the caste codes.

The problem with the Sati and the Jauhar Vrat is not only burning the women alive but the way it has religious and societal sanctions, and the way they are glorified and portrayed. All those people who said that Sati and Jauhar are the evil practices of the past and that it is not practiced now forgot the Roop Kanwar Sati case which took place in 1987. Roopkanwar was a Rajput woman (of the Shekhawat community), who was immolated at Deorala Village in the Sikar district in Rajasthan. If the news reports are to be believed there were thousands of people who not only witnessed the Sati but also hailed it. After the Sati event took place, temples were

constructed in the name of ‘Sati Mata’ and its visitors included the powerful political figures and an annual fare is also organized in the name of ‘Sati Mata’.

After the film got released it was widely appreciated for its perfect use of VFX, the character portrayal done by all the three leading cast members and especially Deepika Padukone were appreciated and many people came to the conclusion that the film does shows ‘the Rajput valor and pride’. This is a very complex chapter in the history of Women’s studies, because when taking the side of Sanjay Leela Bhansali (in the name of his creative freedom) we unknowingly also supported the glorification of Jauhar. And it is in this regard that Swara Bhaskar penned down an open letter to Sanjay Leela Bhansali and that letter gave the much needed focus on the body of the woman from the perspective of a woman, which up until now had been missing. In her open letter she calls out the director for showing the immolation in a positive way.

### **From Tuam to Bihar- the Perverse and Inhuman Hatred for the ‘Illegitimate’ Children.**

Some things and horror about the human depravity remains the same throughout the human civilization despite the stark differences in nationality, religion, race and despite being two different places on two different parts of the globe. The similarities between the Tuam and the Bihar Shelter house are that both of them gave shelter to the illegitimate children. And children in these shelter homes suffered tremendously at the hands of the staff there. The extent to which society hates illegitimate children is just beyond comprehension. Even if we have unwed mothers with their children in the mainstream society, they have a very good reason to protect their identity and be pretentious about their real identity. Or another way is that often times the unwed mothers are wedded very hastily once the pregnancy is confirmed (but then abortion is a different story altogether.)

Although the example of Neena Gupta and Massaba Gupta are a different set of example altogether. Television actress Neena Gupta had her child Massaba Gupta outside of wedlock, and still continued to exist in the mainstream society but that doesn’t come without a cost. Both the mother daughter duo got a lot of hate for their courage and standing up for themselves and existing in the society. But despite the difficult journey, Neena Gupta very strongly carved a niche for herself, and so did her designer daughter who opened a designer house for herself by the name of ‘House of Massaba’. Not only did they survive the whole ordeal of being a single woman but owned it as well.

<sup>20</sup>Starting with the incident in Tuam in Galway located in the West of Ireland, more than 800 dead bodies of infants was discovered buried in a septic tank (which has often been described as

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1. <sup>20</sup>[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoulaehrD\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XoulaehrD_I)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kWBwjR6QPhI>  
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/28/world/europe/tuam-ireland-babies-children.html>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/03/mass-grave-of-babies-and-children-found-at-tuam-orphanage-in-ireland>

the mass grave of the children) in Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home also known as St Mary's Mother and Baby Home, which housed unwed mothers and their 'illegitimate' children. It was a house where unwed pregnant women came to get shelter and deliver the child there. Later the child was put up for adoption and mothers were shown the way out of the house. But the discovery of dead bodies of countless babies in that septic is not the only controversy that came out of that house but also there were allegations of child trafficking, hasty and suspicious adoption procedures where a lot of infants were adopted to the United States Couples. Not to mention there was severe ill treatment of the pregnant women there and also their children. It took more than four decades to unearth the whole matter and collect strong evidence against the sisters. Everybody talked about it in hushed voices and only a very few people came forward to collect evidence and to locate the dead bodies of the babies buried in that septic tank. The system in Tuam was designed and put to work in such a way that they under the guidance of Catholic Priests and Parishes worked like a vigilante group to take hold of unwed mother, take her to the home (or convince her family members to leave her at the home), when her date is due, because an unwed woman out there in the society is a threat and she cannot be seen outside roaming around in a baby bump. So there was an entire system in action not only in Tuam but also in other parts of Ireland as well where the Catholic Church takes the bible teaching more seriously especially when it comes to control the womb of women.

When a few years later a local small time historian Catherine Corless started her research of the place there. Because like everybody else she in her subconscious mind was aware of the misdoings of the matrons there, and she decided to do something about it and bring the truth to the front. When she started her research she had no names or numbers or the causes of the death of infants but later she shockingly discovered that there were around more than 795 infants and kids who had died there. It was not long before she figured out that the infants were buried inside the premises of that Home, the more and more she delved deeper into her research about the resting place of those children, the more her suspicion got confirmed about this. In April 2014, Corless published her work on the Tuam home. Since then Corless has been campaigning for a proper burial and a proper grave yard for those unfortunate infants.

Needless to say after the reports were published there was quite a big controversy, the Church in Ireland was already in trouble for a lot of previous horror they had done especially in the cases of paedophile priests, Mary Magdalene laundry where women were exploited for their labour and other countless horrors of the Church. It was amidst all these allegations that the Tuam horror too hit the national headlines, and the activists are demanding justice for the wrong done to the mothers and their children. A noteworthy important fact about the Tuam case which came out was that women were the major driving force.

## <sup>21</sup>**Coming back to Bihar- The case of Muzaffarpur shelter house case**

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<sup>21</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6L8teIVtfp8>

The intensity and severity of this case was less intense and widely under reported throughout the country in comparison to Tuam. In the Indian case scenario, this shelter home news and how it was received by the local people, local media and the government gets more complicated. And after a point it showcases how money, caste and muscle power exactly works in the Indian sub continent (for whatever maybe the state). And in this special case scenario, it was not just about the muscle power of high caste folks this time. All the power got concentrated and united to suppress the voices of those girls and to make sure the evidence does not reach the court. And in this case as well the skeletons were dug up from the ground, perhaps the skeleton of a dead rebellious girl or a girl who maybe succumbed to the sexual exploitation and cruelty of those of the perpetrators.

It was a case of sexual abuse of minor girls residing in an NGO run shelter house by the name of, 'Sewa Sankalp Evam Vikas Samiti' at Muzaffarpur Bihar, one of the main accused in the entire fiasco was a very affluent and powerful man. When the news broke in May 2018, about the alleged abuse of girls at the shelter house, the FIR was lodged against 12 people by 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2018. From what the news has surfaced up, apparently more than 40 girls were brutally sexually assaulted there. And the later report that emerged up detailing the extent to which it happened was even more shocking and tragic. TISS Mumbai inspected the shelter house there and submitted the report by April 2018, the government reviews it and files FIR against the accused by the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018. After that the girls were shifted from there and relocated to three different shelters in Madhubani, Patna and Mokama. Patna Medical College in their medical examination confirmed that the owners of that orphanage did indeed assaulted the girls sexually along with his friends. But the unraveling of news does not ends there, later it was discovered and reported that 11 women were missing from a shelter house which was again run by the same accused. Medical test definitively confirmed that out of 42 girls, 34 were sexually assaulted, and allegedly the girls there also had to undergo abortion, which led to the death of one of the girl and was buried on the premises 'Ballika Grah.' But however when the spot was dug on, no bodies could be found at that spot (which was mentioned by the girl).

Even in the case of Tuam, it took a lot of efforts to finally face the actual truth that women and children housed there 'had sinned' and this was one of the main reason why the locals there were

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<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/muzaffarpur-shelter-home-case-sc-terms-details-of-sex-abuse-incidents-horrible-scary-1375495-2018-10-25>

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/bihar-muzaffarpur-shelter-home-case-bihar-scandal-brajesh-thakur-paratah-kamal-sexual-abuse-under-his-care-5292021/>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ix2S\\_83z5F0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ix2S_83z5F0)

an accomplice in that horror. The same pattern of news and abuse and could be seen in the Bihar shelter house case as well, the way the women staff treated the girls there is so much similar to the matrons of the Tuam shelter house. In the Ireland 'Home' the ultimate perpetrator was the Church, and here the ultimate perpetrator was also a man and how he used his power to hush up the whole affair. Because in one of the reports that surfaced up, it was reported that the neighbors had idea as to what was going on there and they heard the cries of girls there and yet they chose to look away. It will take up some more time when new details of that Shelter house comes up and the real problem is addressed.

### **Mother Teresa and her True Impact on the Reproductive rights of Women...**

*“Well, Mother Teresa was a fanatic, a fundamentalist and a fraud. She was not a friend of the poor as she claimed to be, she was the friend of poverty. This is not modesty either, nor is it humility, doesn't exhaust my critique of her either. We all know there is a cure for poverty, a rudimentary one- it does work though-works everywhere for the same reason-it's colloquicoly called the empowerment of women, it's the only thing that does work. If you allow women some control over their cycle of reproduction, so that they are not chained by their husbands, or by village customs to annual animal type pregnancies, early death disease. If you will free them from that, give them some basic health of that sort. The whole flow- culturally, socially, medically, economically of that village will rise, it works every time. Mother Teresa worked her entire life, campaigning against that outcome. She said that contraception was equivalent to abortion morally and abortion was equivalent to murder. She was entirely against the only thing that cures poverty. I would say that her preachments led to an enormous increase in the amount of poverty, ignorance, and disease in the world. And I would further add without embarrassment that it is of those things, that Roman Catholic Church has always fed and made its living. And believe me I have barely started with that terrible person.”*

*Christopher Hitchens, 2010*

Mother Teresa is an idol to a lot of people (especially children growing up), due to her saint like persona and how she helped the needy and poor people until scholars started investigating about her work. Especially noteworthy are the views of Christopher Hitchens, who made some valid points against her. Unlike half the world, Christopher has almost no kind words for Mother Teresa. After Church, she was one of the very powerful force to limit the access of contraceptive and abortion to women to a lethal extent. Not only was she shady and dubious in her charity works but she was absolutely spiteful of women having reproductive rights and taking control of their body. The Hitchen's book, 'The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice' where he bursts each and every myth about her, that circulates the global media, especially her image of being a poor saint. In his book he goes on to argue that while Calcutta was poor, Mother Teresa was not.

<sup>22</sup>And It was not only Christopher Hitchens who raised questions on her sense of morality, (he even goes further and calls her the Ghoul of Calcutta), but there were others as well. The Italian investigative journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi's work, 'The Original Sin' goes on to give detailed accounts of the money laundering done by her charity. His book even goes on to claim that Mother Teresa had so much money that if she withdrew the money or had closed the account, the Vatican would have gone bankrupt. The riches of Mother Teresa in the account of Vatican sheds light on how the Church had money to get rid of all the paedophile cases made against the priests of the Church order. She had quite a reputation in Ireland, people held her at a great admiration and at a higher pedestal. It was here that she came and advocated against the reproductive health of women, in the mid 70's at a time when the Church there was facing allegations of paedophile, and inhuman institutions for 'fallen women', and there were several cases of missing children in the 'Reform Institutions' of Ireland. But the tragic part is that she campaigned tirelessly against it in strict Catholic countries such as Ireland, and Calcutta as well-two places that desperately needed to empower the reproductive rights of women.

Dr. Aroup Chatterjee, British Indian author and physician penned down a controversial book, 'Mother Teresa: The Untold Story (which was originally published as 'Mother Teresa: The Final Verdict') in his book goes on to give support to the claims made by critics such as Christopher Hitchens, Mihir Bose and Mary Loudon that Mother Teresa had terrible impact not only on the dying people in her 'charitable institutions' but she was very hypocrite towards women and their health and well being. Both Dr. Aroup Chatterjee and Christopher Hitchens testified against the sainthood of Mother Teresa and they made some valid point. Hitchens in his documentary titled, 'Hell's Angel' (1994) goes on to document the statements of Mother Teresa on how she makes statements on banning abortion and contraceptives, and how both of these things are a threat to the peace of this world!

In the end it would be right to say that each and every religion has a very long and disturbing history of oppressing of women because of their anatomy. Religious people in the seats of power when work towards denying women some of the basic medical care, it takes the society as a whole in the backward direction.

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<sup>22</sup>[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NK7l\\_lhtKNU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NK7l_lhtKNU)

<https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1996/12/19/mother-teresa/>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdYKsiredbM&list=PL7D8B99B25F2AB004>

## **The Narrative of Motherhood on Television.**

The film 'Mother India' is at the other spectrum of Indian Cinema's climax, it's glorified and sacrificing depiction of motherhood and their nurturing nature, especially the way the film ended. The film is set in 1957, post independence poverty stricken India. The story is about Radha (played by Nargis), who is abandoned by her husband Shamu (played by Raaj Kumar), due to different situations. Radha is left alone to fend for herself with her three children, and a mother-in-law

The ending of 'Mother India' is something which is tragic, yet revolutionary in itself, something that has yet to happen again. The film is heavy with Hindu mythological symbolism and draws heavily from the cultural definitions of nationalism and womanhood. The film that for once appeals both to the traditionalists and also to the feminists as well, the harrowing struggles of a single mother from a poor family, trying to raise up her children, to survive and pay the huge debt (with its ever increasing interest). It is a very relatable tale to a lot of women, even today, especially to those women who were abandoned by their husbands, and have to raise the kids on their own. The film is replete with doses of multiple themes in its narrative, the most prominent being the sacrificing nature of the Indian women and how they always put the need of their children and their family first. It would be wrong to say that the film feeds on stereotypes, because the sacrifices which women as mothers puts in their children are neither false nor the stereotypes. Now coming to the way the film ended- and the ending of this film is something that sets it apart from other 'women centered' movies made not only in the history of Indian Cinema, but also in the history of world cinema. One circumstance leads to another and Radha is forced to shoot her own younger son, who was trying to abduct the daughter of the moneylender (the moneylender being one of the villains here, who lusts after Radha throughout her life, and literally makes her life miserable). In that moment of difficulty, her sense of womanhood overpowers her sense of maternity- a decision to pull the trigger but she pulls it anyway and falls on the ground. This is one of the few films that address the question of how parents (especially the mothers) raise up their sons. In the second half of the film, Radha continuously warns her grown up sons that she does not like the stalking behavior of theirs and will not tolerate it- and apparently she was serious about it. Deep maternal love versus the upholding of one's ideals is a difficult choice to make, and the way Radha collapsed on the ground after she shot her son was depiction of that hard decision.

In the past few months, one particular advertisement caught the imagination of the people. It was a shift from the traditional depiction of motherhood on television. The traditional depiction of motherhood (was and still) mostly deals with women tip toeing around their children and family and fulfilling their wishes and at the same time taking care of the entire family.<sup>23</sup> But the Vicks advertisement which released on 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2017 is a different story altogether. Although Vicks created a lot of advertisements under the title 'generation of care' in various countries in a lot of

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<sup>23</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zeeVEKaDLM>

different languages, but here I will only discuss the Indian version of the Vicks advertisement. An advertisement that shows motherly love and care in a different light and different gender altogether. This advertisement features the transgender social activist Gauri Sawant and how ‘against all odds she is raising’ her adopted daughter Gayatri as her own. In the advertisement Gauri wants her daughter to become a doctor, but her daughter Gayatri decides to become a Lawyer so that she can ensure the rights of her mother as a human being in the society. It gives positive messages in a lot of societal perspectives, especially the most important being that it gave an impetus to the LGBT movement in India and how they are striving to gain a more humane reputation and a place in society. But most importantly it shows that how anyone is capable of ‘maternal instincts’, and that anybody (not everybody) is capable of motherly love and care.

### **The Final Word...**

Like I mentioned in my third chapter that how culturally the purity of and loyalty of women is ensured to make sure that the child is legitimate- and this is something which is passionately followed across all religions. But at the moment that is a strong political rhetoric for everyone.

But apart from these living room discussions, another subject that is debated in a heated way is the changes in the Demography of India, and the changing fertility statistics especially when it comes to the fertility competition between the Hindu and Muslim Women. As I mentioned earlier both in the first and third chapter that how religious leaders (on both sides of the dominant religions) are often advising women to go on having more and more children, the list goes on forever in that case. While discussing the demographic and religious dynamics in India, <sup>24</sup>Conrad Hackett (he is a senior demographer and Associate Director at Pew Research Center.), goes on state in his paper, ‘By 2050, India to have world’s largest populations of Hindus and Muslims’ (which was published in April 15, 2015) goes on to write, “In the coming decades, India will have the distinction of having the largest populations of two of the three largest religions in the world- Islam and Hinduism. India is already home to the most of the world’s Hindus. In 2010, 94% of the world’s Hindus lived in India, and this is expected to remain true in 2050, when 1.3 billion Hindus are projected to live in the country. But India is also expected to have 31million Muslims in 2050 (11% of the global total), making it the country with the largest population of Muslims in the world. Muslims are expected to grow faster than Hindus because they have the youngest median age and the highest fertility rates among major religious groups in India. In 2010, the median age of Indian Muslims was 22, compared with 26 from Hindus and 28 for Christians. Likewise, Muslim have an average of 3.2 children per woman, compared with 2.5 for Hindus and 2.3 for Christians. Due to these factors, India’s Muslim community will expand faster than its Hindu population, rising from 14.4% in 2010 to 18.4% in 2050. But, even with this increase, Hindus will make up more than three-in-four Indians (76.7%) in 2050. Religious turmoil (between Muslims and Hindus, but also involving Sikhs, Christians and others) has long been a fact of life in India. The year the country won its independence from Britain, the Indian

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<sup>24</sup><https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/21/by-2050-india-to-have-worlds-largest-populations-of-hindus-and-muslims/>

subcontinent was partitioned along religious lines, into Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India. Even though the separation was intended to ease religious tensions, it led to a spasm of violence that left up to a million dead and more than ten million displaced.”

For whatever maybe the demographic statistics and opinions of the experts on this subject matter, one important thing that remains constant is that it is the womb of the women that have to bear the brunt of it. Because be it institutional delivery or non institutional delivery, it is still very much a painful task to bring a life alive and well outside of the womb. And lastly women are not baby producing machines and this fact needs to be presented to the religious hard liners from both the major communities. It is the twenty first century where women are making space and an identity for themselves and they view the motherhood perspective in a very different light.

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## Appendix

To enable better and efficient approach to the subject with proper question, the following interview guide was created. Later only a few questions were picked up from this guide to ensure quick and to the point response from the subjects.

### Interview Guide

**Name:**

**Age:**

**Gender:**

**Occupation:**

- 1. Describe yourself as a woman and how the ideals and values of your mother and grandmother shaped up your personality and every feature of being you.**
- 2. Do you have a child or have you adopted a child?**
- 3. Do you feel incomplete without a child? If yes, why? If no, why?**
- 4. What is the response of society towards a single professional successful woman like yourself?**
- 5. What is your definition of Motherhood?**
- 6. What are your views/opinion on the issues related to:**

**a) Abortion:**

**b) Miscarriage:**

**c) Access to contraception:**

**d) Forced Motherhood:**

**e) Maternal Health:**

**f) Patriarchy and Patrilineage:**

**g) The child of a woman outside marriage or sans the system of patrilineage:**

**7. Have you witnessed abortion, delivery, or miscarriage of a closed friend or relative?  
How did it affect you, and your perspective on motherhood and pregnancy?**

**8. What are your views about marriage, with reference to the Indian Scenario?**

**9. If the social and cultural conditions were women friendly and gender sensitive would you go ahead and have a child of your own? Or adopt a child?**

**10. Lastly what is your take on those women who fail as mother, in the sense that they are a witness to the abuse of her child but does nothing much to help him or her out or even report about the abuser?**

**11. How do you view the whole matter about pregnancy and the changes it brings to the body of a woman?**